

STATEMENT OF KENNETH MAXWELL GOULDTHORP

I, KENNETH MAXWELL GOULDTHORP, care of Toowoomba Regional Council at 153 Herries Street, Toowoomba in the State of Queensland, Chief Executive Officer of Toowoomba Regional Council, can say as follows:

1. I have been Chief Executive Officer of Toowoomba Regional Council ("Council") since 27 April 2009.
2. Council was established on 15 March 2008 as a result of the amalgamation of eight former Councils namely, Cambooya Shire Council, Clifton Shire Council, Crows Nest Shire Council, Jondaryan Shire Council, Millmerran Shire Council, Pittsworth Shire Council, Rosalie Shire Council and Toowoomba City Council.
3. This statement has been prepared pursuant to the request made by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry by way of letter dated 28 February 2011 ("the Letter").
4. The Letter requested me to provide a statement from an "organisational viewpoint" that would cover a number of issues. I have addressed these issues below in the order set out in the Letter.
5. Activities and services in the management of the flood disaster were undertaken jointly by Council, Local Disaster Management Group ("LDMG") and Local Disaster Coordination Centre ("LDCC") as they worked as one in response to the flood disaster. That is to say, their actions were not independent of each other but integrated.
6. The LDMG and LDCC interfaced with their district level equivalents District Disaster Management Group ("DDMG"), and District Disaster Coordination Centre (DDCC) as and when necessary.
 - "i. The preparation and planning undertaken by the Toowoomba Regional Council and if they were members of or privy to the preparation and planning undertaken by the Local Disaster Management Group ("LDMG") and/or the District Disaster Management Group ("DDMG") in relation to the 2010/2011 floods."**
7. Council appointed Mr Norman Fry to the new role of Regional Disaster Management Coordinator/SES Local Controller on 10 May 2009. The prime purpose of this appointment was to provide region-wide coordination of the Local Disaster Management Plans and to facilitate membership, training and coordination of State Emergency Service (SES) volunteer personnel.
8. The Council developed and adopted the Local Disaster Management Plan ("LDMP") and the Evacuation and Welfare Management Plan on 15 December 2009. Refer to Items 330 and 332 respectively of the documents provided to the Commission.

9. The LDMP detailed the arrangements for the coordination and management of resources to ensure and maintain public safety in the region before, during and after a disaster in accordance with the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (Qld). Refer to Item 330 of the documents provided to the Commission for a copy of the LDMP. The LDMG was established for the Toowoomba region as required under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (Qld). The members of the LDMG comprise Council representatives including Councillors, Local Disaster Coordinator and myself and representatives of Emergency Management Queensland, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Police Service, Ergon Energy, Queensland Heath Service, Telstra, ABC Southern Queensland and Chairperson of the Council's Evacuation and Welfare Committee. The list of LDMG members is on Council's Disaster management website and is included at Item 333 of the documents provided to the Commission.
10. Council takes a lead role in the establishment and management of the LDMG and LDCC. The roles and responsibilities of other agencies are to carry out their statutory functions in managing the disaster and to provide support as and when required by the LDCC. The roles and responsibilities of the lead and support agencies are documented in the LDMP.
11. The Council established the LDCC to manage the day to day operations to respond to a disaster and allocated staff, computers, communications equipment and other resources. Refer to the Minutes of LDMG meetings at Items 334 to 336 inclusive of the documents provided to the Commission. The LDMG endorsed the LDCC Standing Operating Procedures. Refer to Item 331 of the documents provided to the Commission for the LDCC Standard Operating Procedures.
12. A number of practice exercises have been undertaken to review Council's disaster management procedures and practices including Exercise Ember on 20 October 2010 and, most recently, Exercise Orko was carried out from 2 to 4 November 2010. In these exercises, the LDCC was activated for a period of 10 hours. The exercises were used to test, amongst other things, software and the communication links between Council and Emergency Services agencies.
13. Council established and publicised the Disaster management website that has information including details of evacuation centres, Police Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and other emergency contacts, disaster management plans including LDMP, Evacuation and Welfare Plan, Australian Red Cross' REDiPlan and other relevant information.
14. Council also applied for and received Federal and State funding under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program towards the development of Council's disaster management capability. This funding was used by Council to develop software to link its Geographic Information System with its Customer Service database so that information could be consolidated in a Central Mapping System.
15. With some financial assistance from the State, Council constructed an SES Headquarters at Cecil Plains.
16. In response to a request from Emergency Management Queensland to nominate a Local Disaster Coordinator in accordance with Section 35 of the *Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2010* (Qld), the Chair of the LDMG and I nominated Mr Kevin Wruck.

