

Transcript of Proceedings

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THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

MS E WILSON, Counsel Assisting

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

BRISBANE

..DATE 06/05/2011

..DAY 16

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.00 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Sorry, Mr Dunning, before you start, Mr Ure, are you appearing on this application for leave to appear?

MR URE: I understood that leave had been granted.

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COMMISSIONER: No, it has not. Not for the Gold Coast City-----

MR URE: I appear on behalf of the Somerset Regional Council and I seek leave to appear then on behalf of the Moreton Bay Regional Council. It is possible issues will arise that could result in adverse findings or recommendations with-----

COMMISSIONER: You are probably preaching to the converted there, can I tell you. I have a letter which asks for leave to appear on behalf of Moreton Bay Regional Council and the Gold Coast Regional Council. Have your solicitors not kept you au fait with this?

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MR URE: Well, I didn't understand the Gold Coast was being dealt with today but-----

COMMISSIONER: Well, can I tell you my view, and subject to anything further that is made by way of submission along the track. My view, in any case, is this - and if I tell it to you now, Mr Ure, we will all know where we stand - my decisions about leave to appear have been given on the basis of what natural justice requires for whatever party is making the application.

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The test which is useful in that is whether they are likely to be adversely affected in an immediate, direct, and individual way by any finding or recommendation of the council. There have been criticisms made of the Moreton Bay Regional Council, and it seems to me entirely appropriate that it be granted leave to appear to challenge and meet those criticisms.

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The Gold Coast City Council, it seems to me, is in an entirely different category. All that's said in the letter I have is that there may be findings and recommendations which affect local government generally by way of recommendations about planning schemes, or operation of water and wastewater services, or planning and preparation for disasters.

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That all seems to me far too remote. There is nothing specific to the Gold Coast City Council in those matters. And even if recommendations of that type were to be made, one would expect, given their sweeping nature, that they would hardly be implemented without consultation with the councils involved.

So I don't see any basis on which natural justice requires the

Gold Coast City Council to be given leave to appear.

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Now, I understand you are not formally making that application now and it may have to be revisited but that is certainly my tentative view.

Moreton Bay Regional Council, on the other hand, has leave to appear in relation to grounds 2(a), (c), (d), (e) and (g) of the Terms of Reference as set out in the relevant Commissions of Inquiry order.

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MR URE: Thank you, your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Ure. By the way, there is a letter from your solicitors, which perhaps I should make an exhibit or - if there is no formal application from Gold Coast City Council at this stage, perhaps I should leave it? What do you think?

MR URE: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: I will leave it for the moment. Thanks. Now, Mr Dunning, you wanted to tell me something?

MR DUNNING: Yes, Commissioner. You will recollect from Mr Jensen's evidence yesterday afternoon I took him to the statement of Councillor Griffith, which appears on the Commission website. I didn't deal with all of the contents of that statement, but I dealt with, generally, that part of it that accused the council of being partisan in how it managed the flood.

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This is, I think, uncontroversial. My solicitors wrote to the lawyers for Counsel Assisting, asked that Councillor Griffith be made available for cross-examination so we can test what was in the submission, which itself is styled as a statement. It has undoubtedly only reached the status of submission.

I have had discussions with our learned friend Mr Callaghan on the topic. He informs me, and I understand I am at liberty to say openly, that Councillor Griffith has been invited to put on a statement and has declined to do so.

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I can confirm that the Brisbane City Council has provided legal advice to Councillor Griffith in relation to giving evidence and has offered to give additional legal advice should he wish it for the purpose of giving evidence.

In those circumstances, my concern solely is what further use might be made of the submission in circumstances where it is a submission on the Commission's website but it is something that I am unable to cross-examine Councillor Griffith on to test the propositions that are asserted, if I can use that expression advisedly, in it.

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COMMISSIONER: I can say to you in a general sense I can't see that something in an unsworn submission could ever be given greater weight than sworn testimony. As matters presently

stand, at least, where you have the evidence of Mr Jensen that the approach that he took was nonpartisan and the approach of his staff was nonpartisan, it just doesn't seem to me that there is any competing evidence.

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MR DUNNING: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. In the event circumstances were to change, can we then revisit it?

COMMISSIONER: Of course. And if it were that Mr Griffiths changed his mind and gave evidence, then, of course, everything would be altered.

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MR DUNNING: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: But as far as matters presently stand, that would be my view.

MR DUNNING: Very good. And, your Honour, I understand our learned friend's content to confirm openly that Councillor Griffith has been invited to give a statement and declined to do so.

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MR CALLAGHAN: There is nothing I can add to the exchange that's already occurred.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Callaghan.

MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner. I have nothing further.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Dunning.

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MR CALLAGHAN: I call Michael Baker.

MICHAEL STEWART BAKER, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Sorry?

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Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Michael Stewart Baker.

Mr Baker, you are the author of a two-page statement and a two-page submission to the Commission of Inquiry, is that correct?-- That is correct.

Is that being shown to you now?-- Sorry?

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Are those the documents being shown to you now?-- That is correct.

Yes, I tender the document.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Exhibit 292.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 292"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Baker, you say in your statement - or you identify that you are the managing director of a company, but do I take it that you are retired from another profession?-- I am semi-retired, yes.

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What profession is that?-- I was a businessman. I had an electronics company.

All right?-- And, you know, other investments.

And the post-nominals on your submission, CPENG, what does that stand for?-- That's a Chartered Professional Engineer.

And MIE?-- Member of the Institution of Engineers.

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Right. In your statement you detail the proactive measures you took to check your vulnerability to flooding, is that correct?-- That's correct.

And just in brief compass, what were they?-- Check the data that was available on Brisbane City Council's websites, check data available on tide tables, and also going back to the 1974 Bureau of Meteorology report on the 1974 floods.

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And it is fair to say, all though you don't have to necessarily be an engineer to do the arithmetic involved, you adopted what you thought was a scientific approach-----?-- Correct.

-----to the problem?-- Correct, I did.

But, of course, every scientific exercise is only as good as the information you put into it. On the basis of radio reports, you adopted a flood level of 5.5 metres, is that correct?-- That is correct, yes.

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And given that your property ground level was between 7 and 8 metres, you thought you would be okay?-- That's correct.

What actually happened?-- We were inundated with approximately one and a half metres of water, which was a surprise given that the floor level of eight metres and a statement saying there was going to be 5.5 metres of water, I couldn't compute the two.

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And on the basis - what do you identify as being the issue that concerns you most as a result of this experience?-- Well, had correct information been available or alternate information been available, we could have taken other action to get expensive equipment off the floor and up to a higher level as we have two floors in the building.

And thereby reduced your economic loss?-- Correct. 1

When you say alternate information, do I take you to mean some information which was more meaningful to where you were actually located?-- That is correct, yes.

Yes. All right. Thank you. They are the only questions I have.

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you. 10

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure, do you have any questions of this witness?

MR URE: No.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you. 20

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: No questions, your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Have I missed anyone? 30

MR PORTER: No questions from the Brisbane City Council.

COMMISSIONER: I knew there was someone. I don't know if I got your name for the record.

MR PORTER: Yes, Porter, initials B T, junior counsel for Brisbane City Council appearing with Mr Dunning.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Porter. Mr Callaghan? 40

MR CALLAGHAN: No. May Mr Baker be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your time, Mr Baker. You are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED 50

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Craig Hewlett.

COMMISSIONER: Just while he is coming in, Mr Ure, who are you appearing for today? Is it just the Moreton Bay Regional Council?

MR URE: And Somerset Regional Council.

COMMISSIONER: And Somerset, thank you.

ROBERT GEORGE WHALLEY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Yes. My full name is Robert George Whalley. I am a business owner of Eagle Forklifts at Glamorgan Vale in the Somerset region.

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Okay. Mr Whalley, I have announced you as being someone else, but that's okay. Ms Wilson has some questions for you.

MS WILSON: Mr Whalley, do you reside at Glamorgan Vale?-- That's correct.

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And you have resided at Glamorgan Vale since 1991?-- That's correct.

You have made a four-page statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I have.

Could you have a look at this document, please? It is in front of you?-- Yes.

Is that your statement dated the 28th of April 2011?-- It certainly is.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 293.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 293"

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MS WILSON: Can I just ask you some questions about Glamorgan Vale?-- Sure.

When the Glamorgan Vale area floods, is it the case that the local community is split into three separate isolated areas?-- It actually splits into about five, yes.

Can you tell me how that happens?-- Glamorgan Vale is predominantly situated on Stradbroke Mountain, and below Stradbroke Mountain we have Black Snake Creek, Fairney View Creek, and its tributaries. So basically once we have a significant rain event, all the area is divided, yes.

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Okay. Now, if I can take you to your statement and I can take you to paragraph 5 of your statement. You offer a suggestion there, that is that you believe that education is the key to

managing disasters?-- Absolutely. I was fortunate enough to be elected to the Esk Council as a councillor between 2004 and 2008. We did flood - well, we did disaster management meetings and that back then for this type of scenario. What we found was when there is no imminent danger it is very difficult to get people to participate and actually get involved in developing a disaster management strategy, whether it be fire, cyclone, flood. My comments there are in relation to that. We in Queensland, in Australia live in a really nice part in history in the world where we're all very comfortable in ourselves that nothing is going to happen to us, and for that reason I think we need a State-based education campaign, or even national, to let people realise that disasters can and will happen in this country, whether it be any one of those situations, and the - the underlying reason I put that in there was in any natural disaster, people - you know, you will hear - you have probably heard it all through this Commission how people say, "Oh, the emergency services weren't there." They are never going to be there. The first line of defence in any disaster is you. You have to accept responsibility, and have some sort of first reaction plan, if you like, and that's why I come up with this statement.

We talked before about that in flood events Glamorgan Vale gets isolated?-- Yes.

In January 2011 did Glamorgan Vale get isolated?-- Totally.

And part of the education that you are suggesting is for people to know where to go and what to do?-- Absolutely.

Did you find that an issue occurring in the Glamorgan Vale community in January of this year?-- Yes. I actually opened up my place for people to come and get food and shelter. It happened fairly quickly that there was several people caught on the road cut off from Brisbane - they were coming back from Taroom, I think it was. So, yeah, immediately then - that was just as a friendly gesture, but since this disaster, Glamorgan Vale itself, a community group has set up a disaster management group. It is not official yet because to get these things official is a time-consuming process, but we have a local area disaster management group now which does exactly that in a simplistic view. Where the areas get cut into for flood, we've got five people to nominate and put up their hand where it would be a safe haven, each one of these people have got generators, so you are going to have power for phones and the like.

When Glamorgan Vale was isolated, did you have any SES being able to get through?-- The SES did turn up - no, the Queensland Fire and Rescue turned up on my doorstep on the Wednesday after the worst part of the flooding in our area, and were after those two-way radios, UHF radios. I said to the guys, "Why on earth would you be chasing normal residents for these?" He said, "Look, we've got the army personnel, all sorts of people volunteering but we haven't got equipment", which I found a little bit strange. But I don't know what their channels are, but-----

Before the flooding events of January 2011, did you know any evacuation centre or a safe place to go?-- Just through my experience in council, I knew where, you know, we would normally head, which nobody from Glamorgan Vale would have been able to get there anyway.

Okay?-- Yeah.

Now, after the flood event of January this year, the Glamorgan Vale community is establishing a Local Disaster Management Group?-- That's correct.

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And you had a meeting on the 30th of March of this year?-- Look. It would be approximately there. I haven't got my diary in front of me.

Perhaps if I can show you this document. That is the Glamorgan Vale Flood Emergency Management Group newsletter number 1?-- Correct.

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Have you seen this document before?-- I have not read this document before, no.

Oh, okay. Did you go to the meeting?-- I attended the meeting, yes.

This document talks about the topics that were discussed in this meeting and is summarised in four points?-- Okay.

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The first is "the need to have safe areas regarded as key points"-----?-- Yes.

-----"to which people affected by flooding may relocate in areas suitable for air evacuation should the need for medical relocation arise."?-- Yes.

Have these points been identified in your community?-- Look, there was a second meeting which I was not able to attend. I definitely put up my hand for one of these key point areas, as my property's ideally located on top of a ridge and I have got some 50 acres, so plenty of area for choppers and that to land, and emergency to assemble.

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One of the other issues that were discussed at this meeting is "ability for those persons who are offering their property as key points to be protected under a form of legislation in the event of group activation." What sort of protection are you seeking?-- That point was raised by some of the community members purely because during this event they wanted to fix roads and accesses so people could traverse. Those who are lucky enough to be able to phone through to council, the local government, were told that under no circumstances were they allowed to fix access roads or anything on public property as they would be liable. During this meeting we found out from one of the Fire and Rescue guys that if an emergency is declared then a lot of those rules go out the window. So it was general discussion on that night that if we are going to

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be setting up these points, we don't necessarily know if the State Government or Local Government has declared a natural disaster, so we don't know if we're allowed to put into action any plans to repair anything, you know, so as people can get safe access.

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One of the issues this group is seeking is more information to know what you can and can't do in the form - in the event of a disaster?-- Yes. That would be wonderful.

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Now, an issue arising from that is have you had any contact with the Local Disaster Management Group in relation to the work that your group is doing?-- Look, Doc Hannah is doing the lead on all of this management at the moment. I touched base with him last week and he is progressing all this through. He has definitely talked to our local council and the powers that be in the disaster management group there to further enhance this, but what stage he is up to, I couldn't tell you.

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And one of the other issues that I wish to ask you in relation to one of the matters discussed at this meeting is the Night Owl Early Flood Warning System?-- Yes.

Do you know anything about that?-- Yeah, look, Doc's actually assembling the equipment right now as we speak, basically. Glamorgan Vale, as I said, is separated by Fairney View Creek and Black Snake Creek. The headwaters come from Tallegalla, which is up past Marburg on the Warrego Highway. There is a known history of major floodwaters coming down through there with no warning from any relevant authority. What we would like to do is set up indicators in Marburg Creek that when they get a certain amount of water, the indicators go off and trigger the telemetries. We have got telemetry in the area. We have got a group called the Glamorgan Vale Water Board which distributes water from the Brisbane River to all the farmers-----

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Just pause there. Is that group a part of a government agency or is that a community group?-- It is under the auspice of the State government. It was Department of Natural Resources. I was on the board from 2000 to 2006. I understand the State Government, in all their dealings with Local Government, were looking at getting Local Government to take over these water boards. I understand Glamorgan Vale Water Board still stands on its own and it is still under the Department of Natural Resources guidelines.

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So let's continue. You were talking about the water group?-- So what I was saying was what we're looking to do or what we are doing - we're funding it ourselves at the moment - we are going to put in early warning indicators as the water levels rise in Black Snake Creek that it triggers the telemetry at the Glamorgan Vale Water Board which is then phoned to key stakeholders so that people can be warned that there is significant water coming down that creek. Just an example of how much water come down that creek, the Glamorgan Vale rural fire brigade shed got washed. It was on a six inch slab and

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it is a nine by nine shed. It got picked up in the floodwaters and moved across the Glamorgan Vale highway, so that's how much water was actually coming down that creek.

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So is it the case that this community focus group, the Glamorgan Vale Flood Emergency Management Group, is going to fund putting these indicators into the creeks?-- Look, at this stage there is no funding coming forth from anybody, so at this stage, yeah, the local people are going to fund it. Myself included, yeah.

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Have you got any idea what that cost involves?-- I actually asked Doc last week when I was talking to him to work out a true cost on this whole program, because, as I said, as a key business in the area, I would like to help get it up and running, so yeah.

Is that group having discussions with the Local Government or the State Government in relation to implementing the scheme?-- Look, we haven't made - we have asked the Somerset Regional Council. I have spoken to them about the plan and told them we would like some funding. There has been no answer back on that, but as late as last week I happened to be in a meeting with a lady that's from the Commonwealth Government who does put out sources of funding that may be able to help us, so we're pursuing avenues to get some sort of funding towards that.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document. That is the Glamorgan Vale Flood Emergency Management Group Newsletter.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 294.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 294"

MS WILSON: I have no further questions for you, Mr Whalley.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr-----

MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have no questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have no questions.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: I have no questions of this witness.

MS WILSON: May Mr Whalley be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you very much?-- Thank you.

You are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Craig Hewlett.

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CRAIG HEWLETT, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Craig Hewlett. I'm the General Manager of Community Radio Station in the Moreton Bay Regional area.

Mr Hewlett, you've prepared a six page statement for the purposes of the Commission; is that correct?-- Yes.

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It's being shown to you now?-- Yes.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 295.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 295"

MR CALLAGHAN: I just want to take you through a few aspects of that statement, Mr Hewlett. At paragraph 1, you make the point that you are very much acquainted with and involved in the whole concept of disaster management; is that right?-- Yes.

