

## ***“Attachment”***

### **Additional Information to Councillor Steve Griffiths' Submission**

#### **FLOOD TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS COUNCILLOR STEVE GRIFFITHS - SUBMISSION 2011**

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##### **1. Access to and Sharing of Information:**

Brisbane City Council did not handle the distribution of information to the public or Councillors well. Given that I have been informed that Council's Operational Centre was activated on Sunday 9 January 2011 and that 10,000 notifications delivered to residents and businesses (Community Services Committee briefing), many residents reported that they either had no warning, had no access to information (loss of power), or received inaccurate or untimely information. A number of residents also did not believe that their homes would flood as it was not raining.

There appeared to be inaccurate information regarding the scope of the flooding with residents advised to sandbag when it was evident that this would do little to prevent inundation that was approaching. On Tuesday there was inaccurate advice with regards sandbagging locations with the Council Call Centre not aware that their SES site at Salisbury offered sandbagging. Council was directing residents to locations such as the Darra Depot where there were significant waiting times such as, causing even more frustration.

At the Moorooka Ward Office we received very little information in the lead up to the flood event and used the media or a LNP Councillor's website to get whatever information we could to support residents. Residents reported Council's web page failed during this time. I phoned and also emailed the Lord Mayor Campbell Newman seeking up to date information concerning flooding and requested such information should be provided in a bipartisan spirit, the Lord Mayor agreed.

##### **Recommendation:**

Provide timely and accurate information to residents and all Councillors both in the lead-up to, during and following the event. Information should be provided to all Councillors in a bipartisan way with the organisation and operation of the LDCC similarly structured and operated.

##### **2. The Role of Elected Members Including Councillors**

Throughout the Brisbane Floods there seemed to be uncertainty regarding the role of Councillors in relation to responding to local issues. My experience was that often important information concerning local knowledge, understanding, access to and resources available in the community held by Councillors or their staff was either not sought or considered unnecessary or inappropriate to the operation of the LDCC: such options seemed secondary to the intense focus that was placed on meeting the specific needs of the LDCC.

The treatment of Cr Nicole Johnston, whose office was inundated by water as a result of the floods, was disturbing. I understand that Cr Johnston was not provided with an alternate location to operate from, or computer or phone access or facilities for her staff despite the fact that the majority of her ward had been inundated. Council, with its 8000 staff could have provided Cr Johnstone and her staff with access to a desk, phone and computer, so that she had a point for working with and for her community. Cr Johnston approached me regarding the situation and I made my office available.

**Recommendation:**

Recognise and define the role of local elected members in responding to emergencies and in the LDCC process. Make better use of their knowledge and understanding of their local communities, residents, businesses and resources available.

**3. Local Response**

While Brisbane City Council responded at the city and regional levels, there was a real gap at the local i.e. suburban level. This gap meant that local knowledge was missed and opportunities to resource, organise and communicate with the community were also lost and valuable time wasted.

Having a small operational team located in the community, in a visible location provides a point for local, on the ground workers to meet and plan i.e. Army, SES, Volunteer Fire Brigade, Service Clubs, Council, Volunteers and Residents.

In my experience, other agencies then attached to this location including the Health Department, Salvation Army, local community groups etc. From my experience, once established, that point became a hub for local planning and organisation, communication, food and information. In developing such hubs, consideration needs to be given to ensure that they are streamlined, efficient and responsive to the local community's needs.

**Recommendation:**

Council establish local, visible, operational (i.e. suburban) sites to coordinate, resource, organise and communicate with other delivery agencies, the community and volunteers. Provide them with a direct link to the LDCC to ensure information flow is available and accurate.

**4. Flexibility**

The role of the LDCC in responding appeared to inhibit the flexibility and responsiveness of Council at the regional level. Time and again feedback was noted or 'would need to be fed up to the LDCC' before a decision could be made. Army personnel had a command structure as well as considerable experience in responding practically and in a timely and flexible manner. Valuable days were lost in the LDCC process i.e. dealing with asbestos or food waste: in the case of food waste

it was the Army who responded most effectively in overcoming this issue locally in Rocklea.

**Recommendation:**

Review the LDCC structure so that the skills the Army has in dealing with emergency situations can be practically incorporated into responding to events such as Brisbane's floods.

