

**In the matter of the
Commissions Of Inquiry Act 1950**

Commission of Inquiry Order (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Supplementary Witness Statement of Anthony Keith Trace

Local Disaster Coordinator

Ipswich City Council

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Supplementary Witness Statement of Tony Trace

I, **Anthony Keith Trace** of Ipswich City Council ("**ICC**"), 45 Roderick Street, Ipswich, in the State of Queensland, state as follows:

255. On 6 April 2011 I provided a written statement ("**my earlier statement**") in response to a requirement dated 29 March 2011 to provide written information to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry in relation to 21 subject areas ("**the Requirement**").
256. My earlier statement provided a response to Topics 1 - 18 of the Requirement. This supplementary statement provides my response to Topics 19 - 21 of the Requirement.
257. For ease of reference, the paragraph numbering and pagination of my supplementary statement continues on from the paragraph numbering and pagination of my earlier statement, so that my earlier statement and this supplementary statement together represent my response to the Requirement.

Topic 19 - Any measures being proposed, planned or implemented to prepare for, mitigate or manage future flood events (such as the installation of automatic river gauges, culvert management, levee construction and the like)

Introduction

258. As a consequence of the January 2011 flood event ("**the flood event**") there is a clear opportunity to consider and implement learnings from the event to improve our disaster management capability and capacity at all levels of government, across the agencies that are affected by or respond to disaster events, and across the broader community. I also believe that the flood event has created an enhanced appreciation and understanding across the community of the need for "community resilience" in the face of such events. The aim of community resilience is to strengthen communities, individuals, businesses and institutions so as to minimise the effects of disasters, and to reduce the vulnerability of communities to natural hazards.

259. In my capacity as the LDC for the Ipswich LDMG I have identified a number of measures that could, and in my view should, be considered to better plan for, mitigate or manage a future flood event. Unless otherwise indicated in the ICC Submission on Flood Preparedness dated 23 March 2011 ("**Submission**") or in my statement, these are not all necessarily measures which have, at this stage, been proposed, planned or implemented by ICC. In this regard I refer to the qualifications expressed at paragraphs 13.6 - 13.9 of the Submission and in particular to the qualification that not all measures have, at this stage, been fully investigated, costed or evaluated in terms of their practical feasibility and, for some of the suggested measures, implementation is beyond the resources of Council, and their adoption may need to be considered on a State-wide basis.
260. The initiatives described in the following paragraphs 261 - 281 are initiatives that are either currently being progressed, or are planned to be undertaken by ICC in advance of next summer's wet season.

Revision of the Ipswich City Local Government Disaster Management Plan (IDMP)

261. ICC is currently undertaking a revision of the current IDMP and as part of that review is developing operational sub-plans for use by the Ipswich LDMG and community stakeholders. As noted at paragraphs 61 - 62 of my statement, ICC has been granted NDRP funding for this review.
262. An objective of the review of the IDMP is to develop a more user-friendly, operationally focussed disaster management plan, that is clear, concise and actions based for each of the four phases (prevention, preparation, response and recovery) of disaster management.
263. The operational sub-plans will include plans to address "community" specific requirements such as the establishing and operation of evacuation centres. Operational plans (provisionally called Local Area Plans) will also be produced focussing on specific communities, for example those communities which are known to be particularly susceptible to the risk of isolation in a future flood event.

264. The revised IDMP and operational plans will also reflect the learnings gained from any best practice initiatives identified throughout the course of the Commission of Inquiry that have proven to be particularly effective in the wider disaster management community.
265. I expect the revised IDMP and the operational sub-plans will be conveniently accessible on the ICC website, and that the operational plans will also be made directly available to those parts of the community to whom they are relevant. For example, I anticipate that evacuation centre operational plans, detailing the step by step arrangements for establishing and operating an evacuation centre, together with relevant emergency services and Ipswich LDMG contact details will be available at each of the schools, community centres and other locations identified in the revised IDMP as being potential venues for establishing an evacuation centre.
266. Further details in relation to the revision of the IDMP and development of operational sub-plans are set out in paragraphs 13.37(a) and (c) of the Submission. I expect the revision of the IDMP and development of the operational sub-plans to have been completed by ICC prior to next summer's wet season.