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And for your area, there are some special considerations involved in this. I think in paragraph 12, you talk about what happens in your region during a flood situation; is that right?-- Yes.

Can you just describe that to us?-- Basically, from Kilcoy to the west, to the Pumicestone Passage of Bribie Island, I guess, in the kindest terms, would be referred to as a stormwater drain. There is many estuaries, several creeks that all run through together. It turns us into little islands, several of them, which run all the way down south through to Albany Creek, so from the west to the east and then south again.

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So isolation becomes a problem - isolation of specific areas?-- Very quickly.

Yes. In paragraphs 4 and 5, you talk about the information which your radio station receives from the Moreton Bay Regional Council?-- Yes.

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Can you just tell us, what is the system by which you received information from the Council?-- Via E-mails. We receive E-mail updates on road closures from the Council. They come through periodically, sometimes three an hour, sometimes one an hour.

And you've got - or it is part of the routine of the station

for those to be checked?-- Yes.

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In order to pass on that information?-- Yes, we disseminate the information as soon as it comes through.

At paragraph 6, you talk about receiving information from the Bureau of Meteorology. Again, what's the system in place for that?-- Just in paragraph 6 there, there's a little discrepancy with the time. It was more around the 9.30, 10 o'clock that we actually got that message through. This was unlike any other time, as you can expect. I got four phone messages, one on my - two on my mobile phone, and through - because I have three different numbers at the radio station, I actually got three different messages - sorry, same message, picking up a different line. So, in the middle of the crisis, I picked up and got the same message, the phone rang on a different line and there was the same message on the other line and there was the same message on the other line.

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These are Bureau of Meteorology messages?-- No, the Bureau of Meteorology message was the siren for all radio stations in South-East Queensland to play the siren.

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And where is that? Is that an E-mail, or where do you get the information from? BOM?-- BOM is E-mail, monitoring the site, and then an SMS.

So, the message you talk about in paragraph 6 was an E-mail?-- Bureau of Meteorology, yes.

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All right. Now, these other messages that you were receiving on telephones, who are they coming from?-- One of them had the SES controller locally attached to it, one of them had the police service attached to it.

So, SES and police are both calling you at the same time?-- Yes.

Well, I think you effectively describe in your statement that there were some problems with that first message you received, or with the lack of specific information in that message; is that right?-- Yes, the message was a one-line message. Immediately upon reading it, I thought that it would panic the residents if I put it out exactly the way that it was. I took my breath for approximately 10 seconds and didn't want to drag the chain at my end, thinking there would be some follow-up information, so I immediately pushed that out to my announcers and put it out on air.

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You were concerned about the content, but you felt that you had to put it out there, because if you didn't and things went bad, there might be consequences; is that right?-- Well, I - I don't pretend to be an expert in it. I was just doing my job.

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Sure?-- The information came through. I thought the information was skinny. I knew the ramifications on the information that would - you know, would panic the residents,

and unfortunately there was no follow-up information from that.

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COMMISSIONER: Sorry, Mr Callaghan, I'm getting a little confused. You get a message from the Bureau of Meteorology to sound the siren?-- Yeah, we get a warning signal in times of extreme emergency that only the Bureau of Meteorology can trigger.

And so what do you do, sound a siren with no further information, or how does that work?-- No, I attach to that the information that we put out before.

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You wait for what SES and Queensland Police Service are telling, you or-----?-- Yes.

And what is the message they're giving you?-- I'm sorry, I don't-----

What is the message they want you to transmit?-- Normally of flash flooding and road closures and all of that, if there's a storm-----

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But on this day, what were you worried would cause panic?-- The lack of information in the first message that come out that said evacuate Caboolture, Morayfield, Strathpine - all low-lying areas to evacuate to high areas.

And that's accompanied by the siren, is it, or not?-- The message to evacuate to higher areas come from the Queensland Police.

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Mmm?-- The siren to sound the siren in an emergency came from the Bureau of Meteorology.

But do you do the two things at one time, or how do you do it?-- Yes.

Thank you.

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MR CALLAGHAN: And the message that we're talking about at the moment is the one that you describe in paragraph 7?-- The police message.

Police and SES; is that right?-- Yes.

Or was it just police, sorry?-- Police.

SMS, rather. But you then took some action to try and get more information; is that right?-- Yes.

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You phoned the Local Disaster Management Group?-- Yes.

And obviously you were aware of the structure involved and what responsibilities they had in this sort of situation?-- Yes.

And you record what happened in paragraph 8, but can you just

tell us about your efforts to contact your LDMG?-- The moment I put the message out there, it just clogged the phone system up and turned us into a call centre of people asking, "Am I - I'm in Grant Street. Am I in a low-lying area? I'm in George Street. Am I in a low-lying area?", and, "Where do we go to?" There was no other information through. I was monitoring seven computers with people sitting at those computers. There was no other information coming through. I then phoned the LDMG, made a comment about the lack of information. It was then said that I'd get a phone call back with that information - low-lying areas and where to evacuate to, and that didn't happen.

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And just to be clear, you didn't get any phone call back; is that right?-- I got a phone call back later on in the piece from the SES - the local SES, stating that an evacuation point had been set up at the RSL.

But specifically the phone call that you speak about in paragraph 8, the Council staff officer of the LDMG-----?-- Yep.

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-----who said that you would get a phone call back, was there any call back from this source?-- To this date, no.

All right. You then talk about the call that you got from the SES about where the official evacuation point was?-- Yes.

This is after you've broadcast the fact that there was an evacuation point at the Lutheran church; is that right?-- Yes.

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And you get a call from the SES saying that's not right, the evacuation point is at the RSL?-- No, not in those words. It was a conversation to assure me the official evacuation point was the RSL.

All right. You say that was expressed quite sternly though; is that right?-- Yes.

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Okay. Well, then you made inquiries of the RSL yourself to work out what was available there; is that right?-- Yes.

And what were you told?-- They didn't really want to do it. It was done 20 minutes - they were asked 20 minutes before then. They've got staffing issues, they've got problems with, you know, poker machines and access and all of that.

But they'd been told by the Council that they would be an evacuation centre - or they told you, and Council had called them half an hour earlier to say that they would be an evacuation centre?-- An evacuation centre, yes.

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Okay. Now, there was also - there were also issues about information involving the Bruce Highway?-- Yes.

And in paragraph 13, I think you talk about the situation at 3 p.m. on the 11th?-- Yep.

What was the story then?-- We were receiving a number of phone calls asking us whether the Bruce Highway was open or closed. Nowhere could I get any information at all from government websites - several government websites, local council websites. There was no information coming through at all. I was reluctant to leave the radio station because of word of everybody getting trapped around in those pockets, as creeks come up and go down. So, I bit the bullet at about three in the afternoon and went for a wander out to have a bit of a look around and there was several people standing outside the Council chambers that was waiting for a taxi to go to Brisbane. When I asked them, "Where are you going?", they said they were heading to Brisbane, they were waiting for a taxi. I said, "Look, I'm not sure whether you're going to be able to get through. I think the Bruce Highway is closed." They informed me that Council had just told them that the Bruce Highway was open. So, a little bit frustrated with it, I went, "Okay, well I'm going to go down and have a look now and see for myself." So, I hopped in the car and went down the Bruce Highway and sure enough it was open.

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And there were issues with information about the highway the next day as well; is that right?-- Yeah. I hopped up early again, around about 3 a.m., 3.30 a.m., and looked up on the TV to see that the same message was being played on the commercial television that Caboolture was isolated and the Bruce Highway was cut. So, in a mad panic thinking that I had missed it in my sleep, hurriedly got ready and went out again. The main road through town was the first that I checked - the Morayfield Road bridge was open. Then I decided to do the Bruce Highway, so I done a trip around the Bruce, back down through Burpengary and come back up through and it was clear as well. The moment that I put that message to air, it jammed my phone lines up again with people waiting to go to Brisbane or come home from Brisbane that were relying on that information.

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Well, information is clearly what your business is all about, and just to summarise, I suppose, in paragraphs 18 and 19, you, I think, address the whole issue of the supply of information by the LDMG and/or the local Council. Would you just like to summarise the effect of your concerns in that regard?-- Lack of information, lack of owning it, lack of being there, just owning the situation.

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You didn't see evidence of that, is that-----?-- No, none at all.

And paragraph 21, you say that trying to manage the situation out of Redcliffe and Strathpine was an issue. Can you just elaborate on what you mean by that?-- The information started coming - I arrived at the radio station at 4.15 on the 11th. We started pushing the information out straightaway. Councils first. First road closure information come through at roughly 6.15, 6.30, somewhere around there. Towards the end of the information, when I went back and had a look at it, there was a heavy emphasis on information from Redcliffe and Strathpine,

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what roads were closed and what roads were open when there was, in our - the top end of it - which showed me that management from outside the area is just impossible. When it turns into little islands, you know, it's pretty hard to get information in and out. 1

At paragraph 25, you talk about, I think, the development of a counterdisaster strategy with local Chambers of Commerce. What's involved in that?-- Well, shortly after the flood event, if you remember, we were looking down the barrel at three pretty severe cyclones, so I jumped the front foot and contacted the Chamber of Commerce and several support groups that I knew were active in each one of those island areas, if you like, to give the radio station and the people the correct information in that time - would give me a point of contact to call and, you know, "What's going on? Is this open or is this closed?" 10

So, what, you're just identifying contacts-----?-- Stress to them that they're not a counterdisaster group, by any stretch of the imagination, and, "You're actually there to support, not do anything, and more of an information service.", you know, there's sand bags here, there's this here and that there. 20

So, how is it actually going to work in practice? Can you just-----?-- The Chamber of Commerce - and generally across any region - are people that are in touch with the community - are leaders of, you know, the community, in one way, shape or form. So, that's a pretty easily identifiable tag to get ground information in that area without going anywhere else. The Chamber of Commerce President then contacts the community through the service clubs - Rotary, Lions, Apex, you know, Neighbourhood Watch - all that - and gathers information to assist in the emergency. 30

And then is there a system in place or going to be a system in place to channel that sort of information back to you so that you can-----?-- I purely recommended them then to contact the LDMG and identify themselves as what they are and what they have to offer. 40

Yep?-- I made the contact purely from the radio station's perspective, so in those times when I'm sitting there scratching my head with lack of information, I could actually call someone who was on the ground who could give me the relevant information - timely.

So, do you still see in future situations that the information should come to you through the LDMG or from these people directly?-- No, LDMG certainly. 50

So, they should get the information to the LDMG?-- Yes.

And they should be in a position to pass it back to you and others; is that right?-- Yes.

All right. That's all the questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Do you have enough of the membership of the LDMG to know if there are any living in Caboolture?-- No, I can't guarantee it. I'd say if there is, there's one - one person.

And what about councillors? Have you got councillors from Caboolture?-- I tried to get the Deputy Mayor on the phone during the event.

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Is he a Caboolture resident?-- Yes.

I'm just surprised by the lack of - I don't know, anybody emerging in Caboolture itself to give you a bit of help. Anyway, you couldn't get him?-- No. I couldn't get anybody - anyone.

Are there other councillors from Caboolture?-- Yes, Chris Whiting. Actually, he was around. Gary Parsons from Bribie Island. I couldn't get him. I tried the Deputy Mayor and I tried the Mayor.

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Mmm. All right, thanks, Mr Hewlett. Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

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MS O'GORMAN: Just something, Commissioner.

MS O'GORMAN: Mr Hewlett, I act for the Commonwealth, in particular, the Bureau of Meteorology. Are you aware at the time the Bureau requested your radio station to broadcast the signal on the 11th of January, that they also forwarded to your radio station a severe weather warning?-- Yes.

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And are you aware that that severe weather warning detailed that there would be an intense slow-moving band of rainfall that would extend across Maroochydore to Warwick?-- Yes.

Thank you, Commissioner?-- Can I just add to that?

Yes?-- If I would have known about the 404 millimetres of rain recorded in the Council's rain gauge that night, I would

have known that we were in serious problems, and I can't understand why that rain gauge is not in the official BOM register so I can get that information.

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Yes. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No, nothing arising. Thank you, Madam Commissioner. May Mr Hewlett be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Hewlett. You're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. We call Sean Hodgson.

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SEAN HODGSON, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. Is your full name Sean Hodgson?-- Yes, it is.

Are you employed by the Brisbane City Council?-- Yes, I am.

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And you have been employed at the Brisbane City Council for about 11 years?-- That's correct.

And your current role is the Regional Operations Manager in City Services in the Compliance and Regulatory Services Branch?-- That's correct.

And that is, that branch is known as CaRS?-- That's correct.

Okay. And you've been in that role - that is, of Regional Operations Manager - since November 2010?-- Yes.

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And you've made a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I have.

And that statement addresses the role that you performed in the January 2011 floods?-- Yes.

And the role that CaRS performed in the January 2011 floods?-- That's right.

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And attached to that statement is various exhibits that you refer to in your statement; is that the case?-- Yes, that's right.

Madam Commissioner, I tender the statement with the attached exhibits.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 296.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 296"

MS WILSON: Have you got your statement in front of you?-- I do have a copy.

Perhaps if I can just take you to a couple of matters. At paragraph 4, you say, "Ordinarily, CaRS is responsible for all aspects of regulation and enforcement for the City of Brisbane, and the Council's City Services area is within the CaRS Branch."?-- That's right.

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Now, then we can go to paragraph 5 where you say the City Services Division was at the forefront of CaRS' response to the January 2011 floods?-- That's right.

So, can you assist me and tell me the role that City Services performed in relation to the January 2011 floods?-- Yes. City Services area of CaRS comprises the Rapid Response Group, Central Parking, the Environmental Management Team, who have the capacity to enact a first response. They're coordinated centrally across those areas, and because of the structure of that team, they were best placed to lead the broader CaRS response to the flood.

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Okay. Now, at paragraph 7, you summarise the role that CaRS performed in the response to the January 2011 floods to four categories: the preparation, the response, the recovery, and the post-activity administration?-- That's correct.

If we can go to the preparation - the preparation phase, at paragraph 9, you say that, "On Tuesday, the 11th of January 2011 and Wednesday the 12th of January" - that is, prior to the flood peak - "CaRS officers were involved in the following tasks.", and you list them there. I'm interested in the distribution of warning notices to residential and commercial properties. If I can take your attention to there? That is further expanded in paragraph 15 of your statement where it talks about the Council officers conducted a door-knock, and if the Council officer could not speak to the owner of the property or the occupier of the property, then a warning notice would be left at the residence. What was the instruction given in relation to information, other information - that is, verbal information - that these officers would give to residents or occupiers of these houses?-- Broadly, the information was related to that which was then the warning notice; however, should the property owner or the occupier of the property have additional questions that may fall within or outside of Council's jurisdiction and resourcing, then our officers did the best they could to give that information or direct the owner or occupier to that source of information.

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And how many officers were performing this task of going around to residents and providing the warning notice?-- Ah, in total, it would have been close to 250 officers, but, of course, with rostering and with different shifts, there would never have been 250 officers in the field.

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The next question that arises is how were the properties identified that these warning notices were given to?-- These properties were identified on the basis of the 4000 CUMECS map and associated database of streets and properties, which were forwarded to CaRS branch, where we broke them down into our regional areas - our five regional areas - and then they were distributed to the regional manager of those areas.

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Okay. Perhaps if I can show you one of these maps and if you can tell me that this is the map that you're referring to? It's attached to your statement. Now, it's rather large. I have got a copy here that you can have as well to assist. Now, I think this is the map for the east of Brisbane; is that the case?-- On the south side of the river, that's correct,

yep.

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And have a look. The hard copy is in that folder. Paragraph 29 you talked about, "Predicted flood maps provided by the LDCC we used to identify properties." Is this one of these predicted flood maps that we're looking at?-- Yes, it certainly appears to be one of the flood maps, yes.

Okay. So, was it the case that your officers got these maps, looked at them and then worked out which streets would be affected?-- This was certainly a tool that was used. It's obviously visual and very helpful in that regard. Of greater use to us was the database with the list of affected streets and properties. That was easier to manipulate and sort to provide tasks to individual officers and teams of officers when they were going to go out and do the door knocking.

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This database of affected properties, is this a database that has been accumulated over time?-- The database was extracted on the basis of the limits of this 4000 CUMECS flood, so the database of all properties and residences in Brisbane is this - the holistic database. From this map and from our electronic and spacial systems, we can put a line, so to speak, around certain properties where we thought the flood was going to reach and extract from that specific streets and homes.

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Okay. So, is it the case that from this map, you put this visual identification of properties into a list of properties that were to be affected?-- Yes, the list is extracted from the map.

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From this map?-- Yes.