- “ii. The response undertaken by the Toowoomba Regional Council and if they were members of or privy to the response undertaken by the LDMG and/or the DDMG in relation to the 2010/2011 flood events specifically:
Immediate management;
Resourcing;
Coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment;
The adequacy of equipment and communications systems;
The adequacy of community response in their particular region.”

Immediate Management

December Flooding Events

17. The LDCC was prepared from 24 December 2010 in readiness as a precautionary measure due to the unseasonably high rainfall that had been experienced across the region.
18. Over the Christmas to New Year period, the Local Disaster Coordinator and SES Local Controller coordinated SES responses to flooding of the Condamine River in the south west of the region. Flooding at this time was in non-urbanised rural areas of the region. The LDMG was on alert and the Local Disaster Coordinator was in regular contact with the Chair of the LDMG, as well as the Mayor, myself and other key individuals.
19. A small number of evacuations of isolated individuals and a family took place on 28 and 29 December 2010 in the south west rural area, and food and medical delivery by helicopter to Cecil Plains took place on 31 December 2010.

Toowoomba Flash Flood Event

20. The Disaster Coordination Centre was activated at approximately 3:30 p.m. on 10 January 2011. The LDCC was placed on standby before the Toowoomba city flash flood event of 10 January 2011 in response to flooding in Millmerran and Cecil Plains. The LDMG was meeting in Council offices on Ruthven Street at the time of the flash flooding on 10 January 2011. Staff who were present at work performing their normal duties were able to be immediately deployed to the LDCC upon activation of the LDCC.
21. After the LDMG meeting on 10 January 2011, Council's Executive Management Team, chaired by me, activated an operational monitoring and support group which met twice each day from 10 January 2011. The group consisted of the Mayor, Directors, Local Disaster Coordinator and selected specialised managerial and operational staff. The group's role was to monitor LDCC activities to ensure that Council resources were made available in an effective and timely manner and to strategically plan for recovery of infrastructure and services. The broad representation on the group ensured internal coordination between the LDC, Council Departments and Service Centres. This forum also provided access to information updates that were subsequently used for communication purposes.

Resourcing

22. As the Toowoomba city flash flood and other flooding in parts of the Toowoomba region took place during the Christmas holiday period, the number of available Council and SES staff were less than what they would otherwise have been. However, Council maintains a core essential workforce throughout the Christmas period and there were adequate numbers



of staff for the tasks required. Some staff such as Council's electricians and Water Services Department staff worked long hours to address community needs.

23. In relation to resourcing to address the Toowoomba city flash flood, I am informed by the SES Local Controller that extra SES staff were brought in from Clifton, Millmerran, Crows Nest and Oakey to make up the numbers. Most of the immediate response for blocking off roads was carried out by the Police Service located in the CBD and in the vicinity of the CBD flooding. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is located in the City Centre and was in the vicinity of the CBD flooding and provided an immediate response. Swift water rescue crews that happened to be in Toowoomba at the time of the flash flooding also responded quickly.
24. Council and the LDMG and LDCC had the capacity to draw on emergency services personnel across the region because, Toowoomba Regional Council, as an organisation serving an entire region, was a single point of coordination for all emergency services across the region. Previously, this function would have been broken up into eight separate local government areas. That certainly was a benefit to Toowoomba region. Accordingly, I suggest that coordination was better for the fact that we had a single point of coordination with all the emergency services personnel in the Toowoomba Regional Council area. The SES Deputy Controllers reported back to a single SES Local Controller and the LDCC, thereby facilitating coordination and the ability to mobilise personnel across the entire region.

Coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

25. Coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment was achieved through existing procedures set up under the LDMP and LDCC Standing Operating Procedures, and carried out as mentioned in paragraphs 20-24 and 26-27 inclusive.

The adequacy of equipment and communications systems

26. Public calls for help were received through the following means:
 - Calls for the LDCC were received on 1300 655 833. This unique number was operational after activation of the Disaster Coordination Centre. In the initial stages of the disaster four persons staffed the phones with additional staff providing back up support.
 - Emergency calls to Council were received on 4688 6711. A call centre was established to deal with the number of calls.
 - SES were contactable on 132 500. Calls were connected to a SES Call Centre in Brisbane and then the Call Centre sent out the tasks in email format to the LDCC Coordinator and the SES Deputy Controller at Toowoomba as appropriate.
27. With regard to the adequacy of the equipment and communication systems, I would say that the LDCC operating from the Ruthven Street building was rudimentary but effective. The LDCC was adequate for the task, having been brought to readiness before the disaster, and had the computer and communication equipment available for use when required.



28. Council, as a result of this event, considered where it can make improvements. The LDCC room has been upgraded with the completion of the new Customer Service Centre in Little Street, Toowoomba, which became operational on 21 March 2011.
29. A further change that Council proposes to make is to reinstall radio communications in Council vehicles. Council is heavily reliant on mobile phones and due to ease of use of mobile phones, Council has gone away from CB or VHF style radios in a lot of our plant and equipment. While the mobile phones worked well, in the review after the fact, Council identified that, if the mobile phones failed, then radio communications would be available as back up. Again, it wasn't a problem in this event, but should it be in the future we want to have that extra redundancy built into the system.
30. The other advantage of the radio system is that there can be multiple people listening simultaneously to what is occurring. So from an operational perspective, having radios reinstalled would mean that people operating plant or in the field can actually hear what is happening at other locations at the same time so they can get a picture of what is happening across the board. Likewise the LDCC can monitor operational radio traffic and gain an understanding of what is occurring in the field and the conditions in which the field staff are operating. So, for that reason, Council has decided that it will instigate a program of putting VHF back into its vehicles.
31. With respect to the rest of the communications systems, one of the issues that we had during the disaster was that the internet was intermittently not working due, I believe, to the events that took place in Brisbane. Council worked around the problem with very good support from Telstra who are represented on the LDMG. The lack of internet facilities meant that we were relying on fax. As email communication was not available, backup systems were in place to enable communication between the LDMG, LDCC and also emergency service agencies, and accordingly, this did not cause a major issue at the time. However, it meant that physical manuals had to be used, as information that was available on the internet was unable to be accessed. Those backups were there so they did not create any major problems other than being less convenient. There were some lessons to be learnt out of that and that is that whatever systems are put in place going forward, it will be necessary to make sure that they can readily operate on a manual system as well as an electronic system.
32. One of Council's systems that proved very useful in disaster management was the system integrating Council's Customer Service database with its GIS (Geographic Information System) to produce real time visualisation of the location of requests and incidents reported. This system was developed by Council's IT staff in readiness for use by LDCC. One of the benefits of the system was that Council staff mostly did not need to learn to operate separate disaster management database. Council staff were already familiar with the Customer Service database due to the day to day use of it and this aided in the rapid establishment of LDCC to full operational status and the ongoing manning of the LDCC 24 hours per day following the 10 January 2011 event.
33. After the disaster, the same system was utilised to capture and incorporate photographic records, surveying information and all other information associated with the disaster. The system also provides statistical information in relation to the nature of calls, and how the calls were addressed and the number of calls received.
34. Requests for assistance were logged directly into the Customer Service Database by call centre operators and conveyed to the Operations Recorder. The Operations Recorder was receiving requests electronically, printing them and providing them to the appropriate

agencies to deal with. The agencies, having received a hard copy of the request, would act on them and provide notification to the Operations Recorder that the request was dealt with. The Operations Recorder would then finalise the request on the Customer Service Database.

