

Transcript of Proceedings

Issued subject to correction upon revision.

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 11/05/2011

..DAY 19

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.00 A.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns, you're back with us appearing for the police union.

MR BURNS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes?

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MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, I call Mark Holmes.

MARK DOUGLAS HOLMES, SWORN AND EXAMINED, VIA VIDEO LINK-UP:

MS WILSON: Can you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Full name, Mark Douglas Holmes.

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And are you the Local Disaster Coordinator for the Gladstone Regional Council?-- That's correct.

And have you authored two documents for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, we've authored a written statement and an additional written statement, yes.

We'll go to the first document. On the 25th of March 2011 you provided a document in response to a direction from the Commission?-- Yes.

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Now, have you got that document in front of you?-- Yes, I do.

And that document is dated the 25th of March 2011 and it is signed by yourself and a Mr Mark Larney?-- That's correct.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 334.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 334"

MS WILSON: Now, you were also requested to provide further particulars in relation to information that you provided in that statement?-- Yes.

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And you provided the Commission a further document that sets out further information in response to a direction from the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- That's correct, and I believe that was forwarded to you yesterday.

And what date have you got on that document?-- 10th of May.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document. I also tender the letter requesting that information.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Both together will be Exhibit 335.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 335"

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MS WILSON: Now, Mr Holmes, if we can read these two documents together because they complement each other, don't they?-- Yes.

In the first statement you provide information and in the second statement, more particulars on occasion are provided?-- That's correct.

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So do you have those two documents in front of you?-- Yes, I do.

Can I take you to the first document?-- Yep.

Under the heading of "Planning" on page 1, you say, "Although draft documents were disseminated during the development phase primarily in 2009, no assistance, comment or advice was provided by Emergency Management Queensland, EMQ, during this process and none has been provided since"?-- EMQ are a member of our Local Disaster Management Group. They were provided with a copy of our draft - draft plans. But certainly in respect of assisting in terms of what format those plans should take and commenting on our draft plans, nothing was forthcoming from EMQ.

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Okay. So if we can go to your second document and you further particularised that to some degree-----?-- Yes.

-----under the heading of "General Assessment of EMQ Role in LDMG Planning". It is under one LH?-- Yes.

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Do you see that?-- Yes.

What I'm interested in is you acknowledge and recognise the responsibility that EMQ has in providing assistance and support but you state that, "In recent times this seems to have changed with little support now provided". What do you mean by that? How do you particularise the change that has occurred?-- We've certainly over the last couple of years - council, certainly in its newly amalgamated entity, hasn't received any, I guess, level of assistance from EMQ in respect to I guess planning advice and planning preparation that we previously enjoyed.

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What about in 2011? What about the assistance and support that EM Q is providing you this year in more recent times?-- In more recent times we've certainly seen probably an increase

in the flow of information from EMQ but nothing, I guess, has been directly I guess - it's more been through e-mail trails. There probably has been a lack of personal communication of that.

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You refer to - if we can go to your first statement, under the heading of "Training" where you state that "no training was provided by EMQ to the LDMG for persons who may have been required to work in the LDCC". That then is further particularised in your second statement?-- Yes.

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If I can take you to 2C?-- Yep.

Where you say that, "The last EMQ conducted training for the Gladstone LDMG or council occurred on the 22nd of April 2009"?-- That's - that's correct. However, I would probably add that we believe that we've got a level of capacity within council and awareness within our own resources to - of the roles and responsibility of the coordination centre and people's roles within it. So - but we certainly haven't received direct advice or training from EMQ in that regard.

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You do state though in your second statement that, "The Gladstone Regional Council intends to request training for the LDMG and other council staff for the 2011/2012 year". Have you-----?-- That's correct.

Have you requested such training?-- Not to this day.

If I can take you also to your first statement and under the heading of "Training", which is on your first page, where you talk about software and that is the Guardian software, is that the case?-- That's correct.

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What does actually Guardian do?-- Guardian provides, I guess, a central platform for the coordination of requests for assistance but also for managing their - managing their progress but also for central reference for relevant disaster management information and linking directly into our - our geographic information system as well. So it's a coordinated system that enables people to log their - the requests for assistance as they come in, put them directly to the property and then they are then allocated in terms of priority to the appropriate organisation for action.

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When you say "put them to the property", what do you mean by that?-- We receive a - you'll receive a request for assistance by phone or - it's then you're able to locate that particular request for assistance against a - against a property and then that - then that - therefore, people are aware of where that request has come from and when people go to action that they know where they're going to respond to that request for assistance.

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Do you find that it has been helpful to previous software that you've had?-- We previously ran on an access database and had a standalone GIS system. We believe having a consolidated system of this nature and certainly one that has resources

that are common across a number of - of local governments is advantageous to us, particularly if we were to have a prolonged event.

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That was my next question in terms of access between regional councils. Would it be helpful if all regional councils had this software?-- Look, I guess each council has its own decision in that right but certainly it would be helpful, in my humble opinion, that a common platform is there because you would be able to move administrative resources in to assist daily councils that may be under - under impact from a disaster and relieve those staff in those centres.

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So why-----

COMMISSIONER: Sorry, can I stop you. When you say that, do you simply mean that because they're familiar with the Guardian software they can go and work on it in another council?-- Yep, yep.

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Is there any more to it?-- No, that's - that's exactly it.

Thanks.

MS WILSON: If I can then take you to your first statement and to the second page where you talk about the SES, the State Emergency Services?-- Yes.

This is particularised at page 3 in item 5 of your second statement?-- Yep.

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One of the issues that the Gladstone Regional Council raised is that they do consider that it would be good if the council was informed of the training given to SES members?-- It is certainly probably good to know, in our opinion, of the capability of the SES, you know, all units within our region. We rely very much through a local controller, who has - he has good knowledge of that. But certainly, we - it would be good to be aware of what training has been provided and if a particular request for assistance came in and we didn't have - the SES didn't have the scope to respond, that we could then look at an alternative means of responding to that request for assistance.

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Can you give us any idea about the numbers that you have of SES in your region?-- I don't - I don't have those numbers, sorry.

Have you got enough?-- I don't think - volunteer organisations, I don't believe you can ever have enough. But, certainly, we have a large population base around Gladstone but certainly in the smaller communities, I believe at times they do struggle for - for numbers and that's going to be, I guess, an ongoing issue for us to deal with.

