

STATEMENT OF IAN PETER STEVENSON

I, IAN PETER STEVENSON, care of Toowoomba Regional Council at 64 Campbell Street, Oakey in the State of Queensland, Acting Service Centre Manager Oakey of Toowoomba Regional Council, can say as follows:


1. This statement is prepared in response to issues raised by the Commission in its letter received on 8 April 2011, in relation to the Oakey area.
2. After setting out my experience, roles and responsibilities, I set out and respond to the issues below.

My experience, roles and responsibilities

3. I have been Acting Service Centre Manager Oakey at Toowoomba Regional Council since early November 2008.
4. I was Chief Executive Officer of the former Cambooya Shire Council from around January 2007 until 2008 when Cambooya Shire Council and seven other Councils amalgamated to form Toowoomba Regional Council. I have been employed at Toowoomba Regional Council from March 2008 until the present date excluding a period of around a month in July 2008. From March 2008 until June 2008, I occupied the position of Acting Director of District Services and in the period July 2008 until the present day, I have been Acting Manager of Crows Nest Service Centre, Acting Manager of Millmerran Service Centre and the Acting Manager of Oakey Service Centre.
5. I have had a career in local government spanning almost 46 years and have also been Chief Executive Officer of Tara Shire Council from 2004 to 2006, Manager of Administration and Finance and concurrently Chief Executive Officer of the Joint Dalby Wambo Saleyards, Library and Aerodrome Boards from 2001 to 2004, Director of Finance/Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Beaudesert Shire Council from 1990 to 2001, Shire Clerk (CEO) Kolan Shire Council from 1985 to 1990, Shire Clerk (CEO) Peak Downs Shire Council from 1978 to 1985 and Shire Clerk (CEO) Torres Shire Council from 1977 to 1978.
6. In my current role as Acting Service Centre Manager Oakey, I manage the operations of the District Service Centre. I am responsible for ensuring the provision of a range of local government services to the local community in co-operation with Council managers who have responsibility for planning, engineering, environmental health and other functional areas. My role includes the management of staff, preparation of budgets, monitoring of expenditure and engaging with community and business groups in the District.

Statement of Ian Peter Stevenson
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7. I am aware that under the framework of the Local Disaster Management Plan and the Disaster Coordination Centre Standing Operating Procedures, the LDCC is responsible for the coordination of disaster operations in the Toowoomba Regional Council area including Oakey. Accordingly, the LDCC is the local coordinator of the various agencies across the entire region and a point of contact for the public across the region seeking assistance in non-life threatening situations.
8. The Oakey Service Centre is a subset of Toowoomba Regional Council. It facilitates the provision of Council services in the Oakey area and is one of a number of customer service centres provided by Toowoomba Regional Council.
9. During the disaster event, the Oakey Service Centre provided a point of local liaison. That is, when the LDCC arranged for agencies or volunteers to assist in Oakey, the Oakey Service Centre provided the local base and local point of contact for those operations.
10. During the flood event in Oakey, I contributed to Council's efforts in managing the disaster response and the subsequent recovery. My role included:
 - Liaising with residents, local service providers and staff;
 - Assisting other agencies operating from Oakey and providing information to them;
 - Assessing the needs of individuals within the community for assistance and providing this information to the LDCC; and
 - Supervising and directing the work of others in providing that assistance.
11. **Response to "...the allegations that residents were not advised of the imminent flood, what steps were taken to advise residents and if they were not warned why not"**
12. I am aware that TRC issued a series of Media Releases at this time, including:
 - "Possible Flooding in Oakey" issued on 10 January 2011 (refer to item 427 of documents previously provided to the Commission). This Media Release advised Oakey residents that flooding may occur due to significant rises in Gowrie and Oakey creeks caused by heavy rain and for residents to regularly check any water on their property to ensure that water levels are not rising and to take precautions against possible flooding in the town. SES contact number and emergency 000 number were provided.
 - "Mayor Peter Taylor implores residents to stay away from water, off roads" issued on 11 January 2011 (refer to item 446 of documents previously provided to the Commission)
 - "TRC water infrastructure update" issued on 11 January 2011 (refer to item 445 of documents previously provided to the Commission). This media release included information relating to the dams including:
 - "that all dams are structurally sound",
 - "Toowoomba's dams do not have floodgates and that releases commence when water rises above the spillway level" and
 - "the release from Cooby Dam may contribute to increased water level in Oakey Creek but the contribution is minor compared to other inflows due to the extreme rainfall event".