Okay. Now, that is discussed in paragraph 29, but there is also other tools that Council officers used, and that is discussed in paragraph 30. You say that they were directed to distribute the warning notices to properties which were, one, in the immediate vicinity of the properties identified on the flood maps. So, is that the case that if one property was identified - more than likely from the data list, because that's the information that those officers would have had-----?-- Yes.

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-----and the neighbour wasn't, then the neighbour would also be given some warning?-- That's absolutely correct.

Now, did that rely upon the officer's discretion at the time on the street to do that?-- Yes, it did, and certainly in the briefings that were given to officers through regular teleconference we had with our managers and in the distribution of our operational orders, it was highlighted that they were to use discretion and through just being in the street, they could see that this property is deigned that it will flood, then if there's one next to it on the lower side, then visit that one as well.

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The next point that you raise at paragraph 30 is it says, "The properties were to be provided the warning notice in areas which are known from previous experience or which appear from the council officer's assessment to be potential flood areas."?-- Yes.

That raises two issues. We will go to the first, previous experience. Where did the information of previous experience come from?-- The experience came from a number of sources. Some was the experience of other council officers in different areas where through tidal or rain we know that some areas are going to flood, and some of it would have come from system and recorded streets and properties that have flooded in past events.

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So this information that comes from previous experience, is that recorded in council's database?-- I couldn't answer that question fully. I know that in some areas over local asset services they have lists that we work from, and in fact we had worked from late in 2010 when there was some tidal flooding so that information was part of broader cope.

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I am just interested that when the officers go out into the streets and they have been told - they have been directed to properties which are known from previous experience, where that information came from? It wouldn't have been the officer's own previous experience who goes door knocking, I would presume?-- In some cases it might have been, but primarily it would have come from other areas of council that are involved in asset and open space management.

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You cannot assist me today whether there is a database of where that information is recorded in the council?-- I know that it is recorded. Whether it is a holistic database I couldn't say at this time.

The other point that is raised in 30(b), "or which appear from the council officer's assessment to be potential flood areas"?-- Yes.

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And that again is relying on the council officer's discretion on the ground?-- That's correct.

Paragraph 31 states that, "The LGC had provided the maps of flooded properties", which you understand was produced from the council Flood Information Centre?-- Those maps would have come to the CaRS centre through the LDCC but my assumption is that it would come from the FIC.

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You say that you understand these properties were ones in which the total land parcel were predicted to be fully inundated?-- Correct.

Now, I just need some clarification. Is it the case that only properties that were expected to be totally inundated were given the warning notice?-- No.

So how does paragraph 31 work with paragraphs 29 and 30?-- We had separate data that identified the properties and streets that would be fully inundated and partially as our response incorporated the entirety of those particular two subsections.

Okay. So paragraph 31 really didn't come into play in relation to the roles of CaRS officers performed?-- No.

Now, you are aware there are stories about the houses that were on flood maps were not provided warnings?-- I am aware of that, yes. 10

You set out some of those reasons about why this could have occurred in paragraph 31, and they can be summarised as "road closures, localised flooding in particular streets, and heavy traffic to and from affected areas." So the reasons that you provide are to be summarised as the officers just couldn't get there?-- That's absolutely correct. 20

Now, in paragraph 38 you say, "It is not possible to identify all of the areas that staff were not able to access. Information on areas that could not be accessed was not comprehensively recorded." Is there any reason for that?-- It was incomplete data that came in through officers in their reporting to their regional management and to our disaster management centre. It may be they couldn't access three or four streets in a particular suburb. Not all of those streets were recorded. It may have been that we had trouble with legibility of some of those reports and sometimes those reports may not have been completed. 30

Now, I am not too sure whether you can assist me with this. Do you know whether all of the information that has been gathered from the flood events of January 2011 has been recorded by the Brisbane City Council for use in the next occasion where CaRS officers could go out and perform the same task?-- Would you mind repeating that?

Do you know whether all of the information in the data of the streets that were flooded in January 2011-----?-- Yes. 40

-----flood event has been recorded-----?-- Yes.

-----for use for CaRS officers in the next flood event?-- Absolutely it has been recorded.

And that updated information will be used in the next flood event by CaRS officers?-- I am confident that it will be, yes. 50

And that will expand the number of houses to be provided these warning notices?-- Yes, depending on the event and the extent of the flooding, yes.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I have no further questions.

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Your Honour, may I go at the end, please?

COMMISSIONER: Of course, yes. Mr Ure?

MR URE: No, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing thank you.

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MS O'GORMAN: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

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MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Just one brief matter. You were asked some questions by my learned friend Ms Wilson regarding the reasons that some houses were missed in terms of the CaRS' activities and you gave some explanations for that. By later Tuesday afternoon, what was the magnitude of the task in terms of going house to house?-- Our initial tasking was based on the 4,000 CUMECs flood maps and the associated properties and streets. During the course of the Tuesday, the level of CUMECs was raised from 4,000 to 6,000, shortly after it is 7,000, and later on into the evening 12,000. That represented for our officers an increase in the number of properties to be door knocked from approximately 10,000 to well over 30,000 properties. So the job did get bigger quite quickly and perhaps unrealistically that we could have got to the full 30,000. However, by the middle of Wednesday, all of the initial 10,000 properties, aside from those who couldn't be accessed as we spoke, would have received a door knock.

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All right. And so you - by Tuesday afternoon it was apparent that to door knock everywhere you needed 30 - you needed to, in effect, go to 30,000 homes. Was there sufficient time - and you had embarked upon the task in respect of the 10,000 homes with 4,000 CUMECs during Tuesday. Given the anticipated arrival of the floodwaters was it humanly possible in terms of available council officers to have done the 30,000?-- In my view it was impossible to get to 30,000 properties.

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Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

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MS WILSON: I have no further questions. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Hodgson, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, may this be a convenient time for the morning adjournment?

COMMISSIONER: All right. We will come back at 25 past.

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.07 TILL 11.25 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 11.28 A.M.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Kerry Plowright.

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KERRY MAURICE PLOWRIGHT, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Kerry Maurice Plowright, Managing Director for the Early Warning Network.

Mr Plowright, you have prepared a statement dated 29 April 2011, is that correct?-- Correct, yes.

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It is being shown to you now?-- Correct.

I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 297.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 297"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Can you just tell us briefly what the Early Warning Network is?-- Certainly. We provide early warning notifications for severe weather events and other hazards, including fire, tsunami and any other information that we can obtain from authorities that we have authorisation to distribute accurately.

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And you distribute them by way of?-- We do it geographically. We have a system that we have developed since 2007 that enables us to track certain events, especially weather, using that telemetry, overlaying maps so that we can project the areas that are going to be impacted by certain event, and we can accurately warn with that by effectively drawing shapes on a map, if you like, accurately to within 10 metres of where those events are going to impact.

And you send your warnings by SMS?-- Yes, it is actually multiple channel, so we can actually plug into any electronic media, so it goes over mobile, yes, SMS, it goes to landline, it goes to email, a thing called Desktop Alert. Effectively everything that's electronic that we can plug into.

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And there is an arrangement with councils, in Queensland at least?-- We have arrangements with Brisbane City Council and Townsville City Council.

And the arrangement works in what way?-- To provide notices for severe weather warnings, so we're predominantly talking about thunderstorms, flash flooding events, rain events, that type of thing.

Council pays you, I take it-----?-- Yes.

-----for you to deliver that service on their behalf?-- Yes.

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Well, you know we're concerned, at the moment at least, with the flood events of January this year, but then and in any event when you are dealing with the Brisbane City Council, what information do you get that you subsequently broadcast? What information do you get, from whom do you get it, in what form is it? Can you fill us in on that?-- When we are talking about severe weather warnings, most of our information comes from the Bureau of Meteorology. We make assessments drawing sources from NOAA and a few other references, plus our own meteorology sources. So we draw a picture, if you like from that. Then we take the notices from the Bureau of Meteorology and that's what we use to issue the actual warnings. So we have - we're very cognisant of trying to keep continuity with what the Bureau of Meteorology issues so that our messaging is exactly the same. We aim to really, if you like, when the Bureau of Meteorology issues a big broadcast warning for a particular thunderstorm event, or something like that, to hone it down to the particular area that's going to be impacted. That won't always be the case. On some days, obviously, the assessment is that it is going to be difficult to track a particular cell, or something else, so that we issue it to a broader area.

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That's for the most part-----?-- Yes.

-----you rely on BOM?-- Correct.

So you are monitoring BOM, is that right?-- Correct.

Then if you see something that triggers in your-----?-- Yes, yes.

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-----collective mind the need for a warning, what do you do then? Do you let the council know that you are going to send the warning?-- No, we don't. Most of the time we issues those off our own bat. That's the understanding.

I see?-- Where things change - for instance, the bureau issues or reissues warnings on a periodical basis. We won't necessarily reissue the same warning again and again for the same event. That's a waste of time. People already understand that the event is occurring. And every warning that we send out, we steer people to the Bureau of Meteorology website or where the information is available for the particular type of warning that we are sending, so that they can subsequently follow. In other words, what we're doing is providing people a heads up for what is about to occur so they can subsequently track the event from thereon. Unless it

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changes, then we might issue another warning if it subsequently changes. We will, however, in certain events, like we have done recently, talk to the council because we think, look, this is looking to be something a little bit additional to what we've already forecast, therefore let's have a look at what sort of warning we might send out. As you will have on file there, the council has come back on a couple of occasions and said, "Let's do this. Let's send this warning out", and we'll talk about the wording to make sure it is appropriate for this sort of behavioural aspect we want from people and then we will issue it.

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So the arrangement is in the general course of events you will take the initiative and issue the warning based on information-----?-- Correct.

-----from BOM?-- Yeah, yeah.

But you leave open the possibility that there might be situations in which the council has specific knowledge?-- Certainly.

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Which has to be broadcast as well?-- And to put that in context at the time of this particular event we had only just completed a year long trial of this service.

A what?-- Year long trial.

Year long trial?-- Yeah, and that had only finished three weeks previously, and from that, from the learning experience for council, they were able to put together a specification for a tender. So they put out a request for tender. So, literally, that hadn't been answered at that stage. So that was still six weeks away from being completed, so we were working in an interim arrangement at that stage providing the creek flooding warning, the severe weather warning and something we had added, which was the king tide warnings using polygons. So it was still six weeks away from actually answering that tender. We didn't have any guarantee, of course, we were going to win that, but certainly there was the understanding, or I understood that subsequent to that that there was the opportunity for whoever won the tender would be able to-----

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Can I just ask you to slow down?-- -----expand upon the basis that we were working on at the time.

COMMISSIONER: That's for whoever won the tender, I think you said?-- Yes.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Do you have your statement in front of you?-- Yes.

Can I take you to page 8? That's a summary of the alert history sent between the 5th and the 11th of January-----?-- Correct.

-----inclusive, is that right?-- Yes.

If we go to page 10, that is the actual alert that was-----?--
Yes.

-----sent on the 8th?-- Yes, yeah.

And then over the page to page 11 is the actual alert that was
sent on the 10th?-- Yes, it was near midnight. It is a bit
confusing. So you could say late on the Saturday or early on
Sunday morning.

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Yes. And then over the page again is one issued at 8 a.m. on
the Tuesday, is that right?-- Correct, yes.

Okay. Just sticking with that one on page 12, the one issued
at 8 a.m. on the Tuesday, what can you tell us about the text
or the content of that message? Where did that come from?--
That's pretty much derived from the Bureau of Meteorology.

And-----?-- And standard formatting for our SMS text.

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There is nothing that anyone else has added or-----?-- No,
no, we didn't do anything independent at that stage.

Okay. Is this one that you have just of your own initiative
passed on because the BOM issued it?-- No, that's something
that we did speaking with the Brisbane City Council.

All right?-- In other words, a warning had previously been
issued but because of the continuation of the event after
talking with the council, we felt that it was important to
issue another warning.

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Can I just take you back then and can we just work out what
communications there in fact were-----?-- Sure.

-----between you and the council during this period?-- Mmm.

Say from the 8th to the 11th?-- Yeah.

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I know you have retrieved some emails which might be of
assistance in that regard?-- Yes.

Is that right?-- Yes, correct.

They are extracted on a separate document?-- Yes.

I might get that shown to you. It is a two-page document, is
it?-- Yep.

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Is this your retrieval of all the relevant emails-----?--
Yes.

-----you could locate for that period. We might just get you
to interpret this for us. I think the first half on the first
page is as between you and the Commission. We don't need to
worry about that, is that right?-- Yes, which one are we
talking about at the moment?

Well, halfway down the first page there seems to be a message from Michael Bath to Petrocitto, Gordano?-- Are we talking about the 9th of January?

No, this is on the two-page document that you had been handed I thought was a collection of emails starting on the 11th? No?-- No, I have got - I think there were two emails that we're talking about here.

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I will show you a different document?-- Sorry.

Do you see what I am talking about now, the top half of the first page?-- Yep.

Is as between you and the Commission but then there is a message?-- Saying "this may be better"?

Yes?-- Yes.

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Could you just take a look at that. One thing I want to clarify is that you were based in New South Wales, is that right?-- Just across the border, yes.

Which would have been in daylight saving time?-- Yes.

And trying to work out the times on these emails, I am just wondering-----?-- That can be confusing at times.

Yeah. So I am not sure - if you turn over the page, there is an email dated - purports to have been sent at 9.05 a.m.-----?-- Uh-huh.

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-----from Michael Bath. I am just wondering whether that would be 9.05 Queensland time or daylight saving time?-- I would actually have to check that, because it would depend obviously what computer it was sent from and what it went through as to what the timestamp is on it.

Can we work it out? Can you take a look at the document because it is one of those emails which has a tail and I am just trying to work out where it begins?-- I would say that it is, looking at the timestamp, initially New South Wales. I am just - I can't guarantee that. Then it switches on the other one to Queensland.

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All right?-- If I can understand what - what we were going, I might be able to help.

I am wondering if this one was ever sent for a start?-- Yeah.

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It doesn't appear to correspond to - the text in this email, it looks like there is a suggestion there - "this may be better. Queensland emergency flash flood warning", and so on - that doesn't appear - and please correct me if I'm wrong - to correspond to text contained in any of the early warnings which were actually sent that we have just looked at, the last of which was on the 11th at 8.24?-- Certainly, okay. What I

can do with that is that subsequent to the warning that you will have there that was sent on the 11th-----

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Yes?-- The - shortly after that the Queensland Government declared a state of emergency.

Yes?-- And we looked at that immediately, obviously, and the Bureau of Meteorology started to issue Brisbane River flood warnings, so we then started to speak with council regarding the issue of a specific warning for that, albeit one of the things we were concerned about was creating unnecessary alarm, because there was an incredible amount of media coverage over it at that particular time, saturated, and we were concerned that that could create something alarmist and we didn't have any specific information that was meaningful from the Bureau of Meteorology, because, as you would have seen, and has been talked about here, river heights and that type of thing didn't really mean a lot to people as to inundation levels and how their homes would be impacted. So we spoke to council about that and they, of course, were deep in discussions with Seqwater, with Bureau of Meteorology, with Emergency Management Queensland, hydrologists and everybody else trying to - obviously I am just saying that from a side view-----

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Can you just slow down a bit?-- Sorry, from a side view, if you like, trying to get a handle on what the inundation levels were going to be like. So we did have that discussion and they decided that at that particular time to have us stand by and wait for their notice if they wanted us to do anything.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you - sorry, Mr Callaghan - at page 12 that we were looking at before, there is the content and SMS message which is the equivalent of what's in the email about heavy rainfalls spreading south to south-west into the greater Brisbane area. So do you send something different by SMS than what goes out on this other weather alert?-- We will change the content to try to fit into a 146 character set for texting.

So is what was in the email what was sent by SMS?-- This one here you mean?

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I don't know what you are holding up?-- Sorry, Commissioner.

I am looking at page 12 which is an alert, and previously I had on my screen an email with content about flash flood warning, very heavy rainfalls spreading south to south-west into the Brisbane area - greater Brisbane area?-- Yes, which is actually sent. So those are contents of the message that was actually sent at that time on that day.

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So what's in the email went by way of SMS?-- Yes.

Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: But the - still on page 12-----?-- So, I mean, it appears that what we're talking about with the email, just to clarify, is actually what was incorporated within that SMS.

The email's what's contained in the box under the-----?--
Yes.

-----heading "Weather Alert"?-- Correct.

COMMISSIONER: No, it isn't, is it? I am getting very
confused here.

MR CALLAGHAN: I am confused, too.

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COMMISSIONER: I thought what was in the email you have got at
the top of the page under SMS content, but it doesn't match
what's in the box under "Weather Alert"?-- Sorry, I am a
little confused. How we do this is we create the SMS content,
which is there, and then we essentially take the Bureau of
Meteorology content that they provide and incorporate that in
the email warning.

