

'SR-02'

HOT ISSUE BRIEFING NOTE

HOT ISSUE G.X	The Australian Newspaper article claiming Seqwater breached its operations manual during the January 2011 flood events land
Question	

Issue:

- The Australian newspaper on Monday 23 January 2011 published a news article claiming Seqwater breached its manual of operating procedures during the January 2011 flood event.
- The article claims there is a discrepancy between the actual flood operation centre logs and the technical reports produced by Seqwater during the Jan 2011 flood event and the final Seqwater flood report and evidence given to the COI in relation to when Seqwater invoked W3 strategy.
- The article misunderstands that although under W3 strategy the primary consideration is the protection of urban areas from inundation, the flood engineers must consider lower level objectives when making decisions on water releases. These lower level objectives include minimising disruption and inconvenience to rural life (including by maintaining bridges immediately downstream of Wivenhoe trafficable). limiting outflows to a maximum of 4000 cumecs at Moggill to avoid flooding in Brisbane.

Answer:

- The issue and the detailed documents referred to by the Australian have been extensively investigated by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry as part of its Interim Report in July 2011.
- Speculation by the Australian today is unfounded and inaccurate.
- The Commission in its Interim Report found that W3 was invoked at 8am on Saturday 8 January as required by the manual (see page 72 of the Interim Report)
- This was based on the flood chronology included in the Seqwater January 2011 Flood Event – Report on the Operation of Somerset Dam and Wivenhoe Dam 2 March 2011 as well as written and oral evidence given by the flood engineers.
- The Commission noted that the flood operations centre logs for 8 January 2011 did not record the transition to W3 (or indeed when other changes in strategy were made). As a result, the Commission made recommendations in its Interim Report for all future logs to record when decisions are made to transition from one strategy to the next (see pages 66 and 67 of the Interim Report).
- Seqwater has accepted this recommendation and it has been implemented in flood operations centre procedures.
- Further, the Commission closely scrutinised the rates of release during Saturday and Sunday (the period referred to in

the Australian). The Commission identified no error in those release rates nor any failure to comply with the manual. It is important to note that under the manual of operations used during the event, W3 strategy allows from a range of priorities from continuing to minimise the impact on rural life and downstream bridges to the upper limit of the strategy which requires limiting flows to 4000 cumec at Moggill to protect Brisbane from flooding.

- On January 8 when W3 was invoked the strategy focused on minimising impact to rural life as required under the manual.