Establishment of improved procurement strategies

267. To better address the potential delay and inefficiency associated with referring requests for assistance through the Ipswich DDMG (an issue which I have addressed at paragraphs 234 - 237 of my statement) ICC has commenced discussions with the relevant State government agency to establish a strategy and protocols whereby Council can directly access the State's procurement processes and key suppliers so as to improve ICC's capacity to resource key essentials during a flood event.

Natural Disaster Resilience Program

268. ICC will progress and complete the six initiatives described in paragraph 61 of my statement, for which NDRP funding has been approved. Each of these programs will deliver outcomes which will assist in the better preparation for or management of a future flood event, and will result in enhanced community resilience.

Progress hydraulic studies and related natural hazard assessments

269. In addition to progressing and completing the hydraulic studies for which NDRP funding has been granted (noted in paragraphs 60 - 61 of my statement) ICC is undertaking a hazards assessment exercise across all catchments throughout the ICC local government area to identify mitigation initiatives to be considered as part of Ipswich City's ongoing:

- "community specific" resilience planning;
- land use planning and building guidelines;
- ongoing future infrastructure and Works programs; and
- identification of future NDRP projects.

Enhanced community communication of the severity of an event

270. ICC is engaged in an initiative to investigate improved methods for communicating the severity of an event within the community. As has been noted in the Submission and in my statement, information as to flood levels at various gauges is relatively meaningless to many within the community. The community is interested to know and understand the potential impact on their property, their street and their immediate locality. Predicted flood peaks at designated river gauges does not provide this information. As a result, some residents did not prepare as effectively for the January 2011 flood event as they might have had they had a better understanding of the potential impact of the event on them. The challenge is to convert BOM and other hydrological information into information that is meaningful from a "My Street" perspective.

271. To progress this initiative ICC has been invited to be one of the pilot regions for implementing the existing "Coastal Evaluation" framework (which applies in Cairns, Gold Coast and Hervey Bay) in to a riverine environment.

272. As an example of the application of this framework, in Hervey Bay, each residence is categorised as being located in a particular "coloured" impact risk zone, discreetly identified by reference to a coloured "sticker" located within the meter box for each residence. By this

means, residents can be readily alerted to their particular "risk level" in a potential disaster event. Discussion are currently underway with EMQ to progress this initiative.

Enhanced community education

273. As part of the review of the IDMP steps will be identified to expand the current community education programs to enhance community resilience within the City by ensuring the community better understands:

- the natural hazards that can impact the City and, more particularly, their street and suburb;
- the personal steps to be taken to prepare for a possible event;
- the actions required to be undertaken during an event; and
- what warning messages mean.

Training of ICC staff

274. In conjunction with EMQ and other training providers, steps are being undertaken for the further and expanded training of ICC officers and staff, and of personnel from relevant support agencies to enhance the internal disaster management capacity and capability of Council and those agencies across the four key areas of prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

Mitigation planning for essential infrastructure

275. ICC representatives and the Ipswich LDMG will be meeting with essential infrastructure and key service providers to undertake mitigation planning for key infrastructure in a future flood event. The objective is to ensure that, so far as is practicable before next summer's wet season, infrastructure risk mitigation, back-up and redundancy plans have been established, and relevant roles and responsibilities for the maintenance of critical infrastructure and services during a future flood event have been identified.

Improved understanding of the impact of a future event

276. In terms of developing an enhanced understanding of the impact of a future event on the City, the Ipswich LDMG is examining the means by which key information can be gathered and shared so as to create an enhanced LDMG picture for disaster management before and during a future flood (or other disaster) event. Some initiatives which have been identified include:

- the use of aerial cameras to fly over the impact zones to enable the LDCC and LDMG to gain a clearer situation awareness of an event; and
- the increased use of spatial information capabilities to present information and value add to decision making, by seamlessly drawing together what are otherwise disparate pieces of information from multiple agencies.