- “TRC Oakey office to facilitate flood damage assistance” issued on 12 January 2011 (refer to item 452 of documents previously provided to the Commission) advising Oakey residents whose homes have been flooded to contact the Oakey Service Centre of Toowoomba Regional Council to arrange clean up assistance. Contact telephone number was provided.
- “Rumours dispelled” issued on 12 January 2011 (refer to item 457 of documents previously provided to the Commission) that included advice that the level of water spilling over Cooby Dam wall is falling and the level of Oakey Creek at Oakey is also falling.

13. The advice that I received was that there were no official flood warning monitoring systems available in the Oakey area. Council officers as well as residents of Oakey monitored flood levels at the Oakey Creek bridge. This was the indicator we used to assess whether the levels were rising or falling. Information that was gathered in this manner was used to respond to inquiries received from residents and the LDCC.
14. I have provided further information in relation to the response to the flooding in Oakey.

Flooding in Oakey and Response

Monday 10 July 2011

15. On 10 January 2011 I returned to the Oakey office from leave.
16. Although I was not in Oakey prior to returning from leave, I am aware that there was heavy and consistent rainfall reported in the district for some weeks prior to that date. When I returned to the office, the Oakey Council Works staff were busy repairing road damage arising from the rainfall and monitoring water over roads, etc. Rain continued to fall and Council was informed of concerns from residents regarding “rumours” that Council was releasing water from Cooby Dam, which would have an adverse effect on Oakey.
17. I telephoned Alan Kleinschmidt, Council’s Manager Water Operations, who advised me that Cooby Dam had a spillway and had no means of restricting flow, that water had been flowing over it since about 7.30 pm on Sunday 9 January 2011, and that Council was unable to control water releases from that source. This advice was used to alleviate any further concerns expressed by residents who contacted the Oakey office.
18. During the day, a number of reports were received of roads being closed to traffic due to flooding. The Oakey Service Centre was in contact with the local SES and provided sandbags, sand and a couple of hand trolleys to assist in organising sandbags. I was advised by the Acting SES Local Coordinator mid-morning that 6 to 8 houses had been sandbagged overnight as a precaution, but that no evacuations of residents had occurred. Also that the water level of Oakey Creek was 2 metres lower than earlier in the morning.
19. The Toowoomba flash flood event then occurred and caused concerns in Oakey.
20. The Oakey Service Centre engineering staff initially discussed introducing water restrictions because the Toowoomba – Oakey water pipeline was damaged in this event. However with the exception of two areas, Oakey’s water needs were able to be met by the Reverse Osmosis Plant.

21. Road condition reports were sought from works staff and conveyed to Jason Bradshaw, the Director of District Services and the Oakey Service Centre contact with the Local Disaster Management Group ("LDMG").
22. Reports on deteriorating road conditions and scouring of residential streets on the western edge of Toowoomba continued to be received.
23. It was arranged for a Council's Works employee who lived in Oakey to monitor levels of Oakey Creek overnight and to call me if the situation deteriorated.
24. The Warrego Highway was subsequently cut during the evening of 10 January 2011 at Gowrie Creek.

