

## QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

### SUBMISSION

#### *Introduction*

This submission relates to the difficulty experienced in obtaining information about road conditions when travelling from Canberra to Brisbane on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2010.

#### *Experience*

Our experience was this:

After spending Christmas with family, we left Canberra on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> December to drive to Brisbane over two days to visit family who live there.

We knew there had been flooding at Eugowra and planned to travel through Cowra, Molong, and Wellington to Dubbo, thence on the Newell Highway northwards. Nevertheless we made inquiries at the Cowra Information Centre about roads further north. We were told (a) the road through Eugowra had just been opened, and (b) they were unable to tell us any information about road conditions north of the NSW border.

At Coonabarabran Information Centre we again inquired about roads to the north. Again we were told they could give us no information north of the NSW border, although this time we were given some phone numbers to call, namely NRMA (which was always busy) and SES which was not helpful with regard to roads in Queensland. From previous experience, we thought that the Newell Highway around Goondiwindi could be subject to flooding, so we chose not to go that way, travelling instead on the New England Highway.

We had heard from our daughter in Brisbane via text messages that "Warwick was an island" and that the Cunningham Highway was closed due to "a severe weather event." We also heard that the Lismore-Kyogle Road was closed, although we had not intended to travel there.

On Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> December we arrived at Tenterfield at lunchtime. At this point we were thinking to drive across to Lismore and then join the Pacific Highway which we thought would be very busy with vehicles trying to avoid the flood waters. Although it was not far from the Queensland border, the Tenterfield Information Centre was not able to advise about road conditions north of the NSW border.

As it happened, a truckie who had come from the north pulled up and we found out from him that the road to Warwick was now open, but that we would have to get to Brisbane via Toowoomba. And that is what we did, although the roads were badly damaged by floods and rain. We arrived safely and left on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, earlier than planned because of the weather forecasts. We avoided the worst of the Brisbane floods.

However, it seemed to be assumed by most people we spoke to *en route* that we could access a computer or laptop and get on to a website to find out road conditions in Queensland. We only had a mobile phone with us.

The people at the regional Information Centres were either unable or unwilling to look up on their computers any Queensland websites that would have provided the required information.

We also found that as the Test Cricket was being broadcast, the usual hourly updates of news, weather and road conditions were not coming from our so-called "emergency broadcaster." There seemed to be no consideration that conditions could be any different from those in Melbourne at the time.

### ***Submission***

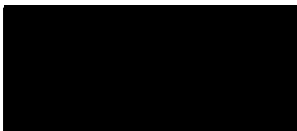
Flood waters are no respecters of State borders, and yet it seems ludicrous that the travelling public cannot obtain information about road conditions beyond the borders of the State they are currently travelling in.

We would submit that consideration be given to having co-ordinated current interstate road condition information available at the regional Information Centres. Ideally this should be available on a national basis, rather than just restricting it to NSW and Queensland.

We would submit that this information should also be available at night, when the regional Information Centres are normally closed. This could be done possibly via regional radio or adequate road signage well in advance.

Finally, we believe that there should be the usual hourly updates on emergency conditions broadcast on national radio, even if this means interrupting Test Cricket broadcasts.

Yours respectfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of John Ryall.

John RYALL  
8<sup>th</sup> March, 2011