Measures such as river gauges, culvert management and levee construction

277. As noted in paragraph 77(d) of my statement, ICC did not have any issues with the operation of ICC gauges during the flood event. Until such time as some of the gauges were rendered inoperable because of overflow, all gauges except for one operated effectively. The one gauge which did not work was located in the top of the Bundamba Creek catchment and was irrelevant to the flood event.

278. Since the flood event all gauges have been reviewed and all are operational. All gauges will again be reviewed in advance of next summer's wet season.

279. ICC has also received NDRP funding for expansion of the Alert gauge network, in conjunction with BOM.

280. As part of this program, ICC is examining the feasibility of installing gauges at critical flood prone crossings, with a view to obtaining more timely information about such crossings and thereby better managing the impact of a flood event at such crossings. One crossing presently undergoing such consideration is the Junction Road/Albatross Street crossing at Karalee.

281. As noted at paragraph 79 of my statement, prior to the flood event ICC drainage maintenance crews were focussed on maintenance activities in low lying areas, ensuring that areas were clear of debris and obstruction. Since the flood event, and as part of ICC's restoration works, areas impacted by the flood event have been reviewed and, in addition to regular drainage maintenance activities, specific rectification works are being progressively undertaken. Approximately \$8 million has been allocated for the carrying out of these rectification works.

ICC Submission

282. At paragraph 13 of its Submission, ICC has identified a large number of systemic and operational learnings to emerge from the flood event, and has also identified a number of potential measures in response to those learnings, including solutions which can and should be addressed in preparation for next summer's wet season.

283. Throughout my statement I have also identified a number of lessons learned and possible remedial measures:

284. These learnings will be considered and assessed by ICC and by the Ipswich LDMG on an ongoing basis. Except to the extent identified in my responses above, I have not repeated reference to these matters in my response to this Topic 19.

Topic 20 - Any special considerations by reason of particular regional or geographic differences

285. Following are a number of particular regional or geographic factors which I consider to be relevant to the City of Ipswich, and to the City's preparation for and response to an event such as the flood event. It should be noted that my comments in this section represent my personal observations.

Proximity to Wivenhoe Dam

286. As was apparent during the flood event, a significant increase in releases from the Wivenhoe Dam has the potential to adversely impact the Ipswich region very substantially and very quickly. The normal flow time from the dam to the junction of the Brisbane and Bremer

Rivers is approximately 16 hours, but this flow time reduces as the magnitude of dam releases increase. The consequence of this proximity to the dam is that the Ipswich City Council, the Ipswich LDMG, other disaster management agencies and the Ipswich community have very limited time in which to react and respond as compared, for example, to the further downstream communities such as Brisbane City, to the impacts of a flood event whose magnitude has been aggravated by releases from the Wivenhoe Dam.

Ipswich Catchment

287. A flood event within the Ipswich area can be impacted by some or all of:

- a significant rainfall event in the catchments for the Bremer River and its tributaries;
- significant rainfall in the catchment of tributaries which flow through the Ipswich area directly into the Brisbane River (for example, Woogaroo and Goodna creeks)
- a Brisbane River flood event which impacts directly on those areas of Ipswich adjacent to the Brisbane River, and
- as was experienced in January 2011, the backup impact of a Brisbane River flood event on inundation levels within the Bremer River and on inundation levels within the tributaries of the Bremer and Brisbane Rivers which flow through the Ipswich area.

288. As a result of these various influencing factors, each Ipswich flood event is a unique event, and, depending on which elements are most in play, the impact upon Ipswich City, and the resultant response to those impacts will be different. As has been noted in the ICC Submission, the January 2011 flood event, which resulted in significant "backup" impacts, particularly in the downstream reaches of the Bremer River and its tributaries (such as Bundamba Creek) and in the Brisbane River tributaries (such as Woogaroo and Goodna creeks) was quite a different event to a "usual" Bremer River flood event.