So the email warning is not the same as the SMS warning?--
No. What we do - what we will frequently do with the SMS -
sorry, I was misunderstanding - is hone it down so it makes a
little more sense for who we anticipate is actually getting
that SMS warning. In other words, in many events, the
information from the Bureau of Meteorology may cover a much
wider area, say it is for a thunderstorm or whatever but we're
using that content to be able to distribute the warning and
then we refine it and use messaging that reflects the impact
on the specific area that we're targeting, and in this
particular instance - this is where we spoke with council to
ask for their input that would reflect what they want their
residents to hear.

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It is just that the SMS doesn't seem to bear much resemblance
at all to the other warning. There is nothing in the other
warning about greater Brisbane area?-- No, we previously sent
warnings over the last - in fact, we'd sent a warning
virtually every day over the last three days up until that
point and our normal standard operating procedure would be we
mightn't have sent one because this was just a reissue of the
Bureau of Meteorology's warnings that had been out there.
What we wanted to do was issue another one which suggested a
greater urgency, if you like; in other words ratchet it up a
little bit upon what we were doing so that people would look
at it and take a bit of urgency to it.

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Why don't you replicate that in the email weather alert?--
This is something we've actually sat down with the Bureau of
Meteorology and talked about with the email warnings. We
really want to try to stick with their continuity, and we
point - because we had the opportunity to when we use it, we
point people to the Bureau of Meteorology website and to the
radar as well so they can see how they might be personally
affected. The email's going to get there a little bit later.
Also, in manufacturing the additional content for the email,
is a little bit more difficult but it is a good point to take
on board that we might be able to reflect that something in
the individual emails.

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I see.

MR CALLAGHAN: Why is it more difficult to manufacture the content of the email?-- Because of the process in which we get information from the Bureau of Meteorology and other places, and we then have to reformat that content to push it out through our system, so that you have to have a person sitting there doing that. They have to create the SMS messaging and they have to do it relatively quickly, and in most of these instances we're trying to turn this around in our system within two to three minutes. So continuity is a real key because the recipients on the end of it have to get used to the way you do this type of messaging. So the way we do the email formatting reflects that. But having taken on board what you have said, there might be a possibility to look at in future customising, if you like, those emails a little more. It takes a little more work but that's something we could look at.

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Using just this one as an example, though, the simple issue is how hard would it have been to incorporate the SMS content into the email? Just those two lines, how hard would it have been to insert those into the email that went as well?-- We could do that. We would have to look at that. I don't necessarily think that would improve the messaging. Most of the people on the end of this system have both, and so the idea of the SMS is that it gives them a heads up so they can then seek information and they can then go to the email or to the Bureau of Meteorology to see how that personally affects them.

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It would have improved the messaging for people in the greater Brisbane area, though, wouldn't it, because the SMS did at least alert them to a specific situation. The email didn't really do that?-- We can certainly, as you are suggesting, look at adding more information into the email.

COMMISSIONER: You might have to change the source because it won't be the Bureau of Meteorology?-- This is a real big concern. I mean, we are a private operator, and because of that, you know, this - nobody does what we do. We're the first people in the world to do what we call location-based alerting for severe weather. Therefore, we're crossing a few different disciplines. What we're trying to avoid is conflicting with current messaging from current approved, authorised providers, so we really don't have authorisation in the total content venue, if you like, from the Bureau of Meteorology to change their messaging. So we don't do that.

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MR CALLAGHAN: So what was the source of the SMS? Is that the council information?-- We - no, this particular one, yes, yes.

Yeah?-- It was a joint one where we talked about it and then we worked out what the messaging should be on it.

COMMISSIONER: It looks your email was sent around 8 o'clock

eastern standard time just looking at the correspondence with this?-- Correct. 1

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you just incorporate, in effect, the SMS as suggested with source Brisbane City Council?-- Yes, we would.

And then the SMS as it reads?-- Yes, we could.

And it would be a simple matter for them to request you to do that, I guess?-- Yes, yep. 10

Okay. I tender that email exchange.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 298.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 298" 20

MR CALLAGHAN: And at the same time you have also - you retrieved some other emails as well but I don't think we need to address those, thank you. They are all the questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions thank you. 30

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Mr Plowright, just a couple of questions, as my learned friend Mr Callaghan has demonstrated on the occasion of the January floods, you were in consultation with my client, the Brisbane City Council, able to tailor your response to the circumstances as they unfolded, but primarily the task you perform is to provide imminent warnings, isn't it?-- Correct, yeah. 40

And it is really because there is no other suitable broadcast means by which you can warn somebody of an event that might be minutes to a few hours away. Would you agree with that?-- Absolutely. In fact, that is where, if you want to put it this way, the system shines. It is that imminent warning status, and the example would be if a Grantham style emergency occurred in the Brisbane City Council area, that would have been caught by our system. We would have spoken to the council several hours earlier about our concerns for the area and what we might have done about that. So we might have put some messaging to go out in place of that. For something like a flooding event, that's entirely different. As we have talked about, we've only just completed the trial and those 50

were things that we were obviously looking at on the expansion

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of this service.

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Certainly, and we can all learn from an experience like this, but I just want to explore with you, to use your expression, why this particular service shines for the imminent warnings. It operates, at least in the instance we're concerned with here, by the SMS messaging and the internet messaging. Now, the SMS messaging is, as you have indicated, limited by a relatively short character content, agree?-- Correct.

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So that the message is one that is necessarily brief?-- Yes.

And it is, no doubt, a suitable one for imminent situations like the "immediately evacuate the area"?-- Absolutely.

It is not well suited to giving detailed advice?-- Yes.

Similarly, the internet service, whilst, you have, got, if you like, endless scope to write as much as you want, again, for the service to shine, to use your expression, that turnaround time of a couple of minutes which you gave evidence of earlier, doesn't permit, on a practical level, the editing or rewriting of these things, does it?-- Yes.

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And, in fact, what your system is really intended to do is augment - sorry, its principal application is in relation to imminent events, agreed?-- Yes, absolutely. That's right.

And it can buttress an event that unfolds in a more orderly fashion such as a river flood, correct?-- Correct.

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But it doesn't - it doesn't have the same primacy, and can I suggest that for these reasons: your system operates on an immediate turnaround and limited analysis, agreed?-- Yep.

And that's appropriate for an event that requires an immediate response. Where you have got a river flood, the event is going to unfold in a more orderly fashion, isn't it?-- That's right.

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And the information - you will have a greater amount of time to gather together the information?-- Yes.

And you will be looking to deliver a greater volume of information than in the case of, say, a flash flood?-- Yes.

And in circumstances like that - and if we reflect upon what actually happened in Brisbane - in effect most commercial television and radio - well, I wouldn't limit it to that - television and radio largely turns to reporting the unfolding flood events on that Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday?-- I thought the media coverage was significant, and I think both council and media should be commended for the amount of information that they pumped out there. It was incredible. It was good.

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And when it comes to providing that sort of information about

something like a river flood, you would agree that those

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mediums, like television and radio, will be a much better vehicle for providing the extent of information that you are in a position to provide?-- Actually, we very much fill what I call the warning gap and that is that gap where an event escalates, like it did in Grantham, or like it did on Black Saturday, where you need that immediacy, that imminency that you talked about to get that information out there as rapidly as possible, so that people can react quickly and do it in a way that gets the right behavioural aspects from people. Fortunately, we have got the combination of combining multiple channels so that we can do that, but that is what it is all about.

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All right. And so that in your professional opinion at least, the most expedient role for your organisation in the event of something like a river flood as we had, is really to direct people to the fact that an event's unfolding, but for them then to go and get their detailed information elsewhere?-- Yes, and I think others have alluded to that as well, so that you don't create that cultural aspect where people are looking for information more or less to come to them, that we provide them with a heads-up and point to where they need to go and they need to monitor a situation.

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Yes. Thank you for your attention to my questions. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: You've mentioned Grantham a couple of times. Where would you have drawn your information from?-- Sorry, Commissioner, from?

You've mentioned Grantham - the fact that you might have been able to issue a warning in that case. Where would you have drawn your information from?-- In that particular instance - and you'll be hearing, I'm sure, and have statements from Anthony Cornelius and others - Anthony Cornelius does work for us as well - Weather Watch - and as you'll be aware there were conversations early in the morning because our guys are monitoring those sort of events continuously, and several of them were quite alarmed at what was starting to occur at that time, and they were-----

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All right. I'm just asking you about your sources. So, you're saying that that kind of Weather Watch group-----?-- Yes.

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-----is one of-----?-- Meteorologists-----

-----your sources?-- -----and a network, if you like, of enthusiasts, who continuously talk about that. I mean, we tap into that as well. It's not like our guys aren't experts, they are-----

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Who are your guys?-- Well, that's - Michael Bath is our alerts manager and Anthony Cornelius provides forecasting services for us as well through Weather Watch, and Anthony Cornelius is the one that - through the statements you will see actually picked what was happening there several hours earlier, but it is through those sources that we would hope, for instance, to provide our customers - that's Brisbane City Council, or Townsville City Council, or anybody else that we're working with - forward notice of something that we're worried about that they can look at, because those are things that then go to the nature of local geography and other things that only those local bodies would be aware of.

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Right, thank you?-- So, you stitch that together, you might come up with something sensible that can be aimed at the people that might be vulnerable.

All right. Thank you. Mr Ure? 1

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions, your Honour. 10

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No re-examination. May Mr Plowright be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Plowright. You're excused?-- Thank you. 20

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Gordana Petroccitto. 30

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GORDANA PETROCCITTO, SWORN AND EXAMINED.

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name?--
Gordana Petroccitto.

And your occupation?-- Project officer with Brisbane City
Council.

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You've prepared a statement for the Commission which contains
a number of attachments; is that correct?-- That's correct.

It's being shown to you now. I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 299.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 299"

MR CALLAGHAN: Ms Petroccitto, can you I take you to page -
sorry, I've lost the reference. I probably don't need to take
you to a page. In your statement, you refer to the number of
households who are registered for the purposes of the early
warnings that are distributed. The impression we get is that
those who register would seem to register for both E-mail and
SMS; would that be - as a broad proposition, would that be
right?-- I would say so, yes.

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When we see that 19,000 E-mails and 19,000 SMSs were sent, it
is a fair bet saying that most of those are sent to the same -
same person?-- Yes.

We've just heard from Mr Plowright about where the information
that's contained in those warnings comes from, and he's
explained that a lot contain information which is more or less
directly passed on from the Bureau of Meteorology; is that
right?-- Yes, that's right.

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But there is that other category where specific information
from other sources is incorporated into the message, and one
of those other sources is the Council itself?-- At times,
yes.

At times?-- Yes.

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Can you just explain to us the process by which that sort of
information gets forwarded to the Early Warning Network for
them to incorporate into a message?-- Certainly. There
haven't been a lot of instances that we have had to actually
incorporate information into what is the standard process
currently used. However, during the event, I do recall that
we were contacted by EWN because of the situation, and we
elected to insert a comment about where available sandbags

were located, and generally the - it would take - the process is a conversation over the phone and a confirmation E-mail.

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Who actually does that?-- I'm usually the point of contact for EWN. I then would discuss the matter and get confirmation from my management, and then I would actually pass on the information and the agreed wording to EWN.

Okay. The most - the best way to do this might be to actually refer to that page of Mr - page 12 of Mr Plowright's statement we just tendered. Could I ask the witness to see that? This is just a copy of the material that's just been produced to the Commission, and it relates to the warnings sent on the 11th of January, 8.24, eastern standard time. Can you see that at the top of the page - page 12 of the document that you've just been handed?-- Yes.

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You see there's - that there were two messages sent at that time by the Early Warning Network - sorry, probably three. There was an SMS, landline and E-mail. The SMS content does not appear to be reflected in the E-mail and it does appear to be in that category of information which would have been imparted after consultation with the Council; is that right?-- That's correct.

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And who actually devised the form of words for the SMS?-- For the SMS? That seems to be standard wording - a normal SMS for a severe weather event would be based on the BOM warning.

Somebody has actually crafted that into the number of characters that-----?-- That's correct, and that would be done in consultation.

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With - first of all, done by you?-- In consultation with Council - be it myself or another officer.

And when you say "in consultation with Council", with whom in Council?-- Either myself or another officer.

Now, you're the one who's actually working out the message, aren't you?-- My role is to be the point of contact for Council.

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Mmm?-- However, I don't have any authority to approve any messages.

Fair enough. Who actually approves it?-- That would be my manager.

And who is that?-- Chris Lavin - at that particular time was Acting Operations Manager.

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Okay. The operations manager?-- Correct.

I'm just interested in the circumstances in which the Council would take it upon themselves to draft a message of this kind. Is there any set procedure for what should happen when that - when there appears to be a need for that?-- Can you repeat

the question, sorry?

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I'm talking about that situation where - not where the Early Warning Network is passing on something from BOM, but where Council is actually wanting something put out there themselves. Is there any set procedure involved in that situation?-- We actually do do that for king tides at the moment.

Well, what's the procedure?-- The procedure is that in consultation with EWN, a Council officer - that may be myself - would actually write a draft that then would actually go through the process of management for sign off, and then we forward it to EWN.

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Right. Turning back to this particular period in time, was there ever any contact made or information received from the flood information centre?-- With regards to these alerts?

With regards to these sort of alerts?-- No.

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No. Why was that? It's just not part of the-----?-- The current process is based on the BOM alert. So, EWN would wait for a BOM alert to be issued.

Yes?-- Based on the information contained in the BOM alert.

Yes?-- EWN would then predict the path of the event and then they would actually send out that alert to those residents registered within that path.

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COMMISSIONER: Am I missing something? Where does the content of this SMS come from? I thought Mr Plowright said it was the Council.

MR CALLAGHAN: Well, the SMS was drafted - who actually worked out the characters?-- That would have been done in consultation between the Council and EWN.

But who actually did it? Who actually typed that on to the screen and pushed "send"?-- As an alert?

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As it reads?-----

COMMISSIONER: Who actually knew that there would be very heavy rainfall spreading south-west to the greater Brisbane area and that flash flooding was likely. Who told whom that?-- That would have been an alert issued from BOM. EWN would have contacted the Council.

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MR CALLAGHAN: See, the E-mail that appears below that appears to be the BOM alert issued at that time. That just looks like a BOM alert that's been flicked past - straight on to the Early Warning Network, but you're saying that there would have been another BOM alert in the terms expressed in the SMS content?-----

COMMISSIONER: See, the SMS is different from the E-mail?--

It is.

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I'm just curious about where the information in the SMS comes from, and it seems odd if it is BOM information that it isn't in the BOM alert?-- The - if I can go through the process of how the Severe Weather Alert Service works. The process is that it is based on the BOM alert. Once the BOM alert has been sent, EWN then predict the potential path. They would then establish the suburbs that would be impacted. They would then take out the most relevant information out of the BOM alert, translate that into an SMS message, and send that message to the residents.

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So, effectively, you're saying this came from EWN - the content of that-----?-- On the 11th of January, there was consultation - and, sorry, that may be the confusion. There was consultation with Council.

Well, did the Council contribute to the content of the SMS?-- In this particular case, I can't quite confirm that now.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Can we show you some E-mails which might refresh your memory and which do touch on this subject, but don't necessarily answer the question. That's the exhibit that was just - this is an exchange of E-mails between yourself and Michael Bath, and just take a moment to look at it, but it appears at 8.20 a.m., the subject of the next is addressed, and he says, "This may be better.", but it doesn't really give us much of a clue as to what's gone beforehand?-- Yes. So there was a conversation between Michael and myself after he sent through the initial E-mail. That would have happened over the phone. We had suggested alternative wording and then Michael had then suggested alternative wording to our suggestion.

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And where did your suggestion come from?-- That would have been a discussion within our office.

Between who?-- Between my team.

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All right. And your discussion was prompted by what?-- By the E-mail received.

The E-mail received from EWN in the first place?-- Correct.

We don't see - the only E-mail we seem to have from them to you is the one on the following page, which looks pretty similar. Are you telling us there was another E-mail suggesting that a specific Council warning should go, or-----?-- No. So, there would have been a conversation with EWN, then the E-mail would have come through suggesting some text, and then another conversation, and then subsequent E-mails. So, unfortunately, in this E-mail - in this print-out, the telephone conversations are missing.

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I follow. All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Your Honour, I expect nobody else has got anything, so shall I deal with-----

COMMISSIONER: Well, shall I just check that?

MR DUNNING: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: Nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No, your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

MR DUNNING: Ms Petrocitto, can I ask you just a couple of questions. Do you still have Exhibit 298 with you? That's the E-mails of 11 January?-- Yes, I do.