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I'm interested in the deployment of SES and you addressed that at page 4 and item F where you state that, "SES deployment is such that it may occur at several levels and by a number of

agencies". What do you mean by "several levels and by a number of agencies"?-- I guess they could come - the meaning there is it would be - SES could be activated by local police for assistance at a road crash scene, for a traffic supply. They could be activated by the local controller through a request for assistance through the 132 500 network or they could be request by direct - by us through the Local Disaster Coordination Centre or by the DDC themselves.

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You state that in some cases council may request that the 132 500 calls for the Gladstone region be diverted to the LDCC?-- Yes.

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So they are calls that residents are making to the SES and you are requesting for them to be diverted to the LDCC. Is that the case?-- Yes, that's the request we've made in a - in previous events.

And did that occur?-- That would - the only time we have requested that was at the infancy of the 132 500 and that didn't occur at that stage. However, I believe that that can be done now.

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And why do you think that that would be of assistance for those calls to be diverted to the LDCC?-- I believe, I guess, in my role as Local Disaster Coordinator I probably need to have an idea as to what the impact is on - on the ground, what issues are arising, and certainly if a request for assistance comes in from outside of that 132 500 system, so they've - they've contacted council directly and I've tasked the job to the SES to done with a high priority and they already have resources committed through a process, through the 132 500 network, that that may be jeopardising, I guess, the performance of that task.

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So who is taking those calls when those calls are diverted to the LDCC, an SES member?-- No, they would be dealt with by our local disaster coordination staff.

And then the LDCC would deploy the SES?-- The SES is one of the agencies that make up our - are party to our Local Disaster Management Group so we would task them with the job and they would then perform the task.

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You haven't - you said that this hasn't occurred in practice yet but you're hoping for it to occur?-- Yeah, I believe it will beneficial, yes.

But it hasn't occurred yet; is that right?-- No.

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If I can take you to page 3 of your first statement where you talk about that "council is aware that EMQ will only provide minimum levels of equipment to the SES". Can you explain that, please?-- Yes. I guess we're aware that EMQ funds only particular forms of equipment and only to a particular standard, and they've got a uniform doctrine that they're applying. I guess we recognise also that there's a need at times for additional equipment to be supplied and additional

resources to be pushed into the SES system, and I guess we provide an avenue of support to our SES groups by providing them with a - basically, a budgetary consideration for that. So each - each unit has an amount of money that they can spend on - on both operations and then also capital requests as needed.

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Does the council have any input into how that money is spent?-- Council has established a - essentially an SES committee, SES funding committee, and essentially - and that is basically informed by the SES local controller and council.

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What sort of money are we talking about that you supply to these groups?-- It is certainly in the order of probably - about quarter of a million dollars.

And that's per annum?-- That's per annum.

If I could then take you to page 11 of your first statement?-- Yes.

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If you look at item 20 there, I'm actually interested in the paragraph above that where it refers to community-based groups working with the LDMG ?-- Yes.

You have particularised that in page 6 in item 9 of your second statement?-- Yes.

The point that you make, it is that, "It is the council's belief that community-based groups working with the LDMG will play a vital role in building community resilience in areas that may be subject to isolation". Then you refer to these community-based groups. You say that, "These groups have not yet been established. However, council is drafting terms of reference for groups at" certain areas that you have particularised?-- Yes.

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What are the terms of reference that you are drafting?-- We have drafted a - basically a document that outlines, I guess, our - it is opening - opening the conversation with those communities about what role they can provide in looking after their communities in the form - during an event, and also mainly acting as a communication conduit between the LDMG and their local communities. We had a particular circumstance that has led to this that came out of the last events in December where a - communications were lost to areas to our south and a - if we were to have an alternative communication network in there at a local level, we would think that that would ease a lot of potential angst, enable the community message to get out and for communication to be - you know, genuine two-way communication. So we are getting reliable feedback about what's happening on the ground, not - and also, we are able to provide them what we're doing in particular response and also what may be - may be coming.

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So the terms of reference is a document which will stipulate what you require from them and what they can expect to receive from the LDCC?-- Absolute - from the LDMG, yes.

LDMG?-- Yep.

And then is this going to be worked into the Disaster Management Plan?-- Yes, yes. So we're only started this. We've had - we've had an initial consultation meeting with one of our - one of our community groups and the proposal has received good support and we're looking at refining the document now and to putting it to them finally, and we'll then look at extending it to other communities that may be affected, particularly those that get isolated. We have a certain level of vulnerability in the southern part of our region. The communities of Agnes Water and Baffle Creek get isolated with - you know, during normal rainfall events, you know, 60 - if you've already got water flowing in a stream, you know, a storm of 60 to 70 mil is likely to send those roads closed. And so we need to have a reliable communication mechanism into those communities.

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Why do you need a terms of reference? Why do you need to draft it to an extent that it needs to be documented?-- We believe we need to make sure that the ground rules that clearly establish so that they know, I guess, what their roles are and also - and also so that they know what we - what our responsibilities are as LDMG. We don't want, necessarily, those local groups to be ordered evacuation of places, et cetera, which may - if you don't specify those ground rules, some of those community groups may get - you know, try and extend the boundaries for what they're actually I guess legally entitled to do.

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When you're talking about community groups, who makes up these community groups?-- Generally you're talking about volunteers within those local communities. And you're talking, you know - you know, rural fire members and generally, you know, service club type - type members.

Are any other government agencies having a role in these local community groups, for example the police officer or-----?-- Yes. And certainly we would - the draft terms of reference has the - particularly the police playing an important role, certainly just as a - as an officer on a ground and generally the officer in charge in those local communities being a presence.

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The next matter that I wish to take you to is in relation to page 12 where you refer to the information that is being provided to the LDMG?-- Yes.

Do you see that?-- Yes.

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And this is further particularised in the second statement at item 11?-- Yes.

You say in item 11 at C that, "In recent times the level of support from the State through EMQ and others has decreased with respect to disaster management with expectations that both the community and the State rightfully continuing to

increase in this regard". What do you mean when you say the level of support from the State through EMQ has decreased in relation to information?-- Well, we - I guess that is referring to an observation on the ground at our end that, certainly, at times there appears to be a lack of certainly support in our local region, certainly from EMQ, but also a lack of understanding in some areas of State Government agencies of disaster management arrangements in general. And that can lead to confusion then when you are trying to respond.