289. The different characteristics and impacts of each event will result in different considerations to be addressed by the Ipswich LDMG and by the Ipswich City Council in relation to the matters such as road closures, community alerts, protection and management of essential infrastructure, evacuation of residents and the location of evacuation centres.

Proximity to Brisbane

290. Because of its proximity to Brisbane, Ipswich is considered, in some quarters, as another "western suburb" of Brisbane. The experience in the flood event, where both Brisbane and Ipswich were severely impacted, was that Ipswich had to compete with Brisbane for resources and support. As is noted at paragraph 11.11 of the Submission, an early priority for the Ipswich Recovery Task Force was to agree procurement arrangements with private contractors to assist with clean up operations, as demand for contractors to assist in the Brisbane clean up resulted in those contractors being offered premium rates to divert their resources from Ipswich to Brisbane.
291. In planning for any future such event, the implications for Ipswich of its proximity to Brisbane is a factor to be taken into account so as to ensure that the requirements of Ipswich City are sufficiently prioritised and can be appropriately resourced and addressed.

Impact of television

292. During the flood event, television was a major medium for communicating the status and potential impact of the event to the community. However, unlike in many other parts of regional Queensland such as the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, Toowoomba, Wide Bay, Townsville and Cairns, Ipswich does not have a regional television station which focuses, in its reporting, on regional issues.
293. Whilst the Brisbane based television networks certainly reported on the Ipswich flood event, they did not focus on the Ipswich event in the same way that a regionally based television station would. As the flood threat to Brisbane increased, the television coverage of the Ipswich event decreased. Television is an important and effective means of communication to

the community, and in preparing for the management of any future event, consideration should be given to the means by which regionally focussed television coverage may be achieved for those regions of the State such as Ipswich that are not serviced by a local television station.

Inconsistency in geographic boundaries of Council and support agencies

294. At paragraph 11.37(d) of its Submission, ICC has identified the difficulty, from a coordination perspective, which arises as a consequence of the Ipswich LDMG and the Ipswich DDMG being responsible for geographic areas of operation identified by reference to local government boundaries, whereas other support and emergency services agencies (for example the QPS, EMQ, QFRS, Department of Communities and others) have their areas of responsibility identified by reference to different geographic boundaries.

295. This can and did result in some coordination complications and some competing priorities during the course of the flood event.

Presence of Amberley Air Force Base

296. A geographic factor unique to Ipswich is the presence within the city boundaries of the ADF Amberley base. The base provides the opportunity for ready access to high quality personnel and logistical resources. The base provided exceptional support to Ipswich during the flood event, particularly in the recovery phase.

297. However, an issue for consideration is the means by which the resources available through Amberley may be more effectively accessed by and deployed to assist the local Ipswich community in the management of a future event.

Topic 21 - Features of disaster preparation, planning, response or recovery operations which presented particular difficulty or which may require practical or legislative change

298. Throughout the ICC Submission and my statement, a number of challenges and areas of difficulty, particularly in connection with the notification to ICC of the magnitude of the flood event, and in relation to the immediate response to the flood event have been identified. I do

not repeat those matters here, and have limited my response to this topic to what I consider to be seven issues of particular significance.

The role of Executive Officer to the LDMG

- 299.** The November 2010 amendments to the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (Qld) abolished the role of Executive Officer to the LDMG and created the role of Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC). Section 36 of the Act sets out the functions of the LDC, which include coordinating disaster operations for the local group, reporting regularly to the local group about disaster operations and ensuring, so far as practicable, that any strategic decisions of the local group about disaster operations are implemented.
- 300.** Although the November 2010 amendments abolished the role of Executive Officer to the local disaster management group, the Executive Officer roles were retained for the State disaster management group (section 21A of the Act) and for the DDMG (section 27 of the Act). The function of the Executive Officer to the State and district groups is to support the groups in the performance of their functions, including the calling of meetings, and to otherwise provide executive support.
- 301.** Based on my experience during the flood event it is clear to me that the Executive Officer role remains a critical support role at the LDMG level.
- 302.** I found it extremely onerous during the flood event to perform a combination of the strategic responsibilities of the LDC and the administrative and executive responsibilities of the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer responsibilities were a distraction. Whilst I appointed Council staff to assist me in carrying out the Executive Officer function, because this was not a formally designated role, many administrative type matters were still directed to me.
- 303.** The Executive Officer role concerns management of the Coordination Centre operations, management of human resources, fatigue management, minute taking, preparation of situation reports (SITREPS), scheduling of meetings, coordination of agencies and to generally act as a

"gate-keeper" between those involved in the Coordination Centre and the LDMG and LDC.