Okay, thank you. Now, outside the exceptional circumstances such as this, the way the system was working was that EWN would, in fact, craft an appropriate SMS message and simply issue it, correct?-- That's correct.

Without reference to Council?-- That's correct.

All right. But, in unusual circumstances, Council would take an active interest in the form of the SMS alerts?-- That's correct.

Thank you. And on the morning of the 11th was one of those occasions where yourself and colleagues were concerned to endeavour to tailor the SMS alert in the manner that you thought expedient?-- That's correct.

Now, tell me if this doesn't accord with what you recollect, but having seen the E-mail now, does it appear to you that there was some discussion before 8.20 between yourself and

Mr Bath regarding the fact that a tailored SMS message was desired?-- Yes.

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And that, apparently at least, yourself and colleagues had come up with some ideas, and as a response to that, Mr Bath then sends you this E-mail, suggesting something that he thought was better tailored to the situation?-- Yes.

Thank you. And, in due course, you gave authority for it to be issued?-- That's correct.

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Thank you. Nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Ms Petroccitto. You're excused?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Commissioner, I call Dennis Ward.

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DENNIS WARD, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Dennis Ward?-- Yes, it is.

Do you reside at Nardoo Street in Fernvale?-- Yes, I do.

And you have been a resident of the Fernvale community for 18 years?-- That's correct.

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You provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry about flooding in the Fernvale area?-- Yes, I did.

Can you have a look at this document, please? Is that the statement that you provided to the Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, it is.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 300.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 300"

MS WILSON: Mr Ward, you're the coordinator and founding member of the Fernvale Action Group?-- I am.

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What function does the Fernvale Action Group do?-- We formed after the floods. Basically we found that, through some meetings that were held after the flooding, that there were a lot of concerns that had been raised with local and State Government in regards to infrastructure, that there had been a lot of development in the town and, I guess, infrastructure hadn't been maintained. It had been raised and we just felt that, as a group, we would have a stronger voice if we were raising these concerns as one group through to Council and State Government.

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You say this group was formed after the flooding events of January 2011?-- Yes, it was.

Have you had any meetings with the local government since you were formed?-- We've had two action group meetings since then and there has been local and State Government representation at those meetings.

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You raised some issues in your statement, so perhaps we'll address them later on?-- Yes.

You live at Nardoo Street, Fernvale. That's a lowset house?-- Yes, it is.

At paragraph 5, you talk about that you live on a water

course, and you state that the water course starts from a drain which causes water to flow from the south side of the Brisbane Valley Highway, between your current property and your neighbour's property, and the water course then flows down into a lagoon and then feeds into the Brisbane River?-- That's correct. 1

Now, you've also provided a map attached to your statement. Perhaps if we can look at this map? Have you got that map in front of you?-- Yes, I have. 10

Now, you identified on this map there is old and new?-- Yep.

And that identifies your old house where you used to live on Nardoo Street?-- Yes.

And your new house where you now live on Nardoo Street. Then you've got the reserve water course and we've got some arrows?-- Yes. 20

Is that the - is that - those - does that line and arrows indicate where that water course exists?-- That's correct. That's the reserve area.

Okay. Now, how far away is the Brisbane River from your property?-- I understand it's two kilometres heading in that particular direction. The Brisbane River, I guess, goes in a U-shape around Fernvale, to some degree.

Now, in your statement, you refer to the development of the Fernvale hillside?-- Yes. 30

And you are of the opinion that this development affects the ability of the stormwater drains in Fernvale to cope with rain events?-- Yes.

Can you explain that opinion to us?-- Fernvale has been part of - identified as part of the urban corridor. The original area of Fernvale that was developed that I live in, a large - are predominantly acreage sites, and it is on the flat area of Fernvale. The hill area, which is now being developed, is - they're smaller sites, and they're being built with, I guess, the usual sort of infrastructure that you would see in those areas with large roads, kerbing and guttering, the sites are, I guess, mainly a house, so there's a lot more potential for run-off from those sites as opposed to the original developments in Fernvale which were predominantly, I guess, grass and that sort of thing. 40

In your statement you raise that to cope with this development, the Council has put an increased number of stormwater drains in?-- They have done some stormwater drainage in these sites, and, as I said, they've all got proper kerbing and guttering and that sort of work, but unfortunately they tend to sort of end at a point, and that water then - once it flows out of there - out of those estates, goes into a gully or into a channel or just is left to dissipate over a large area of land, and those - because 50

they're up higher, that water flows through into the original area of Fernvale.

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Now, in October 2010, there was some flooding in the Fernvale area?-- That's correct.

Your property was not affected?-- No.

But your neighbours were?-- My neighbour's was, yep.

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If we can go back to that map, which is indicated at DW01, the map in front of you, where is the drain in relation to your property?-- Where it says "reserve water course"-----

Yes?-- -----there's actually a drain through there.

Okay. And is there an opening?-- I beg your pardon?

Where is the opening?-- Just on the other side of the highway there are three drain pipes, or three pipes, that are 450 millimetre diameter that go underneath the highway, and then there's also - next to the highway, there is also a path and three pipes go under that path as well. So, then, on this side of the highway, it's just an open drain where the reserve area has just been cut down to a lower level.

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Perhaps if - have you got a pen there?-- Yes.

If we can have a look at the exhibit of DW01?-- Yes.

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Perhaps if you can put in where you say those drains are - or the culverts?-- Yep.

So we can get a better indication of where that is?-- That - where it says - the reserve water course and those arrows basically is where the water flows. That is the drain.

Okay. And you talked about the culverts before?-- Sorry.

The culverts. You talked about that?-- They are - yep, they're just on the other side of the highway.

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Okay?-- So, where the word "reserve" is-----

Okay?-- Yep, they start there.

Okay?-- And then across from that is all farming property.

We can identify it then on the map if it's where the word "reserve" is?-- Yes.

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That's where you say those culverts are?-- Yes.

Okay. Now, in January 2011, your property got flooded?-- Yes, it did.

And this occurred on the 11th and 12th of January?-- It occurred - yes, on the morning of the 11th from the storm, and

then it occurred again that evening.

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Now, you've provided some video footage to the Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I did.

Perhaps if we could just show you some of this. Now, this is your house?-- Yes.

And can you recall when this video footage was taken?-- It was taken about 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday the 11th. So, we'd been through the worst of it. We'd been up on the roof prior to that, and at this stage we felt the levels were, I guess, safe enough to sort of come down and see what was occurring. We did go and have a look at - to see if our neighbours were okay and at that stage I had spoken to a person who was wearing yellow overalls, so I assume from the SES or rural fire brigade, who informed us that they were evacuating the area.

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Can you give us any indication of where you believe the water was coming from?-- It was coming from directly across the road, through the farm that was across the road, and then that catchment extended up through to the south of that area.

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Now-----?-- So, basically as I face the camera that way, that's the direction the water was coming through.

So where we see that shed and the car parked-----?-- Yep.

-----beyond there is where you say the water was coming from?-- Yes, yes.

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Okay. That's enough footage. Now, do you-----

COMMISSIONER: Do you want that tendered?

MS WILSON: I will tender that.

COMMISSIONER: It's on a disc?

MS WILSON: On a disc.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 301.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 301"

MS WILSON: On the 11th of January, you left your residence?-- Yes, we evacuated around that time, so around 9.30, and we were then advised to either go up to the Futures Complex, which we couldn't get to, because the road was bogged, or up to the school, and we went up to the school.

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When you returned on the 12th of January, you say that the high water mark was 1.2 metres on the outside and one metre on the inside of the house?-- Yes.

So, by looking at the marks on the house, you could work out how high the water came?-- Yes, after that initial storm event in the morning, we actually came back to the house, because the water had left and had stopped coming across the road by about 3 o'clock, I understand. That water had basically - had left the township. People were out having a look to survey what sort of damage had occurred at that time and then we left the property again around 5.30, 6 o'clock to go and stay with a friend.

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Can you tell me whether the height of the water was higher on the 11th or the 12th of January?-- It was higher on the 12th.

Now, if I can take you to paragraph 95, page 13 of your statement, there you state concerns expressed by the Fernvale Community Action Group?-- Yes.

And if I could take you to some of those concerns that you have stated in your statement. The first concern that is expressed on page 13 is the Local Council planning in relation to the large growth and development to the Fernvale area was insufficient?-- Yes.

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Now, we've touched on this before?-- Yes.

And you were talking about the development on the hillside. You state that you believe that there was a lack of foresight regarding the drainage requirements of the Fernvale area?-- Yes.

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And it is your view that that contributed to the severity of the flooding experience?-- Yeah, so, not only had the planning not taken into account the needs for increased drainage, but also the drains hadn't been properly maintained, and a lot of the drains were - had built up with silt and grass and that over the years.

Now, you have brought these concerns regarding the drainage to the attention of the Local Council?-- Yes, we have, and since the floods, they have enlisted a contractor to do a drainage capacity assessment, and that's due to be completed this month.

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The next issue that I wish to raise is that you state that "no disaster response or warning for Fernvale residents"?-- That's correct.

And that flows on from that concern that you have expressed - the concerns that you expressed about the drainage. That's on page 15 of your statement. Now, you say in paragraph 106, "The Council was aware that, prior to this time, that there was no Emergency Response Team in place for the Fernvale area, and the former emergency response team had become defunct during the 12 months prior to this event." What Emergency Response Team was in the area some 12 months - some 12 months previously?-- I'm not aware of any Emergency Response Group within the town, and none of the residents that I've spoken to

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were aware of any Emergency Response Group. We had the rural fire brigade there, and we expected, I guess, that they, in an event, would probably take the lead role.

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What was the former Emergency Response Team that you're referring to in paragraph 106?-- Apparently, yes, by legislation, there needs to be an Emergency Response Group within a community, and that in speaking to people within the community or within the Council, they had said that that group - and I guess maybe because of membership - I'm not too sure - had really become defunct and that, prior to Christmas, there was some plans to try and get it back up and running - given the likelihood of storm events and that - but that hadn't occurred by the time the flooding occurred.

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One of the issues you raise is that there was no sirens or similar auditory warning systems in place to alert Fernvale residents?-- That's correct. And I guess, again, we had the storm event in the morning and there was no alerts to the fact that that was occurring. But, I guess, more so the concern of residents was the fact that in between that, that event in the morning and then the flooding that occurred as a result of the release of the water from the dam in the evening, people were going about business as usual. I mean, we were trying to recover some property from our place, had put things up higher in our house to sort of just make sure they were out of any water, but there was no indications that afternoon that there was going to be another flooding event.

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Just focussing on the issue of sirens-----?-- Yep.

-----you talk about there was no community speaker system. Is that something that the Fernvale Community Action Group is seeking?-- It is, yes. We - I guess a siren firstly to indicate that there is some sort of event occurring and then a loud speaker system to actually tell people what the nature of the event is.

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And where do you suggest that that could be positioned?-- Well, the siren's in the middle of town now. It is actually there, it is with the Rural Fire Brigade, it wasn't sounded, and, I guess, any sort of loud speaker system - it could even be a loud speaker system or it could be like a radio broadcast to tell people - give them details of what event it is and what they should do.

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So you say the rural fire brigade does have a siren?-- Yes.

You talk there that they had fire trucks they could have used?-- Yes.

But they also as well have a siren?-- Yes. I only saw - that morning and during that day I only saw one SES person in town.

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Now, in paragraph 109 you discuss that you had television, you had internet, you had some radio capabilities but at no time did you receive any community warnings?-- That was first thing that morning, yes.

Or direction to evacuate. You then discuss that there was a text message warning system initiated by the SES?-- Yes.

Did you get that text?-- No, I didn't.

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Do you know of other residents who got that text?-- I do know of residents that got it and it seems that it didn't seem to matter which network you were on. Some people got it on Telstra, others in my family on Telstra, they didn't get the alert.

Do you know when the residents received this text?-- They

didn't receive it until around midday on the Tuesday and it was in regards to the flooding event that was sort of unfolding from the storm-----

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Okay?-- -----which had already passed by.

You talk about, at the top of page 16, which is the continuation of paragraph 111, that some residents received a test text message on Wednesday the 19th of January which featured no warning but was merely a test of the system?-- Sorry, that date should be the 12th.

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Okay?-- Yeah.

So-----?-- And when we asked council about it, about the warning, that was the response, that it was actually just a test of the system, that it hadn't been fully implemented.

Okay. So where your statement says the 19th of January, that should be the 12th?-- That should be the 12th.

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Perhaps if you can have your statement and you can make that amendment. Now, in relation to warning about releases from the Wivenhoe Dam?-- Yes.

Are the Fernvale residents seeking some warning from the operators of the Wivenhoe Dam?-- Yes, we are, yep.

And what steps have you done for that - to put that into action?-- At this stage there hasn't been any discussions with Seqwater in regards to an early warning system from them but it is certainly something we would like to see, I guess, out of this, that there would be an early warning system put in place, particularly because of the proximity of townships like Lowood and Fernvale to the dam where the warning system is no more - we have got no more than one and a half hours to two hours of increased water releases.

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That's the next question I am going to ask. How long does it take when water is released from Wivenhoe Dam to reach Fernvale?-- It is only one and a half to two hours.

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Thank you, Mr Ward. They are the only questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR HUGHES: My name is Hughes, initial J, representing Seqwater. Mr O'Donnell is detained briefly elsewhere. But in any event, we have no questions for this witness.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR PORTER: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have no questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have no questions.

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MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. May Mr Ward be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Ward, you are excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Megan McKillop.

MR CALLAGHAN: No, she doesn't. I call Peter Martin.

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PETER JOHN MARTIN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your name, rank and station, please?-- Yes, my name is Peter John Martin. I am Assistant Commissioner of Police currently I am attached to Metropolitan North Police Region.

Thank you. You have prepared two statements for the purpose of the Commission, is that correct?-- That's correct.

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There is one dated 9 March and one dated 3rd of May?-- That's correct.

The one dated the 3rd of May has three attachments to it, is that correct?-- That's correct.

Perhaps they could be - perhaps the one of 9th of March could be one exhibit and the 3rd of May could be another.

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COMMISSIONER: They will be 302 and 303 respectively.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 302"

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 303"

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MR CALLAGHAN: And do you have copies of those there, Mr Martin?-- Yes, I do.

And the attachments?-- Yes, I do.

Can I take you to - I think it is the second attachment to the second statement. In any case, it is the document entitled "Issues involving resupply of Moggill, Belbowrie, Karana Downs and Mt Crosby"?-- Yes.

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You know the document?-- Yes, I do.

Can you just tell me what is this document; who prepared it or just tell us about it?-- I am the author of that document and I prepared that document while the flood event was ensuing and I prepared that document from a range of sources, not least of which were DDC log entries, my own personal notes, in notes such as official diaries and a range of other sources. So what I did was I acquired those notes from a range of sources to compile that particular log.

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When did you actually put it altogether?-- I put that altogether in the week preceding the most significant part of the flooding event. So that would have been the week commencing - the major peak event was in the early hours of

Thursday. I commenced the preparation of that document in the week thereafter and finalised it probably during that week, is my recollection.

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All right. I just want to dispose of this issue about your communications with Dr Flegg?-- Most certainly.

And in this document, which for the record is annexure C to your second statement-----?-- Yes.

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-----there is a detailed account of some of the conversations that you had with Dr Flegg. Have those been transcribed from another source like your official diary or something like that?-- Yes, they have.

They have?-- What I've done is I made notes at the time in my official diary.

Yes?-- And I have taken those, one source of the information, to supplement the detail in this log.

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You have just transcribed it and integrated it with other information so we have got a complete chronology?-- That's correct, yes.

Okay. There will be no problem with getting a copy of those notes-----?-- I would be happy to make those available.

-----from your diary at some stage? Okay, thank you. And in your statement of the 3rd of May, you say some things about the decision you made in your communications with Dr Flegg?-- That's correct.

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And can you accept that I am not asking these questions that I am about to ask with a view to judging the correctness or otherwise of that decision, it is just the process which is of interest?-- Yes.

Because, of course, there are aspects of this sort of situation could recur, couldn't it, in a disaster situation with someone trying to organise something privately?-- Most definitely.

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You - and I am summarising - suggest that your decision was influenced by a number of reasons?-- That's right.

One of them was that you - and this one I think you communicated to Dr Flegg - was that the powers under the Disaster Management Act only - the powers that you have are only to be exercised in special circumstances?-- That's correct.

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And, again, I am summarising, but, in effect, your view was that the circumstances of the resupply, or the food drop to the far western suburbs weren't special because they were going to be reprovisioned soon anyway?-- That's correct. In fact, my conversation immediately after I had my initial conversation with Dr Flegg confirmed that-----

Yes?-- -----when I spoke to my executive officer.