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Can you give us an example of this misunderstanding?-- We've - certainly we've had - you know, we've had issues which have been dealt with by - certainly, the Shen Neng 1 incident was one that came up whereby-----

Can you just pause there, Mr Holmes. We're just taking down a recording of what you're saying so we've just got to catch up.

COMMISSIONER: So which was the incident?-- The Shen Neng incident.

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Just spell it. Spell it, please?-- S-H-E-N N-E-N-G 1.

MS WILSON: That is the boat?-- That's the boat, yes.

That-----?-- Certainly.

Sorry, was what that?-- That was the boat that ran aground on Douglas Shoals.

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Yes?-- There was an activation - there was a request for us, for council, and the LDMG to be activated and respond to that event. However, what we - some of the tasks that were being asked for us were already being planned for by other State Government agencies. That led to duplication and we believe a lot of that has already been addressed in the report, final report from that incident that came out post my original statement.

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What about events that occurred in December of this year? Have you got any examples of that?-- I guess the one - the one issue we did raise there was certainly the resupply policy. We believe that there was - new guidelines came out for that late December. We certainly weren't aware of them or made aware of them, only when we went to act on them several days later. And that - and that certainly was a - was an issue because we did have to look at resupplying areas in Baffle Creek.

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You have also provided an example about the release of evacuation guidelines by EMQ?-- Yes. That's correct.

Can you tell us about that?-- I guess we've received the draft evacuation guidelines were released in - in early November and there certainly has been an expectation by - certainly at a district level that the evacuation planning has been essentially completed. Now, I find that - it was pretty hard

given that we only received those guidelines on the 11th of November and had only received our biggest threat in our area, in our mind, is storm tide and cyclone and we'd only just received, essentially, our storm tide and mapping information from EMQ mid-November also. So it just seems very hard to have completed that process with appropriate community consultation in the time frame that was expected.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you, what was the resupply problem at Baffle Creek?-- It was about medical supplies.

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But what was the problem?-- People - that we had to resupply medical medicines to local - local people and that was coordinated by council and through the local SES.

I thought you said though that the guidelines had changed or the protocols have changed for doing it?-- Yeah, I-----

I was just curious as to how that changed and why that mattered?-- It didn't matter in that instance but, certainly, we were looking at resupplying some shops and the like where there was a need to get - my understanding was there was a need to get certain forms and letters signed and agreed, you know, prior - prior to and it just seemed to be a very longwinded process.

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So is it still a longwinded process? I'm just trying to get to whether there is a still a problem or what it is that you're-----?-- Look, it may well be the fact that the guidelines, as I said, were released on the 22nd of December and we were looking at implementing these on the 27th and 28th of December. So that it may be that, you know, communication and consultation with respect to those changes wasn't effective and if - you know, if that had been, maybe the perceptions of what we saw would be somewhat different.

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So are you saying that it is not so much the forms you have to fill out but that you weren't familiar with them?-- We weren't - we certainly weren't familiar with them and we weren't aware that there was a change in that policy until we actually went to look at - at that resupply issue.

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Thank you.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Commissioner, can I reserve our position on

some aspects of the evidence Mr Holmes has given this morning. I just need to get some instructions. It might not be an issue or it might be addressed by appropriately calling a witness from EMQ at some stage in the future but I just need to - if I could reserve my position.

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MR BURNS: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: No questions, Mr Burns.

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MS McLEOD: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: That's everyone, isn't it? Thank you very much, Mr Holmes. You didn't have any re-examination I take it.

MS WILSON: No, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: We can end the connection now and you're excused, thank you?-- Thank you very much.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, the next witness I am calling is Stuart Holley from the Mackay Regional Council. We just need a short adjournment to be able to set up the video link.

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COMMISSIONER: All right. We'll adjourn until you're ready.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.29 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.31 A.M.

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MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Stuart Holley.

STUART MARK HOLLEY, SWORN AND EXAMINED VIA VIDEO LINK-UP:

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: Is your full name Stuart Mark Holley?-- That is correct.

And you're the local disaster coordinator for the Mackay Regional Council?-- That is correct.

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And you have authored two documents that have been provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry?-- Correct.

The first - the first statement that - in time that was provided is a statement that was actually signed the 10th of May, yesterday?-- That is correct, yes. I have been away for three weeks and returned yesterday.

Okay. Now, you provided that in form to the Commission, and from that document further questions were asked?-- That is correct.

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And you then authored a second document to answer those questions?-- That is correct.

And that document, though, is signed on the 9th of May, the second document?-- I have got both of them being signed on the 9th of May.

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Okay. The - okay. Well, I tender the first document which is - which is - the first paragraph is the local planning and preparation, that was the first document that you drafted; you see that paragraph one?-- That's correct.

Okay?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 336.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 336"

MS WILSON: And then the second document provides further

details to questions that were asked of you?-- That is correct.

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And that first page is headed up, "Question One"; do you see that?-- That's correct, yep.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 337.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 337"

MS WILSON: Now, these two documents have to be read together because the second document provides more information or particulars that were asked for in relation to the first document?-- Correct.

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Have you got those two documents in front of you?-- Yes, I do.

Okay. Now, if I could take you to that first page which was - which is where you discuss the local planning and preparation in relation to the 2010/2011 flood events?-- Yes.

You state there, "There was a review of the Emergency Action Guide in September 2010, and this Emergency Action Guide is available to all residents in hard copy and by Council's website." Have you got that Emergency Action Plan with you?-- I do, yes.

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Can I take you to that, please?-- Yes.

Now, this is a document that is provided to residents to assist them in knowing what to do in emergencies; is that the case?-- That's correct. We've introduced this document certainly of the order - initially about 10 years ago, and we've updated that on an annual basis for depending on what circumstances arise associated with particular events that have occurred over that period of time, and the most recent one was updated prior to the cyclone and flood season of 2010/'11.

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Okay. Now, the information that you provide in this document, is that advice based on experience, studies, information from EMQ? Where do you get that information from?-- It's a combination of things. Certainly a lot of information comes from resources from EMQ; information that's through experience that we've had with flooding and cyclones over, as I said, the 10-year period; and it's a gradual accumulation of material that's updated on an on-going basis.

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And this Emergency Action Guide is attached to your statement, the second statement?-- We - it is, yes.

Perhaps if I can take you to just a couple of matters in that document. You see at page 4 you've - you provided information on how to prepare an emergency kit?-- That is correct.