These are all very important, but time consuming tasks.

304. The existence of an Executive Officer within the local group will allow the LDC and the related agencies to remain completely focussed on the management of and response to the particular disaster event, rather than become distracted and have valuable time consumed in attending to administrative and managerial functions.
305. In my opinion future disaster management within the local area would be enhanced by formally reinstating within the Disaster Management Act the role of Executive Officer to the LDMG. I consider there is merit in the role being afforded statutory "status", as this reinforces the significance of the Executive Officer function at the local level. However, if the role is not reinstated in the Act, the local disaster management plan should itself include express provision for the appointment of an Executive Officer to the LDMG.

LDMG power of direction

306. The LDMG does not have any power of direction. Under the Disaster Management Act these powers are invested as of right in the District Disaster Coordinator. This issue is touched upon at paragraphs 9.68 and 13.37(b) of the Submission. There is power under section 75 of the Act for the Chairperson of the State group or a relevant DDC to authorise a person to exercise declared disaster powers for a disaster situation.
307. The reality is that, during the flood event, the Ipswich LDMG managed within its boundaries the vast majority of the issues that arose. In practical terms, the actual oversight from the district disaster area level was quite limited. However, the Act, as it is presently framed, invests all of the key statutory powers at the district level rather than at the local disaster management group level.
308. In my opinion the effectiveness of the Ipswich LDMG would have been enhanced by the granting of a power of direction, and in terms of improving future disaster management in the local area, I consider this to be a subject worthy of further consideration so that there is a clear

understanding as to the extent of the LDMG's powers and authority in relation to the direction and coordination of the local response.

Inconsistency of geographic areas of operation for disaster management agencies

309. I have previously raised in response to Topic 19 the coordination difficulties experienced as a result of the inconsistency between the geographic areas of operational responsibility of local authorities and the geographic areas of operational responsibility of other agencies involved in the disaster response. This inconsistency lead, in some cases, to inefficiencies, delay and competing priorities. This issue is also addressed at paragraph 13.37(f) of the Submission.

Activation of non-affected LDMGs in support of affected areas

310. I consider current disaster management arrangements and operational plans should be reviewed to provide for consideration by a "non-impacted" LDMG of the need to activate so as to:

- be in a position to assist, in a coordinated manner, in the provision of support to affected areas; and
- coordinate the provision of information throughout non-affected communities and to be a source of event related information to concerned families and stakeholders.

311. In other words, I consider there is merit in having non-affected LDMGs activated so as to be ready to participate in and support a regional disaster management approach to a disaster event.

312. Where an event is locally based, I consider that adjoining LDMGs should nevertheless be activated and ready to respond with support for the impacted area as required.

313. Where an event, such as the recent flood event, is widespread there is, to my mind, value in non-affected LDMGs being activated on a regional basis (for example, in the case of the recent event, the LDMGs on the Gold Coast and on the Sunshine Coast) as these disaster management groups are in a position to provide invaluable support to the affected areas.

Formal activation of the relevant non-affected LDMGs would enable such support to be provided in a coordinated and organised manner, rather than on an adhoc and reactive basis.