He had a different perspective, which you understand?-- Yes, I do. I understand Dr Flegg's perspective.

But your view-----?-- He is a strong advocate for his community, I understand that.

All I am interested in, though, is that that was the reason why you did not think that this was special. In other words, you can conceive, can't you, of a need to authorise a private resupply as being special circumstances. If there hadn't been reprovisioning happening anyway?-- If there hadn't been reprovisioning under the circumstances that were occurring at that time, then I would certainly need to look at the urgency and immediacy of the request and certainly a private supply effort may have been appropriate under the circumstances.

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That's all I am getting at, is that you don't feel that your powers under the Act couldn't authorise such a delivery if there was nothing else happening?-- Can I say to you that my view is that under the circumstances, I can acquire - and that is under the Disaster Management Act, I can acquire the use of a helicopter or other vessel or vehicle, I can apply that for a purpose under the Act, but the ability for me to authorise a private individual to undertake a private use of a resource, I see as being somewhat different and I see myself not being able to authorise that under the legislation.

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All right. And I think your next point is an interesting one, and I think that might be at least related to what you were saying, is could you have done it anyway? What power - and I think you acknowledge in your statement as at the time you wrote it, you weren't sure that you had the power to authorise a helicopter to land or authorise a particular flight path for a helicopter anyway?-- No, that's quite correct. I was also concerned from a risk management perspective that I was being asked to authorise a very complex set of arrangements that largely I had no control over, issues such as the serviceability of the aircraft maintenance schedule, the flight path, the competency of the crew, in particular the pilot, whether fatigue management had been looked after and a range of other issues. That was certainly exercising my mind at that particular time. So in order for me to make that decision without that information, apart from the legal issues, I saw as being quite problematic.

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The legal issues themselves are a subject of interest, or at least they are of interest to us because you make the point - and I think by all means refer to your statement - but it is in paragraph 22, that you made a call to the QPS solicitor during all of this because, as you rightly point out, there are legal issues involved. Now, obviously you, with your rank, are at liberty to contact the QPS solicitor-----?-- That's correct.

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-----on legal issues. Can I ask this firstly: is that access

available to you 24/7?-- Yes, it is.

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Okay. But be that as it may, and we know that it was - that advice was available to you as a police officer, but is it - do you take it to be available to you as a DDC?-- Yes, I do.

Okay. And is there provision anywhere for - or is it part of any plan that urgent legal advice should be available to you in those sorts of circumstances?-- I can't tell you that it is part of a plan specifically but it goes without saying that part of my responsibilities require intimate application of legislation-----

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Mmm?-- -----sometimes in quite critical time-frames, and bearing in mind the only, at least to my mind, quick authoritative and easily to access source of legal advice is in fact the QPS.

That's of interest, whether that's adequate, and this is no reflection on Ms Bradley who clearly alerted you to relevant issues?-- That's correct.

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But it is not hard to imagine a situation in which urgent legal advice might be necessary on a specialist subject?-- That's quite so.

And aviation matters are such an issue?-- That's right.

And there is two aspects to it, I suppose: first of all, you need to know what you're authorised to do?-- That's correct.

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But, secondly, it would have been helpful, wouldn't it, or it might be helpful - let's leave the Dr Flegg situation behind - but it might be helpful to be able to advise to someone - to be able to advise someone, "Look, this is a Commonwealth issue"-----?-- Yes.

-----"you need to direct that to CASA", or whoever?-- Yes, that's correct.

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Let the ever helpful Commonwealth Attorney-General's office work through the legalities. That's not something that you can do?-- Yes, that's right.

All right. In that same statement - sorry, that's probably - I will give you the opportunity, though - was there anything else - I mean, those were the matters of interest to us arising out of the situation with Dr Flegg. Was there anything that you take forward from that exchange other than what you've recorded in your statement?-- I think the point has been made well thus far, and I would like to put on the record that any issues with respect to my, perhaps, insensitivity with respect to the need of that particular community would in fact be quite wrong. In fact, the plans were well afoot to reprovision that community. In fact, subsequent to the phone call from Dr Flegg, as I indicated, that we had a large amount of food and other provisions, including medications, that people had worked very, very hard

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on at the DDMG to acquire, they had in fact been sourced already and a detailed strategy had been determined with respect to the resupply of those communities. I might add, in fact, that we were able to facilitate that earlier than the early hours of the Friday morning. The very first vehicle reprovisioned the community of Moggill and Belbowrie by one unit carrying over a tonne of food certainly prior to midnight by 0250 hours on the Friday morning. We had in fact deployed the entire four plus tonnes of food into Moggill and Belbowrie the following day by way of an ADF asset we acquired and deployed eight plus tonnes of food into Karana Downs and Mt Crosby. So those plans were in fact well in train.

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And all of that was on your mind, which brings us back to where we started where you decided it wasn't the extreme situation-----?-- Correct.

-----that needed the power exercised?-- All of those things were exercised on my mind and subsequently were confirmed in my phone call to my executive officer to confirm those arrangements.

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All right. Let's leave that particular situation behind. Can I take you to paragraph 30 in that statement, where you speak to tasking Superintendent Fleming to build capacity to deal with such an event in the future. Could you elaborate on that for us, please?-- Most certainly. Immediately after the flood event and business was starting to return to normal, and I was starting to leave my DDC responsibilities, having regard for recovery was well and truly in train, and I was repatriating back to my usual role as Assistant Commissioner for Metropolitan North, I had a conversation in some detail with Superintendent Peter Fleming. Peter Fleming is the District Officer for Brisbane West District and he is the geographical catchment area, bearing in mind that he is one of my district officers and one of my reports. He has responsibility for the area of Moggill and Bellbowrie and the areas west of there, but not quite Karana Downs. That comes into the Ipswich district. But a fairly large catchment area and a very large geographical area is covered by this arrangement.

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COMMISSIONER: Do you think you could slow down just a little?-- I am sorry.

It has just got to be taken down?-- Most certainly. I apologise for that. So Peter Fleming, I had a conversation with him. This was now toward the latter part of January. The purpose of the conversation was to seek his assistance and task him specifically to engage with the local community, engage with local council, specifically within the context of building capability with respect to issues such as how do we communicate with formal and informal community leaders, what is the best way to facilitate that, how we can support evacuation centres, information centres, call them what you will, and the best way that we can support community if there was such an event to occur in the future, whether it be a flooding event, taking all-hazards approach, it may be a bush

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fire or some other event. So he has been tasked very specifically with respect to community engagement on those issues.

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MR CALLAGHAN: And what is the status of that or-----?-- That's currently a work in progress. I have received one progress report from him verbally. I know that he has other work in train at the present time, and that my expectation would be that is a body of work that will be rolled out over coming months and certainly toward the latter part of the year.

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Is it envisaged that he will give you a written report at some stage?-- I would certainly envisage a range of strategies that he would have identified. We will have further conversations about that but there would be some written report and I would be happy to make that report available to this Commission at some future time.

I was just going to try to get a clue, ballpark as to the timetable?-- Well, I can certainly give a preliminary report in coming months and that could be determined. But I would think that if you, depending upon your time-frames, if I was to provide a report on progress to date, somewhere in the order of late September/October, bearing in mind that this is a work in progress, I would be happy to do that, or at some other time as convenient.

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All right. Would it be possible to get a clue as to what was happening before then?-- Most certainly.

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Just in the way of a brief interim report, say, in early June?-- I would be happy to do that.

Just a summary, accepting that it is a work in progress?-- I would be happy to do that.

Thank you. Look, we might be able to - look, in paragraphs 31, 32 and 33 of that statement, you helpfully include some recommendations. These are the sorts of things that would be embraced in the sort of report you are talking about, I take it?-- Not necessarily.

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No?-- The sorts of things that I am talking about, that I have tasked Superintendent Fleming to look at is particularly related to not the more structural issues but moreover capacity building, capability building within the local community.

Communication?-- Communication ostensibly.

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All right?-- How do we function, how do we restore service as quickly as we possibly can, but particularly around issues of communication.

I will bring you back then to those paragraphs and ask whether you care to elaborate or add anything to what you have already suggested in that part of your statement?-- There is nothing

further I want to add, other than to say that the isolation of the community just doesn't occur within the context of a very significant flooding event. I am aware over a number of years there have been a number of occasions where the community have been isolated for varying times as a result of quite significant rainfall, not necessarily a flood of this proportion.

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All right. Moving then to the topic of river hazards, you say in paragraph 34, no doubt correctly, that you are unaware of any damage caused by the river walk. We all recall, though, the vivid image of a volunteer tug steering part of it through the pylons of the bridge. Is there any lesson to be learned from that example, any capability that needs to be developed in response to hazards of that nature?-- Certainly from my perspective, the fact that the river walk left the pylons in its then current position is probably an issue of engineering, and moreover clearly that could have been obviated potentially - and I am not an engineer - had a different engineering solution been used for that particular piece of walkway. In terms of our capability to be able to influence the walkway after it had left its position, that was a very difficult operation. We were fortunate, insomuch as we could position maritime assets at the lower reaches of the river. But further up the river where the walkway was, was virtually inaccessible by river vessel, having regard for the speed of the current, which my understanding was the peak of the event was flowing at something like 22 knots in the centre of the river and it was extremely difficult and it risked human life by venturing into the water in an event like that.

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So there is very little that can be done in respect of hazards like that?-- I found that that was the case, and, moreover, had at one stage prior to the river walk - attempting to - having left its current position, I wanted to explore the option and, in fact, my preferred option was to use explosives to actually compartmentalise the walkway into much smaller sections so we could manage it, and, moreover, if we couldn't manage it, then therefore it wouldn't cause significant damage as a result of the walkway in total leaving its position. But unfortunately the speed and the current that existed at the time prevented me from furthering that course. I literally couldn't get access to the river walk.

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So the absence of damage would seem to be really just a matter of good luck rather than anything else?-- I would definitely agree with that.

Can I take you then to paragraphs 65 to 69 of this statement, and this is under the heading of "Evacuation Centres". And I suppose the very fact that you've described them as such, whether technically or not, that's how they have been described, is as evacuation centres. That's the way you describe them in your statement?-- I do, that's correct.

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You draw attention, I think, to the fact where you say, "The Belbowrie centre was operated by three off-duty police officers." Just what do you mean by "operated" in that

paragraph?-- The language might suggest, you know, a coordination, a leadership role, in effect. My understanding was that there were three police officers at varying times assisted the community at those particular centres.

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They were operational?-- They were.

At least-----?-- That's correct.

-----assisting?-- These were officers that were isolated in that particular community-----

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Yes?-- -----who had self-activated, at least initially, and we were aware of their existence, and were making a significant contribution to assist the community.

That accords with our understanding?-- That's right.

I just wanted to clarify whether you agree. You have some interesting things to say in paragraph 72 about unofficial evacuation centres, and you set a place for them in "Emergency Management", but you also acknowledge the risks associated with them?-- I do.

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Look, one question which does occur to me, which is going to be raised by Mr Goebel from the Red Cross this afternoon, is the question of volunteer workers at centres such as this because the Red Cross does a criminal history check on volunteers who work at such centres. That's something, though, that one imagines could be hard to do in respect of a centre which just springs up. Do you have any thought on that topic?-- I most certainly do, and I can tell you that certainly one of the issues that we were grappling with at the time that evacuation centres were forming and volunteers were being pressed into service, whether they would be a formal regime or alternatively self-activating, it was the bona fides of those particular people and, yes, you are quite correct. I am concerned about the liability issues for the individual who self identifies and, through goodwill, wants to contribute, but, equally, I am concerned about the bona fides and the motivations of the individual. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that a person for some criminal purpose may want to inculcate them self in an unofficial evacuation centre, or, for that matter, an official one, and I think it is a cause of some concern.

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Mr Goebel makes the point that the people in these centres are going to be highly vulnerable-----?-- I hold the same view.

So, what's the solution?-- Well, certainly for my mind, I think that there is definitely a place for unofficial evacuation centres. I think that certainly the preplanning will, to some degree, expose the motivations of people who are very much community minded and what have you, particularly those that might want to take a leadership role with respect to the community self-activating.

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So if they were already on a register, for example, that could

be checked after a centre sprung up fairly spontaneously, that would make things easy, I suppose?-- Potentially, and potentially in an area such as occurred in the western suburbs of Brisbane where it is a very collegiate, confined area that ultimately is likely to be, you know, local people who were addressing their own local needs, people know who they are in the community and they're likely to be ensconced into the community and stand up and stand up early to assist their fellow community members.

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I suspect you've already answered this question, but criminal records are, of course, maintained by the police service?-- They are, that's correct.

Would it just be completely impractical to do a screening of volunteers in a short space of time available in setting up an evacuation centre?-- In the vast majority of cases and certainly from my experience, as I encountered with the Brisbane floods, I would find that to be incredibly problematic.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, it is just after 1.

MR CALLAGHAN: I think I'm just about finished, if that would be a convenient time.

COMMISSIONER: All right.

MR CALLAGHAN: I would seek leave to interpose a witness at 2.30. I believe she'll be very brief and she's on telephone.

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COMMISSIONER: I'm just wondering if we can let Mr Martin go, but how long is everybody going to be with him?

MR O'DONNELL: I have no questions, your Honour.

MR DUNNING: Commissioner, I don't have any questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have none.

MR MacSPORRAN: I will be about 10 minutes, I think, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: All right. We might leave it until 2.30, I think, or after the witness is interposed. Is 2.30 all right?

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MR CALLAGHAN: We might be able to finish Mr Martin at 2.30. I don't need leave to interpose someone, apparently. We can call that witness when Mr Martin is finished, especially if it's going to be brief.

COMMISSIONER: All right. We'll adjourn until 2.30.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1.03 P.M. TILL 2.30 P.M.

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THE COURT RESUMED AT 2.30 P.M.

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PETER JOHN MARTIN, CONTINUING EXAMINATION-IN-CHIEF:

MR CALLAGHAN: I just have two more questions for Mr Martin - or questions about two more things: just going back to the delivery of supplies to Moggill, which we know you'd arranged via a Unimog via the ADF; is that right?-- That's correct.

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Can you just explain, because it might be a useful example of how the Disaster Management System work, how that actually came to be that an army vehicle was activated even at that stage to deliver those supplies?-- Most certainly. The request emanates from the community, negotiated with the LDCC with respect to the provision of certain goods. Those goods are sourced by the LDCC, and at that point they realised that it was out of their capability to deliver those goods to the community in question. So, what they did was they escalated that request to the district, and from a district perspective, I identified the fact that the only way that we could possibly provision the community was using ADF assets, and made an RFA - request for assistance - to State, and the resources were made available to us to facilitate the provision for the community.

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And I appreciate it was the State - it was done through the State, but do you actually know how that was actioned?-- I do.

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Can you just tell us?-- What occurred was I made an RFA - or I caused an RFA to be made. That was a written document, faxed to State. I followed that up with a number of phone calls to make sure that it was given high priority and, moreover, the SDCC negotiated with the ADF specifically with respect to capability.

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And, finally, have you stayed in touch to the extent that you're aware of the evidence that we've heard, for example, from Councillor de Wit about the group that she was organising out at Pullenvale in the nature of a disaster management group, but below the LDCC level?-- Unfortunately, I didn't hear or see Councillor de Wit's testimony, but I am aware of such a group, as she's outlined, but I had no knowledge of their group prior to her evidence.

No. But you're aware of the concept of a local group-----?-- Yes.

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-----organising themselves-----?-- Yes, I am.

-----for pooling of relevant information and-----?-- Yes.

COMMISSIONER: I think they called themselves the Disaster Recovery Advisory Group?-- Yes, Commissioner, that was the

first time that I had heard that in that context.

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MR CALLAGHAN: All right. I would just be interested in your view, if you have one, as to where a group like that might fit into the disaster management framework - whether it should be formally recognised under the act, or whether it should be left as an informal sort of a thing, and, if so, how they might be recognised during the course of the disaster?-- My view is that one community is probably distinguished from another, and a one-size-fits-all approach probably is not the best, having regard to the unique nature of that particular community. My sense is that there's probably a role for a group such as that, particularly in terms of co-ordination and communication. I would have a concern, though, if there weren't very strong links into local government with respect to that group, and particularly strong links into the DDCC, that would be, at least to my mind, a golden opportunity and, if that wasn't the case, an opportunity gone begging.

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All right. Thank you. That's all I have.

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COMMISSIONER: All right. Now, does anybody but Mr MacSporran want to ask questions? Nobody was keen before lunch, but that might have changed.

MR DUNNING: No, thank you.

MR URE: No, thank you.

MR O'DONNELL: No, thank you, Commissioner.

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MS O'GORMAN: No, questions.