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That information that you got there, is that coming from EMQ experience or just what you think the residents might require?-- It's - as I indicated before, it's a combination of material. We utilise the material that EMQ has provided in the past. We also have available for distribution at a range of events EMQ material which complements this action guide.

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If you go to the next page you refer to flooding?-- Yes.

And you provide the SES number to call in an event of flooding?-- That is correct.

And you provide information to the residents about what to do if flooding is predicted?-- Yes, that is correct.

Okay. And you also refer to the evacuation section which is the next page, and if I can take you to that. Now, does - do - does the Council provide evacuation centres in relation to flooding events?-- Council does not provide evacuation centres prior to events. We have - we have evacuation facilities in the case of people that are, if you like, in response to an event, but certainly not prior to an event.

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Okay. And in response to an event, where would the residents know where to go?-- In terms of a flooding event, we would advise residents to, in normal circumstances, whether it be cyclone or flood event, to seek assistance from friends and relatives in high places.

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And is there any reason why the Council doesn't set up evacuation centres per se?-- We don't have the resources or the access to facilities to accommodate that. The issue for us is - where that is the most critical is in the event of cyclone storm surge and I think - I mentioned in one of the statements that if we get in excess of half a metre above highest astronomical tide, then we're in the process of having to evacuate 11,000 people. We do not have the resources to be able to accommodate people in that sort of numbers in emergency facilities-----

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You-----?-- -----or evacuation facilities.

You state on that page that if you decide to evacuate prior to being asked, to phone the disaster ordination centre?-- That is correct. If people need to have access or we need to identify where people are going to be, then we have that opportunity to register those people.

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Okay. And how does this - how does this system work, of this relying on self-evacuation to go to higher ground or to friends?-- Well, from experience, over the last 10 years that I have been in this role, that has worked very well. We've had situations where we've had to particularly get people to self-evacuate in a preliminary way during Cyclone Ului and in

preparation for preparation Yasi. In relation to flooding, the areas that are likely, and we can predict those in a reasonable short time, we do door-knocks to particular people. In the Cremorne area which is the most critical, and there's probably only about 20 to 30 properties there that are likely to be impacted upon on a regular basis and they have mechanisms in place themselves to deal with that evacuation.

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You say that this Emergency Action Guide is available to all residents in hard copies. Do you distribute it to all residents?-- We do. We've previously distributed of the order of 60,000 copies two years ago to every resident. We then make it available through our particular customer service centres, civic centre, libraries, to residents that have lost them or inadvertently misplaced them. We also have it available on our website for all residents to be able to get access to. And as a result of issues associated with Cyclone Yasi, the flooding and surge chart maps that are in that document at the rear have all been separately identified so that it doesn't clog up our e-mail and our web page system.

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As well as the - that document of the Emergency Action Guide, the Council also distributes with the Daily Mercury a document called Surviving Emergencies?-- That is correct.

And is that put in the newspaper, is it?-- Yes, we have a program each year where we work through our local paper to prepare our community. We also do very comprehensive programs with the - our local radio networks in terms of both awareness, in terms of flooding and cyclones, right through the whole of our region.

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And it appears that this document of surviving emergency provides the same type of information as the Emergency Action Guide, but in a - in a consumable way?-- That - we have a very comprehensive Corporate Communications department that work with us in Mackay Regional Council, and they liaise with the Daily Mercury and the local paper to make sure that the material is consistent.

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Okay. And does the Council every year provide this document in the paper updated?-- That - that has been the case. We also have a very good working relationship with the paper. We also run a series of workshops or - what would you call it - we run a series of seminars that the residents are able to attend and we have workshops at local shopping centres to be able to identify what the needs are of the community, particularly for those people who have just moved into the area to make them aware of what the circumstances are.

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And is this of a great expense to the Council providing this type of information to the residents?-- I think the cost is well worth it. I can't give you a figure in terms of what that cost might be. We have program of about \$15,000 for publicity and advertising and it's well within that sort of program. We allocate about \$15,000 a year for the reprinting and documentation of the Emergency Action Guide.

If I can take you to item 4 in your first statement and on the third dot point where you talk about, "There is some misperception in the roles of the Queensland Police Service and the role of local Government in events"?-- Yes.

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Can you explain that to me?-- That was also a question for clarification in the second document-----

And-----?-- -----and we provide information in relation to that, and where that is I would probably qualify that to say that we have an excellent working relationship with the District Disaster Management Group in Mackay, and because of the sorts of disasters and events that we've had over the, you know, the time that I have been here for 10 years, we have had cyclones and flooding annually for at least the last five or six. We've got a pretty good working relationship. One of the things that we find is that at a State level there seems to be an issue with making sure that local Government, which is the Combatting and Response Agency, and that's our role, is we need to make sure we get that communication through to us to make sure we're able to do that, that happens at a district level. There's some issues at a State level where that doesn't necessarily occur.

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You provide examples under question three of that second document?-- That is correct, and if I can just go through those with you. It probably relates predominantly to - predominantly to cyclones rather than the flooding events. The flooding events that we experienced were, sort of, the top end of that particular event. Certainly the issues for us were re-enforced by, I think, concerns by State as a result of the floods, then leading into Cyclone Anthony and Yasi where significant requests were made of local Government in relation to contact details associated with retirement villages and disabled groups which is something that we have listed, it's something we deal with, it's a matter of then why the need for State to be involved in that day-to-day or like hands-on issue at that level.

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You talk about-----?-- The-----

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Sorry, you talk about, "The confusion seems to be created with the changes to the Local Government Act and the air and perception that the Queensland Police Service now runs the response and recovery"?-- I think that where that comes from is that it's only been introduced effectively. This series over the Christmas period and flooding period is certainly a new approach associated with the new Act which has just come into effect. I think it will probably take a little bit of getting used to in terms of who's responsible and the level of responsibility to make sure that people who now have roles to play at a State level have a level of comfort that local Government can operate effectively and what we're saying is that certainly at Mackay we have - we consider that we have got the ability and level of expertise to be able to do that without necessarily being overly influenced from a State level on a - on a day-to-day basis.

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And you say that the issue can be resolved with greater training by the - to the parties?-- I think the other thing is there's training but also just working with the system. This was the first time that effectively that system had been put in place and I think it's a matter of getting levels of comfort between organisations as to the ability to be able to perform at that level.

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If I can take you to the role the SES plays in the regions covered by the Mackay Regional Council, and you address that in item 5 of your first statement. Now-----?-- Yes.