Tuesday 11 January 2011

25. The Warrego Highway reopened briefly in the morning of 11 January 2011.
26. On Tuesday 11 January 2011, I travelled to Oakey early owing to radio reports that the road between Oakey and Toowoomba was in imminent danger of being cut off again. Staff reported that over 75 mm of rain had been measured in Oakey overnight. Also, that residents of at least 6 low lying (brick) houses and some residents of the QCWA units had been evacuated overnight as a precaution. Businesses in the CBD sandbagged their premises as did many houses.
27. Quite a few Council staff advised the office that they couldn't get to work or left work to return home while they could. This left a few core Council staff to answer telephones in addition to Council's Works staff that were operating throughout the events.
28. Shortly after I arrived at work, the highway was cut again.
29. Rain continued to fall with water from Oakey Creek gradually rising and cutting off contact with the northern area of Oakey. Contact was made with Jason Bradshaw and Chris Rubie Manager, Construction and Maintenance District, during this time, as well as with Council's Works staff monitoring flood levels and their effects. Informal conversations were held with residents to try to gauge a likely flood peak. Jason Bradshaw advised that Police Sergeant John Cook was on duty in Oakey that day and contact was made with him on his private mobile. Efforts to contact local Police Officers by telephone were unsuccessful due to congestion of the telephone system.
30. Reports were received of houses on the north side of Oakey being inundated and Jason Bradshaw advised that the Oakey Cultural Centre was to be used as an evacuation centre.
31. At this stage, the Oakey Service Centre was in the centre of a number of flood flows, effectively cutting it off from the south, east and north. The local IGA was shut down, having run out of milk, bread and other food items.
32. Members of the Oakey Lions Club were contacted by others and myself to seek their assistance with the provision of food for evacuees if required.
33. I contacted the Oakey Hospital to see if they required evacuation and assistance.

34. Karen King (Cultural Centre Coordinator) volunteered to return to work and coordinate the evacuation centre, assisted by Fay Meadowcroft. A number of residents started arriving at the Oakey Cultural Centre, having been evacuated from their houses and they were registered and attended to. I subsequently received advice from Jason Bradshaw that the evacuees were to be bussed to the Toowoomba Grammar School, and they left shortly after midday, when the Warrego Highway re-opened. A second bus transported residents from the QCWA units from the Uniting Church Hall to the same centre.
35. Readings at the Oakey Creek Bridge provided by Council's Works staff during 11 January 2011 that I had recorded were:
- 7.5m at 12.00 noon
 - 7.35 m at 12.30 pm
 - 7.1 m at 1.45 pm
 - 7.0 m at 2.30 pm

Wednesday 12 January 2011

36. On Wednesday 12 January 2011, water levels continued to fall and roads re-opened. When the flooding situation allowed, Council commenced to carry out works with the aim of restoring Oakey infrastructure and amenities.
37. In carrying out works, Council gave priority to ensuring that everyone had at least temporary access to their homes and properties. To this end, Council's Works staff were engaged on assessing and making urgent repairs to roads.
38. Contact was made by others and myself with Sergeant Cook of Oakey Police Station. I also made contact with the Toowoomba Grammar School and Local Disaster Management Coordinator, Kevin Wruck. Arrangements were made to return evacuees mid morning.
39. David Totenhofer, Community Development Officer, telephoned and offered to return from leave to assist on 12 January 2011. He and Karen King were tasked with conducting a house to house inspection of flood affected properties. I understand that they visited flood affected properties in the morning and afternoon of 12 January 2011. Fire and Rescue Service conducted a similar assessment. Information obtained by Council and the Fire and Rescue Service were subsequently exchanged.
40. Assessments were made of food and fuel supplies on behalf of the LDMG.
41. The Department of Communities advised they would be sending a team to Oakey to assist with the recovery effort. Offers were received of a number of Fire and Rescue Units being deployed to help clean out houses etc. Volunteers arrived and were tasked with assisting Fire and Rescue teams as well as residents.
42. Council and volunteers carried out a footpath cleanup exercise virtually non-stop, loading and delivering water damaged furniture and effects to the Jondaryan Waste Facility.