MR DOLLAR: No, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: Just a couple of matters, Assistant Commissioner: I take you back to the issue of your dealings with Dr Flegg, and if you need to - and with the Commissioner's leave, I'm sure you can refer to your statements and or the chronology that you've attached to your statement - your second statement - for the details - but can you confirm this for us: that the first contact with Dr Flegg was at 17.20 or 20 past 5 on the afternoon of Thursday, the 13th of January?-- That's my understanding.

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And the request that came to you was for permission to use a private helicopter to collect supplies which had been donated by a supermarket at Caloundra for provisioning of the Bellbowrie/Mt Crosby area?-- That's correct.

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And the flight of this helicopter was proposed for the following day, the Friday, the 14th?-- That's correct.

Now is it the case that - I think you've told us this - one of

the reasons you refused that request, after making some inquiries and considering the position, was that the plans for the resupply of those areas was well advanced and was to take place, on your understanding, either later that day, the 13th, or early the next day, the 14th, anyway?-- That's true.

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Did you also, when you got back to Dr Flegg with your decision - and that was about 6 o'clock that same day-----?-- That's correct.

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-----did you explain to him the detailed reasons why you were refusing the request?-- Yes, I did.

And did you, in particular, tell him that there would, as you understood it, be a resupply as early as the next day?-- I did.

Did you also make the offer to arrange for the collection of the donated supplies at Caloundra and have them delivered as well, in the ordinary course of events, with the arrangements that you thought and knew were in place?-- Yes, I did, I made that offer.

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And that offer was rejected?-- Correct.

That was about 6 o'clock you conveyed the news to Dr Flegg. About 20 minutes later, did you have a phone call from a journalist from the ABC?-- I did.

Seeking to have you explain why you had refused the request?-- That's correct.

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Did you outline to the journalist the reasons you had given Dr Flegg?-- I indicated to the journalist that I was in the middle of dealing with a very significant event; however, the issues of resupply were important and moreover I gave an explanation to the journalist that we were well advanced with respect to our plans to reprovise that community at the earliest opportunity, which would occur the following day, the early hours of the Friday morning, and the journalist indicated to me that that was different to what he had been told and, moreover, that there was no story in that.

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And that's the last you heard from that journalist?-- I didn't hear from that journalist again.

Now, can I move to this topic about the use of the ADF assets?-- Yes.

When the disaster management arrangements come into effect, is there automatically a contact point between the State and the ADF?-- Yes, there is.

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And how is that mechanically arranged? What are the arrangements?-- The contact point with the ADF occurs by way of a number structures. There is a very senior ADF LO - liaison officer - at the state level. We were also fortunate to have senior liaison officers based at the district level -

at the DDMG - and it was also my understanding - and there was certainly evidence of that at every LDMG meeting that I attended - and I attended every meeting - that there was a senior ADF member present at the LDMG meetings.

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That's a routine arrangement put in place to facilitate such communication, is it?-- That's correct.

And did it work well in this event?-- It was invaluable. I couldn't have imagined dealing with the situation that we dealt with without the assistance of the ADF, and it was incredibly important to get their expert capability and advice on their capability in each of those meetings, but, particularly for me, the DDMG.

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Now, during the event generally, were there occasions when the use of ADF air assets was refused?-- In very, very rare cases, but I would add there were very compelling reasons for that and bearing in mind that this was a multifaceted, fast-escalating event with a large number of - and a high priority on those assets - they were in high demand-----

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All right?-- -----but very few of those requests went unaccepted.

Can I take you to another topic: the question of messages being sent out by police media once the arrangements had been put in place. What form did those take, generally speaking?-- Generally speaking, every morning I would hold a 0700 hour DDMG meeting whereby that meeting would generally go for about an hour. Upon finishing that meeting - media was my high priority in terms of public messaging. I would then use that time, albeit very briefly, to either do one of a number of things: I would provide either a podcast, which would be downloaded onto the Internet live, or alternatively a recording - an audio recording to be uploaded onto our Facebook page, and at other times E-mailed messages and media releases on a whole range of issues that were of pressing need, given the circumstances of the event.

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And was one of those - one of the topics to be covered in such messaging the issue of the public and any members of the public driving into flood-affected roadways?-- Yes, that's correct.

Was there a concern within your organisation as to the public's response to such warnings?-- Yes, there was. There were a number of issues associated with that, not least of which was the fact that this was an issue which potentially could impact fairly significantly on public safety. Intelligence was being communicated to me via the police regions concerned - and also from the Brisbane City Council - that people were not heeding road closure signs and, moreover, if people didn't heed road closure signs, not only was there obvious implications associated with public safety, but moreover that we would have to go to a strategy of putting a police officer on a road closure, and that's not a good use of resources. Those police resources would be much, much better

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utilised in terms of the response and recovery effort. 1

Did the scenario seem to be that despite the very public and repeated warnings about driving into flood waters, members of the public, for whatever reason, continued to ignore such warnings?-- That's correct. And, in fact-----

And this involved the use of other resources, which could have been used elsewhere, having to be deployed for rescues of those persons?-- Unfortunately, that's true. 10

I'm sorry, I cut you off. You were going to add something, were you?-- Oh, no, I was just going to add that, regrettably, our only true flood-related death, as far as I'm aware, was an unfortunate matter at Durack where a person failed to heed a road closure sign and ultimately led to his death, and that was a significant tragedy.

Was that the fellow who was apparently trying to go to his father's aid who was in a flood-bound house?-- That's my understanding. 20

Now, just finally, your statement deals with an assessment overall about how these arrangements worked in your opinion. You were in a very good position to judge how the arrangements worked. Can you give us a very brief summary, if you would, as to your assessment as to how those arrangements operated?-- I was in a unique position and, in fact, I was in a very privileged position to see up close not only the arrangement at the level below me in terms of the local level, but also the State level and, bearing in mind that I was having close liaison with both of those, this was a very fast moving, multidimensional, rapidly escalating event and it was over a prolonged period of time, and I have to say to you I was incredibly impressed with the performance of the LDMG, the leadership, the strategy that was implemented at that level, the performance and the professionalism of those that performed at the LDCC. I would make very firm comment with respect to their industry. In particular, the work of the DDMG, it was my privilege to coordinate that particular group. This was a very dedicated group of people from a broad range of disciplines, and all of them worked incredibly well, and they worked incredibly long hours and took very significant risks in terms of their decision-making and were very heroic and brave in terms of the work that they did, and I'm very pleased to see that that was manifest in terms of - as a result of the decision-making of the DDMG, and, in particular, my decision-making under the act, I'm pleased to say that not one person lost their life, not one person, as a result of my decision-making, was seriously injured. There was no significant damage to critical infrastructure associated with any of my decisions, and I would say that the loss and the damage to private property was kept to an absolute minimum. So, from my perspective, I think that what I saw was the three tiers of the disaster management arrangement working very effectively. 30 40 50

And those arrangements which appear to have worked so

effectively in these events are continually under review; is that so?-- Yes, they are, and, moreover, I don't want to give the impression that there is not room for improvement. You would never hear me say that. There are learnings and, moreover, there have been some very useful observations from this event that I'm sure we'll be able to build on and, ultimately, will strengthen our arrangements into the future.

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In terms of the self-evacuation centres - the unofficial ones we know that operated certainly in the Bellbowrie and Moggill area - your view is that they are recognised and they're a useful addition to the arrangements that are formally put in place?-- I agree with that whole-heartedly.

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You would be surprised to hear of any evidence suggested that there was a delay caused by the unofficial status of those centres, queries being made to them as to whether the requests they were making were truly necessary and things like that because of their unofficial status?-- I would agree with that most strongly. I can tell you that, certainly from my perspective, a community need is community need and it matters not where that comes from, and an official evacuation centre or an unofficial evacuation centre - it would be appropriately assessed and the necessary resources would be brought to bear having regard for their need.

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And in that context, you've told us about the review that's being done currently by Superintendent Fleming?-- I did.

And you have no concerns with providing the Commission with an update as soon as you can about the status of those arrangements?-- I'll advance that and I would be pleased to do that.

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And I think the Commission's timetable is that the interim report about the preparedness for next wet season is due early in August this year, so they would need some significant time before that to assess these arrangements as to whether they might seek to make some recommendations arising from those suggestions?-- I would be pleased to work to the Commission's timetable and to give what I can within that timeframe.

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Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr MacSporran. Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No, no questions. May Mr Martin be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Martin?-- Thank you, Commissioner.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Juliea Murray.

JULIEA NICOLE MURRAY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Juliea Nicole Murray?-- Yes.

And do you presently reside in Dale Street, Burpengary?--
Yes, that's correct.

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And you've lived at this address since 2004?-- That's
correct.

And you've completed a statement for the Queensland Flood
Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I have.

Would you have a look at this document, please? Is that your
statement?-- Yes, it is.

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I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 304.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 304"

MS WILSON: Now, the house that you live in in Burpengary,
that's a two-storey house?-- That's correct.

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And it backs on to Burpengary Creek?-- That's correct.

And you're located in a flood zone?-- Yes.

Now, if we take you to paragraph 2 of your statement which
describes the purchasing of your home-----?-- Yes.

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-----you undertook or you instructed solicitors to undertake
searches in relation to that property?-- That's correct.

And you say that the result being that Council had no records
of flooding in the area?-- That's what we were told by the
solicitor.

And, accordingly, you purchased the property?-- That's
correct.

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Now, six months after moving into the property, some
neighbours gave you some photographs?-- That's right, yeah.

And what did those photographs depict?-- It was photos of
their house and our house in the background and there was -
the street - it was one from looking into Dale Street and one
looking in towards our backyard, and significant amounts of
water through the neighbourhood, basically.

Now, you say that in the seven years that you've lived at this address, you've experienced four floods?-- That's correct.

The worst was on the 11th of January?-- That's right.

When waters entered your house by 1.2 metres?-- Around about that, yep.

Let's go to the 11th of January, which in your statement is paragraph 11. You got up that morning to go to work, and at 6 a.m. there was no sign of flood waters in your street?-- That's correct.

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When did you appreciate that there was going to be flooding in your street?-- My neighbour sent me a text message around about 9 o'clock saying that the street was flooded.

Okay?-- And I was at work at Spring Hill, so there was little I could do.

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Did you receive any other warnings or messages that day?-- Not until 11.30 - I think it was 11.35, or thereabouts - from - and I don't know exactly - I believe it's the - it was the standard text message that came through that the majority of people - I was on the train at the time that I got that, and everybody was getting text messages at around about the same time.

So you were on the train at that time when you got the message at about 11.35 and you arrived in your area at about 1 o'clock?-- Yeah, because the train was delayed because of - the bridge was closed up ahead - the train bridge.

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And when were you able to access your property?-- It wasn't until 6 o'clock or thereabouts that night.

Okay?-- When we - we still had to wade in. It was sort of knee-deep water, but we were able to walk in.

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And what was the damage?-- There was significant damage. There was - our neighbours had actually opened the garage doors for us, because that allows the water to flow through the property and not back up, but my car wasn't there, but my partner's motorbike was there. We had a pool table that had been flipped over, fridges - some basic furniture and that sort of thing that was down there had all sort of been pushed aside, all into the corner. A lot of things had floated away. Yeah, and it was just mud and water everywhere - well, not water anymore, but debris and-----

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And was it the case, by looking at the high-water mark, you would estimate that the waters in your house rose to 1.2 metres?-- That's correct.

Now, in paragraph 21 and onwards, you express some concerns?-- Yes, that's right.

The first concern is in relation to the information that was provided by the Council?-- Yes.

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Can you tell me about that?-- Like I said, when we did the searches, there were no - the solicitor came back and told us that Council didn't have any records of any flooding. There wasn't adequate flood mapping. There's - by the time we had warnings from SES and/or Council workers - in previous floods as well - I'm not 100 per cent sure about this one because I wasn't there at the time it flooded - but in previous floods, by the time we had warning, the street was already under. They were wading in ankle deep or deeper water, knocking on our door, telling us that the street was flooding and we had to get out or, you know, lift things to high ground. It's too late then.

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And, in your experience, how much warning is required when Burpengary Creek starts to flood until your house receives flood waters?-- There's a - there is a weather station or something like that just in the creek - sorry, in the park just up the road that monitors - that's a Bureau of Meteorology station that measures that. At about - it's around about the eight metre or thereabouts - that's when people start to get a bit antsy in the neighbourhood, when they're checking the website, that they start getting worried that it is going to flood, and it does flood very, very quickly. Once it starts in the street, that's it. It's up really quick.

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Okay. Thank you, Ms Murray, I have no further questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No, questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MR URE: I have no questions.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS WILSON: Thank you. May the witness be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Ms Murray?-- Thank you.

You're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Commissioner, I call Megan McKillop, and this witness is by telephone.

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MEGAN McCRAE McKILLOP, CALLED:

COMMISSIONER: Ms McKillop?-- Yes.

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This is the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. We're about to take your evidence. Do you have a Bible with you or would you prefer to take an affirmation?-- No, I do have a Bible with me.

All right. I will ask my associate, then, to read the oath to you.

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MEGAN McCRAE McKILLOP, SWORN AND EXAMINED VIA TELEPHONE LINK:

MS WILSON: Ms McKillop, my name is Elizabeth Wilson and I'm a counsel assisting in the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry. I'm just going to ask you some questions?-- Yes.

Your full name is Megan McCrae McKillop?-- That's correct.

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You purchased a property in May 2010 in Burpengary?-- Well, by the time it actually settled, it was June 2010 in Burpengary.

Okay. And you've made a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I have.

And in that statement, you refer to exhibits, including photos?-- Yes, I have.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement with exhibits.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 305.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 305"

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MS WILSON: Have you got your statement there, Ms McKillop?-- Yes, I do.

Can I take your attention to paragraph 2 of that statement?-- Yes.

And that paragraph describes the circumstances when you purchased your house in 2010?-- Yes.

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And you say that there was no information provided to you that indicated that the property was in a flood-proned area?-- That's correct.

It did state, however, it was in a Q100 zone?-- Yes.

Did you know what that meant?-- No, I did not.

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Did you conduct any inquiries in relation to that term?-- Yes, I did.

And-----?-- The same day I received the contract, I did ring the Moreton Bay Regional Council and inquired what a Q100 was.

Okay. And what were you advised?-- We were advised that the property was in a zone called a Q100, which meant it was a two 100 year flood - two in 100 year flood zone.

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And did you continue to purchase the house?-- Yes, we did.

And when did you get that information that your property was in a Q100 zone?-- On the 11th of May 2010.

And by that time had you already entered into a contract?-- No, we hadn't entered into a contract by that stage. Oh, sorry, no, yes, we had. We had. It just hadn't been finalised. It wasn't a settled contract at that stage.

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Okay. So, you purchased your house and you've experienced flooding on your property?-- Yes, we have, twice.

And in October 2010, Burpengary Creek rose?-- Yes, that's correct.

And on that occasion, your house was flooded?-- Yes, that's correct.

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And covered the carpets and tiles downstairs?-- Yes, that's correct.

Now, if I can take you to the flooding event that occurred on 11 January of this year?-- Yes.

And if I can take you to paragraph 9 of that?-- Yes.

You say on that morning that you were at home and you woke up quite early?-- Yes.

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Listening to very heavy rain?-- Yes.

And then, from then on, the water rose quite quickly?-- Yes, yes, it rose at a very rapid rate. The gauge in the creek wasn't reading correctly because the river just kept - the creek just kept rising too quickly.

Okay. Was a decision made at some point in time to self-evacuate the house?-- It was at the time, but it was too late to self-evacuate. The water had already inundated our property, so we couldn't actually self-evacuate at that stage.

When you made that decision, how far up was the water in your house?-- It was approximately shin level.

Sorry, I didn't quite catch that?-- Shin level. So, maybe 50 centimetres of water.

Now, was it then that you tried to contact the State Emergency Service?-- Yes, it was.

And how did that go?-- I was put on hold - well, I couldn't actually get through to anyone. I was on hold for about half an hour, and at that stage the water had risen at such a rapid rate up our internal stairs - we only have internal stairs in our house - that we - I guess, we just started to panic. My husband was yelling out to our neighbour who had a tinny that we needed help to get out of our house. So, we couldn't actually get through to anyone. We ended up - well, I ended up hanging up the phone and walked with the kids on top of our heads to get out of the house.

Once you got to high ground-----?-- Uh-huh.

-----did you get any warning then?-- We did an hour after we were at my sister's residence.

Where did you get that warning from?-- I got it on my mobile phone. I have actually got it in front of me. I got it just from a mobile number, if you wanted me to give you that.

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Do you know which government agency sent it to you?-- I am assuming the Moreton Bay Regional Council. It doesn't actually state but that's what I am assuming.