35. Council's system has the capability to enable individual agencies in the future to receive the request electronically. However, Council is a bit reticent to do that because personnel from other agencies may not be familiar with this system. As a backup, if the electronic system fails, the existing procedure of providing requests on paper can continue.

The adequacy of community response in their particular region

36. The rural community and smaller townships to the south west of the local government area are relatively hardy, and self sufficient. While assistance was provided through the SES to a number of incidents relating to the general flooding in this region in late December, the communities displayed a high level of resilience. This particularly applies to the small community of Cecil Plains which became isolated in December and January.
37. From my position in the LDCC, I did not witness first hand community behaviour in respect to the 10 January flash flooding event in Toowoomba. After the disaster, I viewed city safe camera footage that showed individuals on foot and in vehicles crossing fast flowing water and others becoming stranded after moving into locations to observe the event. The footage also shows members of the public assisting others.
 - “iii. Measures taken by the Toowoomba Regional Council and if they were members of or privy to the response undertaken by the LDMG and/or the DDMG to inform the community and to protect life, public and private property – this is of particular significance in Toowoomba with the flood related deaths that occurred.”**
38. A number of measures were taken to inform the community and to protect life, public and private property.
39. Council and Police closed off unsafe roads to prevent access, and arranged signage that warned the public of water on roads.
40. Council spokespersons provided updates on ABC Local Radio and other media. Council provided Media Releases to the media and posted them on Council's website. In its Media Releases, for example, Council warned residents of possible flooding in the Cressbrook Creek area (10 January 2011), Condamine River area downstream of Tummaville (11 January 2011) and to stay away from any water courses and to be off the roads in the Toowoomba region (11 January 2011). On the day of the flash flooding and the following day, Council issued around 25 Media Releases so as to keep the public up to date on safety and other information as it became available. Refer to Items 419 – 526 inclusive of documents provided to the Commission for Media Releases.
41. Council's Disaster management website was continually updated after the LDCC was activated. According to records, the number of unique visitors to the site until 17 January 2011 was about 11,600, the number of visits to the site for the same period totalled around 18,400, the number of different pages viewed by those visiting the site totalled around 42,300.

42. Council's main operational website continued to operate for the period and also provided disaster management information. Prior to the event, average daily visits to Council's website numbered between 3,000 and 5,000. After the disaster event, daily visits peaked on 10 January at around 14,400. Total unique visitors to the site up until 17 January 2011 numbered approximately 43,200. Total visits to the site for the same period were around 73,400. The number of different pages viewed totalled around 198,000.
43. Council and the LDCC responded urgently to calls for assistance. A total of about 6,271 calls were processed by the LDCC and Council's call centre between 4:00 p.m. Monday 10 January and 7:00 p.m. Monday 17 January.
 - “iv. Measures taken by the Toowoomba Regional Council and if they were members of or privy to the measures taken by the LDMG and/or the DDMG to manage the supply of essential services (water, power and communications) during the 2010/2011 flood events and the maintenance and reinstatement of these services in the recovery phase following the 2010/2011 flood events.”**
44. Measures were taken by the Council, LDMG and DDMG to manage the supply of essential services such as water, power and communications during the 2010/2011 flood events and the maintenance and reinstatement of these services in the recovery phase following the 2010/2011 flood events.
45. As mentioned at paragraph 31, the internet was not working for a period and this impeded communications intermittently, however, Telstra was represented in the LDMG and assisted to address the issue.
46. Immediately after the flash flooding on 10 January 2011, Council was concerned about contamination of Toowoomba city's water supply. On the same day, Council advised residents to boil water. Refer to the media release on 10 January 2011 at Item 429 of the documents provided to the Commission. While Council had no evidence of contamination, this was a precautionary measure that was taken while water quality testing was carried out. On 13 January 2011, residents were advised that there was no further need to boil drinking water. Refer to the media release at Item 465 of the documents provided to the Commission.
47. One of the two major trunk water mains supplying the City of Toowoomba was severed where it crossed the creek. Council workers were commissioned to respond immediately. While the problem was addressed, Council was able to maintain supply to the vast majority of properties and it was able to put in place work around systems which ensured continuity of supply.
48. Emergency response measures were put in place to manage potable water supply to the township of Yarraman and emergency works were undertaken to re-establish raw water supply to the Yarraman water treatment/reticulation system.
49. At various stages throughout December and January Council provided access to potable water for transportation to both Western Downs and Lockyer Valley Regional Councils.
50. Sewage and waste management facilities were monitored and managed to ensure continuity of these services and management of any health risks following the flooding event.