State-wide Information Communications and Technology System

314. In my opinion a common fully integrated whole of State ICT (Information Communications and Technology) solution is an essential requirement for enhanced disaster management response. I have touched upon this issue at paragraphs 48 - 50 and 234 - 236(a) of my statement.
315. During the flood event if, as LDC, I made a request of the DDMG for, for example, 10 beds, I had no means of tracking the status of this request. I was entirely dependent on the DDC and his Executive Officer (both police officers with other more important and pressing commitments) to keep me updated as to the status of my request. This is inefficient and an unnecessary diversion of resources which could be readily overcome through the implementation of a fully integrated ICT.
316. This is but one very simple illustration. Such a system of course has many other benefits. The implementation of such a system would assist in addressing issues identified during the flood event such as:
- event warnings and updates;
 - overall situation awareness and impact assessment, including uploading/updating/sharing of SITREP information;
 - investigating and tracking the status/approval of RFAs (requests for assistance); and
 - updating of contact lists and contact details during event rotations.
317. There are currently a number of different and largely incompatible local ICT systems of varying levels of sophistication in use across the State. However, to the best of my knowledge, there are no disaster management systems functioning at a whole of district or

whole of State level. The implementation of a common State-wide solution would allow for the updating and sharing of relevant information in "real time".

Restrictions on information sharing between responding agencies

- 318.** Allied to the issue of an integrated ICT solution is the issue of the limitations and restrictions which exist in relation to information sharing between the multiple agencies involved in responding to a disaster event. This is particularly relevant in relation to impact assessment data.
- 319.** Information Privacy Act considerations presently constrain the sharing of relevant impact information between responding agencies, with the result that the same information has to be independently collected by multiple agencies. Whilst there are clearly good reasons for the existing restrictions in relation to the sharing of personal information, as matters currently stand, "impact" information that has been obtained from impacted individuals by, for example, the Department of Community Safety, cannot be shared by the Department with other agencies who are also providing recovery support for those same individuals.
- 320.** As a result:
- (a) a comprehensive overall impact assessment is not being developed, instead each agency maintains its own dataset on the particular individual. This is inefficient and is likely to give rise to a sub-optimal result for the individual concerned;
 - (b) support agencies are involved in multiple engagement with impacted individuals, adding to the trauma and stress experienced by those people. They often expect, having provided their information to one support agency, that it will be available to other agencies, and they become frustrated and anxious at having to provide the same information to different agencies on two, or in some cases, multiple occasions; and
 - (c) this can and in some instances has lead to an erosion of confidence by individuals in the coordination of the recovery process.

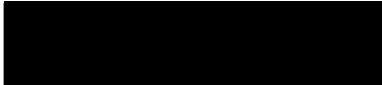
321. In the aftermath of the flood event it has been identified that many "victims" have been visited on multiple occasions by different recovery agencies.
322. I do pretend that the solution to this issue is easy, as personal privacy considerations are important. However, one option may be to amend the Disaster Management Act to provide, in effect, that where personal information is gathered by an appropriately authorised agency in response to a disaster event, that information can be shared with and utilised by other (appropriately authorised) supporting agencies in the undertaking and delivery of disaster response and recovery activities, and for such other purposes as may be authorised under the Act.
323. Given the emphasis in the Disaster Management Act on the need for a multi-agency approach to disaster management, another option that could be explored is to permit agencies to enter into memoranda of understanding or information sharing protocols in certain prescribed circumstances pertaining to disaster management, as an exception to the privacy requirements of the Information Privacy Act.

Development of a State-wide Disaster Management Competency framework

324. I consider the experience of the flood event has identified the need for the development of a State-wide competency framework for disaster management resources. One possibility may be for EMQ to drive the delivery of a training program and to roll out such a framework to all disaster management authorities and agencies. This would ensure the development of common and transferable skills which could be called upon as required, and would assist in easing the resource allocation burden on local authorities and agencies operating within the impact area during a major event.
325. This is particularly an issue for the more remote local authorities with limited local resources. However, even for a local authority such as ICC, our response to a future event would be enhanced and the burden imposed on Council officers and employees reduced if we have available to us a body of disaster management resources from non-impacted areas who have

been developed and trained within a State-wide competency framework and who could be called upon to assist ICC in its disaster management response.

Dated this *10th* day of May 2011

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the official.

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Anthony Keith Trace