

Lawnton  
Queensland 4501

11<sup>th</sup> March, 2011

Dear Sir,

### North Pine River

Thank you for the opportunity to present a submission to the inquiry.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January the dam operators of the North Pine dam opened all five floodgates resulting in massive flooding to properties adjacent to the North Pine River. No water, or very little, had been released from the dam the previous three days despite intense precipitation and the knowledge that the run-off would swell the dam beyond capacity.

I have lived adjacent to the river for 20 years, and I can understand and accept the occasional dam releases, which raise the river by a few metres and just flood the riverbank areas. The release on the 11th January turned the river into a raging torrent that swept away fences and trees, ruined outhouses and left masses of debris on people's properties, not to mention the destruction of the biosphere, with mangroves destroyed and the morphology of the river being permanently altered. There was also the damage to the Gympie Road bridge over the North Pine River, which resulted in closure for several days and significant works to repair the damage caused by undermining of the structure.

A public meeting, held with members of State Government, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Seqwater officials, shed little light on the disaster. Seqwater's basic response was that they were under instructions (presumably from State Government) to maintain the dam at full capacity, and only release water when it was full. Clearly, Seqwater was laying the blame on the Government. However, in response to my email to Seqwater, complaining about their actions, they stated:

- The releasing of water from our dams is approved by Government and delegated to Seqwater through the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008.

As the release of water is *delegated* to Seqwater, then *they* are responsible for releases.

The questions need to be asked:

- Why were there no controlled releases prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> January, when it was obvious the massive rainfall amounts would result in the dam exceeding capacity?
- Why did the dam operators not refer the matter to the Director of Seqwater, if they were not in a position to make a decision?
- If the dam operators did refer the circumstances to a higher authority, then what was that person's response?
- Did the Director refer the matter to the Director-General, and if so, what was his response?
- Did the Director-General refer the matter to the Minister, and if so, what was his response?

Fortunately, few homes along the river were inundated, and no one lost their life. However, the damage to property has been significant. My own property has had fences swept away, tonnes of

debris deposited on the garden, masses of riverine sand dumped on the land, and my outhouse has suffered extensive damage. Seqwater or State Government, whichever the Commission finds culpable, should be responsible for making good the extensive damage to people's properties.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature]

Robert Pestell, Bsc (Hons.), M.Sc., J.P. (Qual.)



North Pine River following dam release on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>



Aftermath of release – debris deposited on property