**5. Community Response**

During the week of the floods I was approached by a number of community groups including service groups i.e. Lions and Rotary, religious groups i.e. numerous Christian and a Buddhist group and a community agency from another suburb. To ensure some co-ordination, effectiveness in managing resources and also to make sure we didn't inundate resident with more offers of kindness, I organised a meeting of these groups. They came up with a plan for the time following the intensive effort on the ground and have been working together in responding to the community. While much of this effort has been voluntary, it could have been so much more effective if resources were available for a worker at the end of week one to help with coordination to enhance the efforts of this group. I understand that now almost 3 months following the flood, money is being made available to establish local networks such as this.

**Recommendation:**

Have funding immediately available to respond to and harness the communities' social needs using local community infrastructure.

**6. Volunteers**

The efforts of volunteers were amazing following the flood. By having local operational sites such as those mentioned in point 3, the efforts of volunteers could be better co-ordinated. Many people chose to volunteer directly without going via Council. There is opportunity to significantly improve Council's response to the management of volunteers.

**Recommendation:**

Provide better coordination of volunteers and seek to ensure volunteers are sensitive to the trauma being experienced by many residents and how this may impact on dealing with residents, i.e. removal of household possessions.

**7. Planning**

Brisbane City Council has just formulated a Temporary Planning Instrument for flood-affected properties that will guide development post the flood. This instrument was developed, despite repeated requests in the Ward Recovery Committee, without consultation with Councillors whose wards were affected by flooding.

This Temporary Planning Instrument directly contradicts a major recommendation of the Lord Mayor's Taskforce on Suburban Flooding, that is, to allow landfill in flood prone areas. The result can be increased impact of flooding for residents who are not in a position to raise their properties. The TPI also allows for application to build habitable floor levels above the Q100 without capping such requests. In addition I understand that technically then you could, for instance, have properties in Rocklea whose habitable floor space is higher than 7 meters, with a two story house being an additional 8.5meters.

**Recommendation:**

Review and update the recommendations of the Lord Mayor's Taskforce on Suburban Flooding and have a bipartisan planning committee in Brisbane City Council to guide planning decisions such as the TPI

**8. Post Flood Council Committees**

Brisbane City Council established a Ward Flood Recovery Committee for affected Councillor's to represent their Wards following the flood event. Despite its intent I found the committee to be almost farcical. An important example was in relation to numerous requests regarding the opportunity to be briefed and provide input into planning issues post flood. These requests were repeated blocked. Similarly the issue of Council buyback of flood prone properties, a program that Council initiated as part of the Lord Mayor's Taskforce on Suburban Flooding was blocked. Unfortunately, this Committee and the way it was managed missed the opportunity of improving and progressing issues following the flood.

Cr De Witt chaired these meetings and made a point of advising us that she was keeping a recording of them.

Following the floods, the Lord Mayor Newman announced that Council would conduct its own review. The cost of this review has recently increased to \$700,000. Councillors were asked to put in submissions, then we had the opportunity to be interviewed by consultants and finally I was asked to attend a meeting (along with Cr Abrahams) with the committee.

I did express my disappointment that residents were not given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding Council's performance during the flood and offered to host the committee at Rocklea.

In our discussions it became apparent that the Committee was not aware of the Temporary Planning Instrument developed by Council and Professor Colin Aplet noted that it was in contradictions to the report he had developed as Chair of the Lord Mayors Taskforce on Suburban Flooding.

**Recommendation:**

That Council conducts public, open and transparent meetings and consultations that enable the public and media to observe and where necessary participate provide feedback on Council's delivery.

## **9. South Regional Centre**

Brisbane City Council is proceeding, and I understand fast-tracking the development of a new Regional Centre at Yeronga on the proposed TOD (Transport Orientated Development) site. This is most concerning not only because the site was inaccessible during the flood event and had no power but because the Regional Centre is where Council runs all of its operations for then Southern region of the city in times of emergency.

I understand that the State Government is reviewing the TOD site pending the outcome of the Flood Inquiry; I do not understand why Council would not do the same given the significant flooding on the overall site.

### **Recommendation:**

Brisbane City Council suspends the development of the Southern Regional Centre on the TOD site pending confirmation the site is safe, accessible and useable in flood events and pending feedback of the outcomes of the Flood Inquiry.