“v. Communications between Local Government, the LDMG, the DDMG and the State in relation to Disaster Management before, during and after the flood events of 2010/2011.”

51. In December 2010 and before 10 January 2011, the Local Disaster Coordinator kept the Chair of the LDMG informed about flooding of parts of Toowoomba region. After the LDMG activated the LDCC, the LDCC Incident Coordinator prepared Situation Reports for the DDMG once a day. The Situation Reports covered subjects such as weather, damage overview, media issues, summary of previous 24 hours, projected operation for next 24 hours, response, population, evacuations, community recovery centres, health, and transport.
52. In addition, Council held nine LDMG meetings and Council representatives attended two DDMG meetings between 10 January and 31 January 2011. I also had a number of informal telephone discussions with the Chair of the DDMG to ensure sound communications and coordination between the respective groups.

“v. Any Provision of services by Toowoomba Regional Council to their local area whether via the LDMG, DDMG or independently before, during and after the flood events of 2010/2011.”

53. The LDCC established a disaster evacuation centre at the Toowoomba Grammar School on 10 January 2011 which operated until 16 January 2011. Administration of the evacuation centre’s capability and the coordination of evacuees was a combined effort of the LDCC, School’s management, Red Cross and Lifeline. The number of evacuees at the facility reached a peak of around 100. In addition, the Oakey Cultural Centre was established as an assembly point for evacuees and emergency personnel and the Highfields Cultural Centre was on stand by as an alternative evacuation centre.
54. Council continued to provide its services such as water, sewerage and road access with some interruptions.
55. Council provided assistance by way of removing debris and cleaning up roads and public areas and waiving landfill charges. Council played a key role in the management of the disaster and liaised with the State government and its agencies in relation to, for example, the deployment of out-service by the Department of Communities.

“vii. Any Provision of services to the Toowoomba Regional Council by the Commonwealth, State Disaster Management Group or DDMG before, during and after the flood events of 2010/2011.”

56. Generally the LDCC was able to obtain necessary services from local businesses and the community. However, as access to helicopter services became more constrained due to competing priorities, the LDCC sought and were provided with helicopter support through the DDMG on two occasions to supply food and medication to the Cecil Plains township.

“viii. Any involvement Toowoomba Regional Council had with the Commonwealth in relation to the provision of emergency response, such as but not restricted to, Australian Defence Force Personnel, equipment and services.”

57. When access to helicopter support became more constrained, the Mayor Councillor Taylor spoke to the Commander of the Oakey Army Aviation Centre who assured Councillor Taylor that when we did need a helicopter, one would be available.