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-----Mackay Regional Council has taken a step of employing a full time SES local controller?-- That is correct. It's one of the things that we took the steps in relation to trying to get a coordinated approach to SES management across the new region with the implementation of amalgamations of Council. We had three Councils come together and the intent was, and what we've been able to achieve, is a coordinated approach across all of our SES units in the Mackay region as a result of that.

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And you have also introduced a separate levy charged to all ratepayers to assist in funding to support SES functions and Emergency Services activities?-- That's correct. The Council fully funds the coordination of the controller and that was done prior to the implementation of the levy on residents. Two years ago Council introduced the initiative of a levy of 11 - currently \$11 per annum per rateable property and that provides an opportunity to - provide training for SES units, it provides resourcing for SES units, it give us the ability to provide - improve accommodation and facilities for SES units. It also provides us with an opportunity to provide services and facilities for emergency management, arrangements both in terms of generators to power our emergency centre and communication centre. Also an opportunity to potentially purchase and develop generators for our works operations depot so we can operate at a - during times of major emergencies.

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\$11 per annum per rateable property, what does that equate to in terms of the funds you get to receive?-- You're looking at about \$500,000 a year.

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And you state that the Mackay region SES unit took steps to ensure that its volunteer numbers remained above 200 persons prior to the yearly storm season?-- That-----

And at-----?-- That is correct.

How do they do that?-- We have a major recruiting program with SES doing displays at shopping centres and through the - we have publicity associated with our local paper and radio. We also ensure that - because we have improved facilities at our units, that - the training that's available is something that - the actual personnel look forward to and that provides them with greater expertise.

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And 95 per cent of the SES are trained and ready to

participate in some capacity as part of an SES response. How is - how do you ensure that the - that you have such a high percentage of SES trained to that degree?-- We are having arrangements in place where we have certified trainers within our SES units. It's probably something that we aren't at the level that we would like to be and it's an area where we're having on-going discussions with EMQ in relation to that matter. The other issue for us is that the level of training that EMQ supports and provides for the numbers that we do have does not allow us to rely purely on EMQ systems to maintain that level of training. So one of the things that we're looking at in the future is how we can facilitate the available training for our SES units and still get them accredited through the EMQ system but looking at external providers.

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And have you - have you had any discussions with EMQ about using external providers for training?-- Yes, we have, and there are a number of providers who can provide that service in relation to workplace health and safety, some of the other training aspects, and ensuring that they are accredited.

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In relation to the-----?-- And-----

Sorry, continue?-- And we have an excellent working relationship with EMQ at a local level in Mackay.

In relation to the deployment of SES, who determines what - which tasks they go to?-- We get advice from EMQ when there's a request made to deploy them outside of the region, but in relation to deployment within the region in terms of our own activities, that's coordinated through the SES controller and his team.

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If I could take you now to strategic alliances that the Mackay Regional Council has with other Councils. You address that in point 7 of your first statement?-- Yes.

Where you state that, "The Mackay Regional Council deployed a team of seven experienced disaster coordination centre staff to Emerald for a period of a week"?-- That is correct, yes.

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How did this come about?-- Our Mayor and CO have been in contact with their respective counterparts at Emerald and Rockhampton during the flooding events to just let them know that if they needed resourcing and assistance then we were in a position to be able to do that. That was subsequently considered appropriate so a formal application was made through the DDMG at Rockhampton through to Mackay, and we did it formally through the standard process of DDMG requests.

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Has the Mackay Regional Council continued working with the Central Highlands?-- We - half that event, we've been in communication with Central Highlands. They've offered assistance to us in the event that should we be in a similar position and particularly in relation to Cyclone Yasi as it come through, so we had that on-going communication. We also have that same working relationship with the likes of Cairns

and Townsville when we also attended at them through cyclone Larry a number of years ago.

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Is it your view that these strategic alliances should be continued, that there should be an on-going working relationship with Councils that you have worked with previously?-- Oh, very much so. I think one of the issues for us is the introduction of the new disaster management software that most Councils up and down the Coast are using now, and it's the Guardian system. That system is excellent, but there is a need to make sure the staff using that are trained to be able to get the best benefit of that, and then when you have a situation where either during floods or cyclones, your own staff had the potential to be impacted upon, therefore, your available resources might be limited, therefore, to be able to pull upon - or call upon a group of trained personnel from other areas that aren't necessarily affected is something that we will be pursuing over the next six months.

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In terms of the Guardian software, what benefit do you see it for the Mackay Regional Council to have it?-- It certainly provides us an opportunity to have the whole system automated. We are now making sure that with our Generation System for our communication centre, that the whole system is stand-alone. It provides us with an opportunity to have on that system our mapping arrangements so that we can identify specifically where there might be a range of activities or areas of staff and we need to address so we can plot the whole lot. We can also make sure that we can send activations out to the other agencies, whether it be police or the service authorities, fire, Ergon, to make sure they can then come back and sign those off, and we've got - we've provided training to those particular agencies. So for us whilst we still have a back-up system of a paper system, initially that material then gets get fed into the computer-based system. It means that we can then do Sitreps to DDMG, then can be forwarded on to State as a matter of course with all the information that's automatically loaded into that system.

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And finally if I can take you to the partnership that you have established with the Bureau of Meteorology-----?-- Yes.

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-----in terms of the river and rainfall alerts. You-----?-- Yes.

-----discussed that at item 9. You have got that?-- I think one of the - again, the issue for us is that because we have a very short, sharp catchment in terms of the Pioneer River, the advice that we get from the Bureau and DERM in relation to - particularly the bureau in relation to flooding and DERM in relation to some of the storm surge use for us is critical.

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We could have major issues in our - the top of our catchment and we can get only four to six hours' notice before we're likely to have mayor impacts on the town centre of Mackay. So that working relationship and the flooding levels and the storm - sorry, the flood levels and flood monitoring along the river is critical.

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You say that, "When a trigger point is received the ALERT system sends an SMS alert to three council officers"-- That's correct.

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"And based on the warnings received, information is then disseminated to affected residents"-- Yes.

How is that information disseminated?-- What it is is we effectively have trigger points whether it shows as minor - minor flooding at particular locations, major flooding or moderate flooding. When we get to the situation of potential major flooding, we use the necessary resources we have through our communication team to warn the public through the media and if we need to, we do door-knocking of particularly the Cremorne area, which is the critical one for us, we use SES or our own emergency management staff to do that.