Thursday 13 January 2011 and later

43. Thursday 13 January 2011 and onwards was a continuation of the flood recovery effort. Most available houses were cleaned by Friday 14 January 2011. A number of houses were cleaned over the next month or so as absentee owners were able to travel back to Oakey

from other flood affected centres, and the various insurance companies approved properties to be cleaned.

44. Food and fuel supplies continued to be monitored. Repairs were authorised to the Oakey Memorial Swimming Pool which allowed it to reopen on Saturday 15 January 2011, to try to return the town to normal as soon as possible.

Impact of Flooding in Oakey

45. I understand that a total of 122 homes were affected, plus a number of sheds and vacant properties. The town was isolated for a few hours on 11 January 2011 and the flood devastated residents who were not expecting a flood of this magnitude to eventuate.

Role of Council, LDMG, LDCC, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Other Organisations in the Management of the Oakey Flood Event

46. On Tuesday 11 January 2011, Council provided support to local Police, Fire and Rescue etc as required during the flooding and evacuation. On Wednesday 12 January 2011 and days following, I believe Council led the recovery process in Oakey, offering accommodation and support to Department of Communities staff, acting as the contact centre for residents and volunteers, and coordinating the recovery efforts.
47. David Totenhofer is Council's Community Development Officer. He was on leave during the flood events. He telephoned me and offered to return from leave to assist with the flood recovery effort on 12 January 2011. In Mr Totenhofer's role, he has access to a wide range of contacts within the Oakey community, and this knowledge proved useful, particularly in the first week or so of the recovery phase of the disaster.
48. During the recovery phase, David and Karen were initially tasked with gaining an appreciation of the scale of the disaster affecting local residents, and their needs. The information gathered was collated and used to assist Fire and Rescue teams and volunteers to help residents clean property and to help the Department of Communities, Lifeline, Red Cross and other aid agencies with their activities. David became a local point of contact over the next few days as requests for assistance were received and volunteers and others were assigned to various tasks.
49. David worked from Wednesday 12 January 2011 until about 28 January 2011 to assist me to manage the recovery effort.
50. I was in regular contact with Jason Bradshaw who was the District Offices' contact attending the LDMG meetings. Leon Love (Regional Area Manager North) also provided advice and support in conjunction with Jason Bradshaw, particularly on 11 January 2011. The arrangements made by the LDMG to bus evacuees to Toowoomba was of great benefit to the local effort, as efforts to source bedding etc were proving difficult.
51. I received information from Alan Kleinschmidt on Monday 10 January 2011 that the Cooby Dam had overtopped on the evening of 9 January 2011. Leon Love, Council's Regional Area Manager (North) on Tuesday 11 January 2011 confirmed Alan's advice that water from Cooby Dam is a relatively small contributor to water reaching Oakey and that the spillage of Cooby Dam was not indicative of the likelihood of flooding in Oakey. Advice on Cooby Dam was sought in order to respond to residents concerns at continuing

“rumours” that the Cooby Dam wall had collapsed, that Council was releasing water and that there was a large wall of water coming to Oakey from Cooby etc. The advice I received was used to allay their concerns.

52. I remained in contact with the LDMG and LDCC through Jason Bradshaw throughout the event by mobile telephone and email on a regular basis. Efforts to contact Police, Queensland Fire and Rescue etc were unsuccessful early on Tuesday 11 January 2011 due to telephone line congestion, localised flooding, and their focus on the business at hand. However contact was established mid morning with full contact established by midday. Meetings between Qld Police Service Oakey, Qld Fire and Rescue Oakey, Qld Department of Communities and others carried out locally between 12 January 2011 and 24 January 2011 ensured that the various organisations worked in a coordinated and productive manner.
53. The recovery effort was assisted by a huge number of volunteers. There were many individuals and businesses and government agencies that volunteered to assist in the recovery effort.

Dated: 16 April 2011.



Ian Peter Stevenson

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