- “ix. Whether there was any arrangement for assistance in relation to immediate response and recovery of an informal nature between the Toowoomba Regional Council and the local Australian Defence Force barracks through use of personnel, services or equipment.”**
58. Refer to paragraph 57 above.
- “x. Whether the local community through individuals or local business and enterprise assisted in the provision of services for preparation, response and recovery before, during and after the flood events of 2010/2011.”**
59. I was advised by the Mayor Councillor Taylor that the Singaporean Air Force Commander from the Oakey Army Aviation Base contacted his Office offering operational support in the form of a helicopter which they were able to get approval from Singapore to operate. Their helicopter required some lead time to prepare following the Christmas period and was not ultimately utilised.
60. There were a number of individuals and local businesses that volunteered their services to aid the recovery process. Services offered included provision of sand, vehicles and equipment, labour and food. In excess of 1,200 offers of assistance were received.
61. In the period that Toowoomba was isolated by road and rail, food, fuel and medical supplies became a potential issue by about 12 January 2011. Council and the LDCC monitored supplies and kept in contact with the major retail suppliers until 13 January at which time the New England Highway from Warwick was opened to heavy vehicles.
- “xi. Any particular consideration that should be given to the particular Local Government area of Toowoomba such as regional or geographic difference that affected preparation, planning, response and recovery for the region.”**
62. The Council area is vast, about 12,973 square kilometres. Parts of the region were isolated as a result of flooding. In view of distances involved and the possibility of localities being isolated, it was evident that it is advantageous to have the capability to mount a local response with local resources and knowledge rather than rely on only a central supply of emergency resources and expertise. Additionally, specific local knowledge is invaluable. Council maintains Service Centres throughout the eight former local government areas that now comprise the Toowoomba Regional Council area and this ensures that Council maintains depth of knowledge of the locality and the community it serves.
- “xii. Any aspects of the above which, in the opinion of the witness from their professional viewpoint, requires practical or legislative change to improve future Disaster Management in their area.”**
63. From a disaster management and coordination perspective, it is preferable for an alignment of the geographical areas serviced by the LDMG, the DDMG and the key emergency service agencies. That is, the Fire and Rescue Service region should align with the Police Service region which should align with the Ambulance Service region and they should all align with the Local Government area boundaries as that would make it much easier for local disaster coordination. As an example, Yarraman locality, though part of the Toowoomba Regional Council area, comes under a different Fire Service region from the rest of the Toowoomba

region. This meant that the Yarraman Fire Service was not represented in the LDMG and Council did not have the degree of visibility for that area that we would otherwise have had.

64. The Warrego Highway traverses Toowoomba along James Street where it crosses East and West Creek. This National Highway has very high traffic volumes due to the juncture of major western, northern and southern inland traffic routes. The flash flood in Toowoomba on 10 January 2011 highlights the possibility of sudden high velocity flooding along East Creek. It is understood that the James Street crossing of East Creek has relatively low flood immunity and given the quantum of traffic and possibility of sudden high velocity flooding, the intersection should be upgraded as a priority.
65. The report that is to be provided to the Commission entitled "Technical Report on the Toowoomba flood of 10 January 2011" prepared by BMT WBM Pty Ltd highlights the large number of crossings of the Gowrie Creek system within Toowoomba and their potential to impair water flow, particularly with the build up of debris. If no case is put forward for retaining unused crossings or little used crossings, they should be removed.
66. The former Toowoomba City Council adopted a program of works in 1998 to be completed over twenty-five years to lift flood immunity of the Gowrie Creek system to a one in one hundred year event. The time required to complete the project is a function of the availability of funding. Council has been progressively completing the program of works and the work remaining is predominately on the downstream side of the confluence of East and West Creeks. Expediting the works would be beneficial and consideration should be given by all levels of government to provide the funding necessary to bring forward the completion of this program of works.
67. The SES Toowoomba Group building at 172 Stephen Street in Toowoomba was inundated by flooding making their work more difficult. Accordingly, it would be desirable to ensure that the Toowoomba SES operates from a facility that is not likely to be inundated in the future. This is a matter that will be followed up by Council.
68. Based on what we have learnt from the flooding in parts of the Toowoomba region, if measuring devices such as rainfall gauges, stream flow gauges and other meteorological data collection currently utilised by the Department of Environment and Resource Management and Bureau of Meteorology could be augmented to increase access to information, then I would advocate that such measures be pursued.
69. A practical issue arises in finding a balance between allowing people necessary access to their homes etc. and restricting curiosity driven tourists from using roads. It is not a question to which we have a solution, but it is an issue that requires consideration as current systems tend to make people self assessors of their needs to traverse the roads.

Dated: / April 2011.


Kenneth Maxwell Gouldthorp