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What is the lag time from when a trigger point is activated to when residents should be evacuated?-- It really depends on what the forecast arrangement is whether the information from the Bureau we monitor carefully as to whether it continues to rise or fall. So it is probably hard to say exactly. We treat it situation on its own merits. But again, it is a situation, as I said before, that we treat on a case by case basis.

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But under normal circumstances, if there are normal circumstances, how much time have you got to warn these residents from when you first receive the trigger points?-- It can vary depending on the - the tides that we have because the area that's most likely to flood in the Cremorne area is more susceptible when we have king and high tides coinciding at the same time as a peak flood event in the river. So we would normally have a situation of probably four to six hours.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr Holley, I can see looking at your storm surge inundation maps why evacuation centres aren't feasible for them, but what about flooding? How many households would you have affected in the event of a major flood?-- In terms of a major flood, and we have been able to control to date behind our levees. We have got a one in 40 year return period for our - at the moment on our levees in terms of our recent study. The main area of flooding is the Cremorne area. As I said before, we get the a four to six week - four to six hour time frame and you're probably only looking about 30 to 40 houses in those areas.

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Are they all capable of evacuating themselves to somewhere else?-- They have their own plans. We have a system in place

where they - that happens on a regular basis if you like, at least annually. So they have systems in place where they know what they've got to do during that period of time. The issue for us a number of years ago in 2008 was local flooding that occurred and we had 4,000 properties inundated in 2008 and we were, I suppose - it happened overnight so the time associated with that was only a four-hour period of time and it happened overnight. So it was an issue that was outside of the Pioneer River catchment which is where we all have our extreme height controls.

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Well, in that circumstance where you've got 4,000 properties affected, did you not find a need for evacuation facilities?-- It was necessary after the event, because the situation in Mackay is that you might have four to six hours' notice but, certainly, the levels in a river normally drop because of the effect on the tides. So I would - in normal circumstances, the tidal effect would be gone within another six hours. So it's really after that period of time that we need to provide more recovery centres rather than evacuation centres.

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I see. And do you do that?-- Yes, we do. We have a whole range of recovery centres identified across our region. Some are within some of the flood-prone areas. Some - and a lot - a lot of them aren't. It just depends on the circumstance and what the event is as to what facility we would use.

So you don't find yourself in a situation of having stranded travellers or backpackers with nowhere else to go where you need to put them up during the flooding event?-- Not during floods, no, we don't. The issue for us is more in terms of cyclones and a storm surge and, again, that's an issue for us to deal with in terms of getting residents to higher places, because we usually get two to three days' notice in relation to that. In relation to flooding of the Pioneer River, which is our main issue and probably an issue that is probably more of a concern to the Commission, that is a more up and down issue. If we struggle with having a break in our levee banks, then Mackay is in real danger and I think that's the critical thing. Is that our levee banks have upheld up since the early '50s and we have been ongoing with the Pioneer River Improvement Trust to improve and increase the height of those levees and we are about to finalise the last link in that levee on the northern side of Mackay to finalise the total enclosure of the Pioneer River as it gets down into the major part of Mackay.

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Thank you. Then in relation to SES volunteers, you said that you had this levee which enabled you to do a few things in relation to training and facilities and so on for volunteers, and you say in your response that it resulted in a greater ability to retain and attract volunteers. What aspect do you think it is that is likely to get you more volunteers? Is it better training? Is it the facilities? What brings people in do you think?-- I think it is a number of things. I think because Mackay has regular activation - I mean, people like to be active when they volunteer. So that's an attraction in itself to a lot of people. That's why they do that.

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I don't think we could really recommend that people have more emergencies in order to up the SES attendance?-- I don't disagree with you but, I mean, that's what we're finding. Is when people are activated in the SES, they have some sense of being - providing a community service and that's one of the things that we want to encourage. The facilities that we have, where there are training facilities that are reasonable standards; we have provision of appropriate trained staff to be able to provide that opportunity for them to be trained; the equipment that they're using, whether it be vehicles or the rescue boats and whatever, all add up to providing an environment in which they're providing assistance to the community. I think the other thing is that what we've been trying to do is emphasise to the community that they are actually volunteers, they provide a service to them. They're not there to be abused or discouraged from undertaking their role and we certainly promote volunteerism in Mackay as a major issue for us.

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So, essentially, you're saying that it's a better looking service because it's better resourced and that brings people in?-- Very much so and that's something that the council were conscious of a number of years ago when they introduced the levee. When you have a look at the facilities we've got and got planned over the next four to five years because of that levee opportunity, it means that we can then provide them with facilities and services that are cyclone proof in if you like. So we're looking at that in the future.

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Then the question of training, what is it about the EMQ training that makes you like to outside providers? Is there not enough of it or is it not of good enough quality?-- It is not so much the quality. I think they have upped the ante in terms of quality over the last number of years in terms of accredited training. And that's one of the areas - because of their new ability to be able to provide trainers who can deliver that accredited training at a local level, is an area that is of major concern and that's one of the areas we're wanting to support and complement what's available at EMQ to give our SES members an opportunity to diversify and develop different skills in terms of their training. It gives us more flexibility in what we can do and utilise our staff and members of the SES for. So they're the sorts of things that we want to continue to develop over the next couple of years.

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That seems very diplomatic. Thank you. Mr Burns?

MR BURNS: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you. 1

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, I have no further questions. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Holley, you're excused and we can end the connection. 10

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Air Vice Marshall Paule. 20

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KEVIN JOHN PAULE, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Kevin John Paule?-- It is.

You hold the rank of Air Vice Marshall?-- I do.

With the Royal Australian Air Force?-- That's correct.

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You also - your role is as head of Military Strategic Commitments, MSC?-- That is right.

And MSC provides strategic level management and situational awareness of potential and current ADF commitments?-- That's correct.

Now, you provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I did.

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The statement has attachments. Can you have a look at this document, please. Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 338.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 338"

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MS WILSON: There's some matters that if I can just take you to in relation to your statement. Have you got a copy of your statement there?-- I do.

One of the issues that I wish to take you to is the request for assistance to Defence and there's a process involved and that process you explain in paragraph 11, but perhaps we can just summarise it as this. Requests come to the Australian Defence Force through the EMA, and the EMA is the Emergency Management of Australia?-- That's correct.

