

SUBMISSION TO FLOOD COMMISSION

My family home and home office in Graceville was flooded. My chief concern is whether the water release strategy in place at Wivenhoe Dam was adequate given the weather that immediately preceded the flood. I understand that Government policy is (and remains) to maintain where possible "100% capacity". I believe this policy contributed to the "190% capacity" that drove the decision to significantly increase the daily release from the catchment just prior to the worst days of flooding (12 and 13 January, 2011) in Brisbane. This decision obviously meant waters already on their way via Bremmer and Lockyer rivers were supplemented by a wall of additional water over a very short period of time. The results spoke for themselves.

Refusal to release more water sooner (based on a "manual" or some other form of Government directive), in my view, led to the flood. I cannot understand how such an inflexible approach can be adopted to such a fluid (no pun intended) set of circumstances.

I note Minister Robertson telegraphing a defence of sorts over the past few days – basically saying his modelling showed that a release of 10% of dam capacity would not have saved the communities affected by the 12th and 13th January flooding. The chief mystery (there are others) behind his statement is over what time period 10% was "released" by his modellers. Is he saying that the Bremmer and Lockyer Rivers were supplying enough water to ensure that same or similar scale flooding occurred regardless of the releases from storage at Wivenhoe? I will be interested to find out more on this so I hope the modelling will form part of the information examined and hopefully made publicly available by the Commission.

Finally, I note the natural tension between those who want the dams to maintain maximum reserves of water and those who think this approach may have been the root cause of the problems Brisbane encountered in mid-January. I also note Minister Robertson lauding the assistance afforded to the clean up by the Tugun Desal plant.

Being one of the many now paying for the privilege of having a Desal plant ready to go when needed (e.g. the next drought) I cannot help but wonder why we are still obsessing about maintaining so much water behind a dam wall, particularly just prior to and during our wet season (and according to the Southern Oscillation Index, a wet season prone to extreme rainfall).

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Brett Walker
Graceville
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