Have you got that message in front of you?-- Yes, I do.

Could you read it out, please?-- Sure. It says, "Immediate flash flooding warning for Caboolture, Burpengary area. Very high water levels in rivers, in creeks. Seek higher grounds now."

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You say you received that text at about 11.30 a.m.?-- Yes, I will just confirm that. 11.35 a.m.

Okay. Now, can I take you over the page in your statement, and at paragraph 16-----?-- Yes.

-----you say that you also received information from a fellow resident that a number of displaced people were told by SES to go to the Burpengary Community Centre?-- That's right, yes.

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What were you told occurred when those people arrived at the Burpengary Community Centre?-- The doors were locked. There was no-one home and the lights were off. We couldn't actually get into the community centre at all.

Now, at the start of my questioning I was asking you questions about Q100?-- Yes.

When you saw the term Q100 did you have any idea what that meant?-- No, not at all.

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And that's when you sought further clarification?-- That's correct, yes.

Have you got any suggestions in relation to the terminology that's used in relation to expressing flood events?-- I do know what it means now because it is now on the Moreton Bay Regional Council website.

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Okay?-- Did you want me to-----

Yes?-- It now means that there is a chance of being flooded twice in any given year.

That's what that-----?-- That's what the Q100 actually means, twice in any given year.

And do you get that from the Moreton Bay Regional Council website?-- That's correct, yes.

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Okay. Thank you, Ms McKillop, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

MR DUNNING: No questions.

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MR URE: I have no questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

MS WILSON: I have no further questions. May the witness be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks for your time, Ms McKillop, you are excused?-- Thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MR CALLAGHAN: Madam Commissioner, our next witness is to give evidence via videolink from Perth but that's been arranged for 3.30. I understand we can't bring that forward. So can I request that we adjourn until then?

COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR CALLAGHAN: That will be our last witness for the day.

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COMMISSIONER: We will resume at 3.30.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 3.02 P.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 3.32 P.M.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Gregory Goebel.

COMMISSIONER: Now, what arrangements have been made with Mr Goebel about being sworn in?

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MR CALLAGHAN: He has got a Bible handy.

COMMISSIONER: All right, thanks.

WITNESS: I don't have a Bible here at the present time.

COMMISSIONER: Will you take an affirmation, Mr Goebel?-- Yes, I will.

I will get my associate to read it to you.

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GREGORY RUSSELL GOEBEL, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED VIA VIDEOLINK:

MR CALLAGHAN: Thank you. Could you state your full name, please?-- Gregory Russell Goebel.

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Mr Goebel, you are the author of a 26-page statement for the purposes of this Commission, is that correct?-- That's correct, yes.

And there are two appendices, I think, to that statement, is that right?-- That's right, yes.

I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 306, I am told.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 306"

MR CALLAGHAN: I just have a few questions arising out of that statement. First of all, we understand that the Red Cross reaches - enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with councils in respect of evacuation centres, is that correct?-- That's right, with a number of councils, not all councils.

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And is there any reason why a council would not enter into one with you, be they logistical or other?-- Not that I am aware of but I am aware that we had been trying to negotiate some Memorandum of Understanding and agreements with a number of

councils, but for one reason or another there may have been some reluctance or some time issues that have delayed those Memorandum of Understandings.

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From the Red Cross point of view, does it matter how remote that council might be or where it is located?-- Not generally, but from a practical point of view, when an emergency or disaster occurs, the memorandums usually enable us to get there, if practical, by transport. So the only thing that would prevent us from fulfilling our obligations is if the disaster cut off our ability to get there or that we were simply overstretched in many areas.

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I suppose that leads to this consideration: that one of the things I think you identify in your statement is the need for early mobilisation, is that right?-- That's correct, yes.

And that might be an issue the more remote the community or council involved is?-- That's not necessarily an issue.

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Just might present practical difficulties, that's all?-- Well, the issue tends to be that the earlier the notification, the better preparedness we are to get people there. Because when we get a notification, we have to advise our volunteers, but, more importantly, get them to the site, and when waters are rising and transport options are starting to close, as occurred in a number of cases, early notification allows us to move people in. So in the case of Rockhampton, when we knew the water was rising and the city would be cut off for a considerable period of time, we predeployed enough people to be able to run the evacuation centre over a number of weeks. So the issue tends to become early notification allows us to get people on the ground despite what might be put in terms of transport options.

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In terms of the councils you don't have an arrangement with, do you approach them offering your services, or do you wait for them to come to you, or how does that work?-- Well, because we don't - if we don't have a Memorandum of Understanding with some councils that does not prevent Red Cross from assisting where the need is. But the Local Disaster Management Group has a responsibility to activate an evacuation centre and in doing that they would generally ask for our assistance, although not always.

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I am just interested in those - in the ones with whom you do not have a Memorandum of Understanding, though, I mean, do you approach them in an effort to reach it, or are you happy to leave things as they are?-- We have been approached. We have been endeavouring to have Memorandums of Understanding with all of the councils for a couple of reasons. It clearly sets out and gives them an expectation of what we can do but it also reinforces, in a sense, what their role is in their relationship with us. We have found in the past some councils think that, you know, our role is to make tea and bikkies, or scones, but, in fact, it is in an evacuation centre, it is far more complex than that, and we really want to have those Memorandums of Understanding so that we know what our

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obligations are, although we clearly know them, but more importantly they understand how they can rely on us.

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I know, for example, in the memorandum, at least the one with Brisbane, that there is a requirement, for example, that they - the council provide you with a list of sites or potential sites for evacuation centres every 12 months, that this is something that is constantly reviewed. I am not asking you to be specific but as a general rule do you find that the councils honour that sort of obligation under the memorandum?-- No, as a general rule I say they wouldn't honour.

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And is there any sanction attached to failing to honour requirements such as that? I mean, I am sure you don't tear it up just because they don't comply with that sort of obligation, but is it reviewed?-- No, look, we generally don't, and we really rely on the good graces of councils to deliver that. I mean, at the end of the day, if the council requires us to manage an evacuation centre, then irrespective of whether we have a Memorandum of Understanding with them, we try to fulfil that. Our aim really is to help people with their most vulnerable need, that's what drives us more than a Memorandum of Understanding, to be frank.

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Fair enough. Can I just change topic for a moment to the whole concept of missing persons and registers of missing people? Are you aware of concerns that have been expressed particularly in the Lockyer Valley by some of the people there who were disturbed by the number of times that they were asked by someone, including, apparently, a representative of Red Cross, for their details? It seemed that they were approached by police and Red Cross and other people and continually asked who they were and where they were from, and some of them recorded a bit of distress about that. Are you aware of that feedback?-- Look, I am aware that at the time in the Lockyer Valley, there were a number of people posing as Red Cross who were posing as part of the American Red Cross. They were never part of Red Cross. In fact, after the Lockyer Valley incident, Red Cross deliberately kept out of the Lockyer Valley while the Queensland Police did their identification and searching for those who were missing, but we were aware that there were some people who were posing and had apparently formed the relationship with some of the - some of the community recovery people there. Red Cross did not go to the Lockyer Valley till quite late. We deliberately wanted to allow the proper processes to occur before we went into the issue of recovery.

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Well, that certainly clears that up as far as the Lockyer goes, and that's the only specific example I had to put, but as long as we're on the topic of missing persons generally, do you find that - I mean, that's something that you obviously work in conjunction with the police very closely?-- Look, our aim is, with the National Registration Inquiry System, to make sure that anybody who is evacuated is put on that register. We do that for two reasons: first of all, it allows those who are seeking people that they think might be in evacuation

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centres to be able to quickly identify where they are, and that's why we introduced a system up on our website that people could search for those people who were in evacuation centres and who we registered and put on the National Registration Inquiry System. But the other role of that data is to enable the other authorities post event to target greater assistance to those people. So, for example, if we know that, for example, a Mr and Mrs Smith are in an evacuation centre and later on those people are seeking some further assistance, we can identify, yes, they were evacuated at this site for this period of time and most probably because they were evacuated they need further assistance. So the National Registration Inquiry System is a database to check where people are, to allow their family or loved ones to track where they are, but also to enable authorities, such as the Department of Communities and Housing, to provide further assistance.

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All right.

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COMMISSIONER: Did you register people who were in evacuation centres in the Lockyer Valley?-- Look, I couldn't tell you whether - I don't think we would have registered those unless they went to an evacuation centre. Anybody who attends an evacuation centre, when they first go into the centre, they are asked to - we have people who take down their details and put them on a National Registration Inquiry Form. We know both with the floods and with the cyclones, something like 24,000 people, I think, were registered.

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So somebody who says that when they were in an evacuation centre at Gatton they were asked by the Red Cross for their details, it is probably right then, are they?-- That would have been right, yes. They would have filled out a form which - basically it is a police form, a Queensland Police Service form, National Registration Inquiry System form, name, address, number of people with them, basic details like that.

Thank you.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Can I just take you to your statement - you have a copy of it there?-- I do.

Paragraph 45?-- Yes.

And those paragraphs following, you perhaps conclude in paragraph 47 where you observe that the Red Cross has experienced confusion about its role in disasters, notwithstanding the existence of the memoranda. Can you just elaborate on that?-- Yes, look, I think that the last thing people do in a disaster is reach for the Memorandum of Understanding. And our view is that constant practices and exercising allows people to enable what the roles are. We found at times with some local authorities, they have confused our role, they didn't know that our memorandum said that we were the people who would help manage the evacuation centres, provide the meet and greets, and in some cases, you know, they have recruited other people to do certain tasks. So I guess

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our basic recommendation is we think that there should be a lot more practising of exercises involving all the agencies so that at times of disaster we all know our role and we're not reaching for a Memorandum of Understanding or explaining to people with the document in hand "this is our role".

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And, look, one of the things we are looking at is this whole topic of evacuation centres, and in the following paragraph, 48, you make some observations which are, with respect, clearly expressed there but I would suggest they are worth repeating. Would you just care to perhaps elaborate on the observations you have made in that paragraph?-- Well, people who generally go to evacuation centres are those who tend to be the most marginalised. Our experience generally has been that the majority of people who have the resources tend to stay with neighbours and friends but it is those who are the most marginalised in the community that don't have those social connections that end up in evacuation centres. So, for example, if I use the case of the RNA Showground in Brisbane, a lot of people there were homeless, a number of people there were single income families. In the case of the evacuation centre at QEII, we had a number of people who suffered significant physical disabilities. Now, that's a bit different in a country town. For example, in the towns of Tully, where people were mass evacuated, I guess our point is that it is the most marginalised who need to be looked after first and our experience has been that sometimes they are left behind. I can clearly recall in the case of Tully when I was there a family approached us, their husband was on oxygen, running out of cylinders. I guess if we had had a list of those people in those towns who either were oxygen dependent, were the Meals on Wheels clients, those sorts of things, they would be a priority issue for organisations like ourselves and the disaster recovery people to target first to make sure they are taken account of.

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All right. And you pick up on that, I think, at paragraph 74 in your statement, which is followed by the suggestions you make in 75, and I would like you to just give voice to those, if you would?-- Look, I think we make a number of suggestions in paragraph 75. First of all, that evacuation centres need to be clearly identified, but importantly in the identification there be consultation with organisations like ourselves. I think it is fair to say that having the practitioners involved to saying, look, this evacuation centre, yes, is appropriate, it has got, you know, a right number of toilets, and that - I should make the point that evacuation centres are different from shelters. Evacuation centres are generally where people are going to be staying for a considerable period of time, so it is not an overnight stay from immediate danger. It generally tends to be maybe a number of days or a number of weeks. So it almost becomes the housing hut for those people. Experience has been that some of the evacuation centres that have been indicated to us are unsuitable for long-term accommodation of people. When it comes to shelters, that's an entirely different thing. A shelter is meant to be a place where people are out of harm's way for a short period of time, if you like, while the cyclone

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blows over. It may well be that they then go to an evacuation centre afterwards for a longer period of time, but we believe that there needs to be some very strong standards put in place. I guess the other thing - the other recommendations that we suggested was that there needs to be better communication systems, particularly for travellers and backpackers and people like that. In that regard, the innovations by the Queensland Police Service using Twitter, using those modern forms of social networking, can have very valuable effects in telling people where to go because it tends to be instantaneous, regularly updated, and for many people, particularly travellers and backpackers, it enables them to know exactly what they want to do. So our concern, in a sense, is that evacuation centres and shelters need to be clearly identified, perhaps more rigorous standards applied to them, but certainly that they not just simply be a Local Government identification by a Local Government engineer, but in fact involves the service deliverers at the same time. After all, we're providing food, we're providing accommodation, in some cases we're partnering with Save the Children to provide some childcare for people there. So they are complex communities in a very small confine.

So what level of consultation or communication is there between you and the councils about the suitability of these things? Is it an ongoing dialogue?-- In some cases there has been an ongoing dialogue with the Brisbane City Council but I have got to say that in a number of other areas, the dialogue is far and few between.

And is that a lack of energy on the part of the council or for some other reason?-- Look, there is probably a lot of reasons. Disasters don't come around every day of the week, although I have to say in certain areas they are certainly becoming more frequent. But I think that there is probably a need for a higher notch of preparedness and a higher notch of consultation going forward. We have found some shelters inappropriate. In fact, some were completely destroyed, had people have been in them they would have most probably suffered significant consequences. So there has been in some cases not enough thought and preparation being put into identifying them. Of course, there has to be a number of shelters because depending on where the cyclone and floods hit, you need the flexibility. But our concern is, in fact, that this be taken a lot more seriously than it has been in the past.

Which ones are you talking about when you talk about those that would have been problematic had people been in them?-- Well, the senior citizens centre in Tully was completely destroyed and Red Cross people knew that the building wouldn't sustain and they moved those people prior to the cyclone hitting to an evacuation centre. I am certainly aware in the case of one location in Cairns where the proposed shelter was a university refectory with floor-to-ceiling glass walls and we clearly thought that that was inappropriate in a cyclone with flying debris, and the Red Cross people there moved those people out of that facility into a lecture theatre.

What about-----?-- That is two examples.

What about in flood-affected areas; are you aware of any that were designated which were affected by flood?-- No, I am not aware of any that were affected by flood, but our experience in the past has been some of those facilities have probably been hastily thought of without the appropriate bedding and arrangements like that put in place. I think the issue with floods is that there is always time to have those evacuation centres properly set up, and we see it is the role of the local authority to set them up; that is, to make sure that there is bedding, to make sure that other agencies have been notified in the case of a number of those, the Salvation Army is ready to provide the food and there are appropriate ablutions available to people.

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Just finally, when you say in paragraph 75A that evacuation centres need to be clearly identified in the plans, do you have a view as to whether or not the location of such centres should be made public in advance of the disaster?-- I think that the number of evacuation centres in the plans probably should not be made public until the time when they are activated. For example, I am aware that Townsville has quite a number of proposed evacuation centres, but the centres most appropriate at the time need to be the ones that are activated. If you prepublished, you know, at the beginning of each year all the evacuation centres, people might go to ones that are not opened. So I am of the view that there is a need to have a range of centres which, depending on the nature and the locality of the disaster, might be opened. I think the other issue also relates to the size of the centres. I mean, we're talking about some centres that are accommodating thousands of people, not 10 or 20 people, and depending on the nature of the disaster, the size of the evacuation centre might be an issue that council would make a decision imminent as the disaster unfolds.

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I think I said finally a moment ago but I do have one more question, and that is just on - to ask you for a comment, I suppose, on where the Red Cross fits into the whole State Disaster Management framework, and whether you are content with where it sits at the moment, or where you might see scope for an enhancement of its role within that framework?-- Well, clearly we have a very good relationship with government and I think in our submission I have tried to lobby for some time that we have a seat on the State Disaster Management Group. That's currently confined to government departments and the local government. Red Cross clearly brings to the table a lot of international experience and, frankly, a huge amount of domestic experience, and we believe as an adjunct to government governing the humanitarian field, we probably should sit on that table. We're involved in a number of other Local Government Disaster Groups but not all of them. I think the key thing is that Red Cross does have a lot to offer, we are bringing more and more experience to the table. We don't see ourselves as an ordinary NGO, but now one that has considerable international and domestic experience, and at the

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end of the day we believe that expertise and knowledge would assist in both the planning, as well as the - as well as the immediate response and recovery phase of disasters.

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Yes, thank you, Mr Goebel. They are the only questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

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MR DUNNING: No questions.

MR URE: I have none.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Would you like the witness excused?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Goebel, you are excused. We can end the connection?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: They are the only witnesses that we have scheduled for today.

COMMISSIONER: Right. 10 a.m. Monday?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn till 10 a.m. Monday.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 3.58 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M. MONDAY, 9TH OF MAY 2011

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