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And then you state that you - "The ADF prefers the requests be made for an outcome or effect rather than a particular asset". So what you're saying there is you don't want requests - you do not want requests coming through saying, "Can we have three helicopters?" You want a request coming through saying, "We need this outcome to be achieved", and for the ADF to determine how that outcome will be achieved. Is that it?-- I think that would depend more upon the nature of the crisis that the state or the territory has before it, and you would perhaps be aware from my statement that there are a number of different categories of Defence assistance. So in terms of a request from a local community to a local commander on a base or so, it might be able to be a reasonably specific request because there's quite a specific need that's beyond the capacity of that community to respond to. But in terms of a much larger commitment, it is probably better to seek from the

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defence force what you're trying to achieve. You want to move 500 people; you want to accommodate this many people. I think it is probably best left to Defence as to what platform we have available and most able to respond in that circumstance. You know, if we were to get - for example, we would rather not someone ask us for a couple of C-130 Hercules aircraft. We would rather someone say, "Can you move a couple of hundred people", and we will determine whether the C-130 is indeed the correct platform or whether we might use any of our other airlift platforms to best perform that task and in the most timely manner.

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Can we talk about the role that the Australian Defence Force plays within disaster management hierarchy?-- Certainly.

Now, you have provided an annexure to your statement which is a diagram that represents ADF liaison with LDMGs, DDMGs and SDMGs. Have you got that diagram there? It's KP-3?-- Yes, I do, that's right at the back.

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Now, on the left-hand side is the agencies that the ADF are supporting, they're the supported agencies, and the ADF on the right?-- That's correct, yes.

Now, what I'm interested in is the role that the liaison officers play with the SDCC and the DDMG?-- Sure. Well, I think that - I think the diagram that is presented there is more likely to be the type of arrangements we put in place to support a large-scale response to a natural disaster such as the Queensland floods. So while on a regular basis Defence would have liaison officers established in the state capitals to coordinate, if necessary, with the state-based authorities should there be a request for Defence, we would not normally have constructed a joint task force to - a joint task force wouldn't exist unless there was a particular natural disaster that we were seeking to - we were responding to. So what we did is establish some liaison officers within the District Disaster Management Groups and increase the level of representation to the State Disaster Coordination Committee to best liaise and communicate with the other state-based and emergency authorities to provide the best possible response to a particular request.

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When DDMGs were requesting assets or were requesting assistance in resolving an outcome, how would they make that request for military assets?-- I think, yes, there were probably a number of examples here and it depends upon the particular type of request that we're talking about. The way the joint task force was constructed and then distributed amongst the region to provide that support to the Queensland authorities, Emergency Management Queensland and also the Queensland Police Service - I'm sorry, can you just ask that question again.

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I'm wanting to know how-----?-- Yes, the requests, yes. Right.

How these requests are actioned and the system that must be

undertaken for these requests to be supplied?-- So an initial request for support would traditionally come up through the state authorities to Emergency Management Australia into Defence headquarters, probably in Canberra, or it might come through our joint operations command headquarters.

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So we have got this map in front of us. So are you envisaging that it comes up from the DDMG to the SDCC?-- I'm not quite sure in the early stages of a disaster response whether you would have established your District Disaster Management Groups at this stage. I suspect that's probably the case. But here's where-----

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Let's work on the basis that they are?-- Okay. So if we're looking at consultation that probably occurs within the state-based system and the state realises that the magnitude of the emergency or the speed with which the response you would seek to implement is beyond the resources of the states or the territory, so that's when the request would then come outside the states into Emergency Management Australia and then across to Defence. And then, we would work with Emergency Management Australia to consider the request and respond with the appropriate assets. The response would normally require a level of authorisation, perhaps at the Chief of Defence Force level or, indeed, the Minister for Defence for a large-scale emergency such as we're talking about here. Military instructions are written from the Chief of Defence Force to the Joint Operations Command and it is the responsibility of the Chief of Joint Operations to then operationalise that instruction from the Chief of Defence Force. The Chief of Defence Force also assigns assets from the other - from the services, our navy, army and air force, to the Chief of Joint Operations and then, indeed, our subordinate to him, the Joint Force Commander. So we're trying to assign the right number of assets at the right time in order for the Joint Force Commander to be properly resourced to conduct the task that we've been asked to perform. Now, that's at the early stages of, you know, the emergency or the response that's required. Once we get into the response phase and the Joint Force Commander has his assets distributed amongst, you know, the Brisbane region or the Lockyer Valley and perhaps - there was lot a close coordination between the units that were in that location and the Local Disaster Management Groups and the District Disaster Management Groups to look at the tasking that came day to day, and I suspect that the coordination that occurred at that local level and at the district level was confirmed at the state level and then put in place for the next day. At that part of our response or indeed as we move some weeks on the recovery, those requests did not have to come back up to Emergency Management Australia to then talk to Defence to, you know, make things happen on the ground. If the resort - if the task that the local commander was being asked to perform was within the resources that he had under his authority or it was within the guidelines of that particular task, they would just make that work happen. It would only be where we're moving on to the next scale of operation where a request might then come back up through probably the military command

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through to Headquarters Joint Operations Command and then into Defence at Russell to assign the Joint Force Commander some additional assets, and that happened about two or three times during the length of this operation where the Joint Force Commander didn't have sufficient assets assigned to him to move on to the next stage, or the increase in the level of the devastation that was - you know, he was seeing before him as the level of the waters increased. So additional resources were then assigned by Chief of Defence Force to Chief of Joint Operations and then further down the chain to the Joint Task Force Commander, and this applied to aviation assets, specialist engineering assets and when some of the naval assets were brought into the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay vicinity.

If you can go back to paragraph 63 of your statement and that refers to the ADF's role in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley from the 10th of January and this ties in I think to what you were just discussing. You state there that, "There are no standing contingency plans at the local level for army units in regional barracks depots in the vicinity of Toowoomba." What do you mean by standing contingency plans?-- Well, Defence is not postured directly to provide support to a natural disaster. We are postured in terms of capability and also in a level of standby to provide military response options for government and defence policy. But because of many of the capabilities that Defence possesses and also the agility with which I think we've proved we can bring those assets to bear in natural disasters, you know, that have previously - we've previously seen, we're able to mount those operations quite quickly. Now, I don't want to get into the details of how we postured the defence force to provide those options to the Minister and governments but there would be some occasions where perhaps you might have some standing contingency plans to support local environments. What I'm trying to say in my statement here is that I'm not aware of any that applied in the Toowoomba area at that time. That's not to say we weren't able to bring assets and personnel to bear on the task at very short notice.

And that was because, was it, JTF637 was established prior to event and, therefore, support was provided under the DCC's category 2 via direct requirements from the SDCC. So it was just a continuing of operations, is that what you're saying?-- Look, it was and I think there have been discussions already about the speed with which the waters and torrents raced through Toowoomba and then into the Lockyer Valley. If we did not have the joint task force already established and in the environs, it would have taken a little bit longer to be able to mount the response. But because the Joint Task Force Commander was - because the joint task force was already established and he had his liaison officers in the State Disaster Coordination Centre and inside the district and Local Disaster Management Groups, we were able to understand what tasks are likely to be coming up tomorrow and the next day. In the Toowoomba case, we had an understanding that after the waters had raged through Toowoomba, the next day was probably going to require a significant search and rescue effort by

helicopters. So because the Joint Task Force Commander already had some assets under his command, he directed the movement of, for example, some helicopters from St George up into the Amberley region at very first light the next morning and he also put a request back up through his command chain to have some additional assets assigned to him, and in this case there were two helicopters from the Oakey Aviation Training Centre that we had assigned to the Joint Force Commander to be available at very first light the next day. So that coordination that occurred at the district level and also the ability to quickly ask for additional assets meant that the Joint Task Force Commander and those aviation assets were able to begin their search and rescue operations the next day.

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If JTF637 had not already been in operation and this was a standalone incident, would there be any delay in deploying ADF assets?-- In the case of the Toowoomba waters, flooding waters, I don't really think so. All it would probably have taken was some conversations between if indeed there's a Local Disaster Management Group or a District Management Group in that Toowoomba environ to speak to someone in Defence, and probably they would know that there are helicopters based at Oakey. So he would probably have spoken to one of the local commanders. And I am sure if there hadn't been a joint task force already in place, the local commander would have done his best to get some helicopters out there, you know, as early as possible the next day. I hesitate slightly because we were during a, you know, major holiday period for Australia so it may have been that there were not as many helicopters available simply because crews were taking leave.

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You talked before about contact being made with a local commander. How is then that request actioned up the line to get approval for defence assistance?-- Well, if it's - if it's a request of such an immediate sense, then the local commander would provide that level of authorisation. Under our defence assistance to the civil community categories we have a category 1 which allows local commanders to authorise defence assets to support the civil community when there is life at risk or to alleviate significant suffering. In that case, I'm sure the local commanders would have provided that authorisation and the work would have happened the next day. That category of defence assistance normally only applies for a 24-hour period. So if it was likely that that level of response was required over a longer period of time, then communications would have probably flowed up through the defence hierarchy to - if it wasn't through the joint task force, probably up through single service channels to the various service headquarters in Russell. There would have been some rapid coordination probably involving members of the Military Strategic Commitments, coordination with Headquarters Joint Operations Command. Some detailed planning would have occurred within Joint Operations Command and some authorisation would have been provided to move that level 1 category assistance into category 2 of a more enduring nature and that would normally require the approval of Chief of Defence Force or perhaps the Minister.

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Can that happen quicker?-- Yeah, very quickly.

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Hours?-- Well, in the example I have just provided, we are talking about moving from a response that may have been provided in the first 24 hours and we're seeking about going beyond that. So in that case we don't have hours. We've got a considerable amount of time to make those authorisations happen.

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And the Local Commander has a degree of discretion whether to be able to respond to it about how he sees which category it falls into?-- The Local Commander's authority is normally limited to category 1 in an emergency sense so it's an immediate response required to save life or alleviate suffering. It's only once you go beyond that 24 hours immediacy that you may enter one of the other categories of assistance and require a greater level of coordination or perhaps a higher level of authorisation.

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If we can go back to your diagram, I'm interested in the liaison officers. Which DDMG are provided a liaison officer? How is that determined?-- Well, in the particular case here in South Queensland, it was determined basically by a planning process within the Joint Force headquarters - yeah, the Joint Force headquarters. It might be worth mentioning that and you would know perhaps from reading my statement, that we had what I would describe as two phases of our response to the natural disaster here. We had what we would call the response phase and then we had the recovery phase. The response phase was quite immediate, it - it largely was - was - it took the form of a search and rescue operations. But as that had proceeded for around about a couple of weeks, it - it became clear that the immediate search and rescue phase, the response phase, was perhaps coming to a close and we're now looking to moving into a phase of recovery where perhaps different types of Australian Defence Force assets might be required on request from the Queensland Government up through Emergency Management Australia, and so the headquarters that was about to move into that response phase was able to undertake a couple of days worth of detailed planning and best position their - the new Joint Task Force, the expanded Joint Task Force to provide that level of response to the Queensland authorities. That planning process included looking at where the initial JTF had the liaison officers established and whether we might seek to augment those local groups, those district groups, and indeed the State Disaster Coordination Centre with additional expertise to make sure that we had the right skills and the right people to provide that - that - that level of expertise and coordination with the other State authorities, State departments and emergency agencies.

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When you talk about the right skills and the right people, what do you mean by that in terms of determining the liaison officers?-- Well, there were some examples where we deployed aviation liaison officers down into the St George and Roma area where we initially deployed, I think, two seeking helicopters to provide some assistance, and to - those liaison officers had stayed on for a longer period of time than those two military helicopters and were able to provide a degree of coordination with the local Councils to assist with the Queensland Police Service helicopters that were operating in that area. People who understood the - the - the capabilities of the particular units that were employed, and there's another example we might use in the Lockyer Valley region where these liaison officers coordinating with the District Disaster Management Group in Gatton and I think the Queensland Police Service headquarters in Grantham understood what - what

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assets the Defence Force had in their particular area, what capabilities they had at the time, and were able to best coordinate the response to the tasks. Not all the tasks went to defence, and nor should they, so they were able to best determine the right Commonwealth or State resources to the particular task of tomorrow or the next day, perhaps.

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Now, you read the statement of Inspector Pitman?

COMMISSIONER: Miss Wilson, I'm thinking about taking the morning break, but that will depend on if you're just going to be a couple of minutes we won't, but if you'll be a little time, well, we might take it now.

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MS WILSON: I'll be about five minutes, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: All right. We'll go ahead then.

MS WILSON: You've read the statement of Garth Pitman, the Ipswich, the District Disaster Coordinator?-- I had a brief look before. Can I have another look at that now, please?

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The paragraph that I - that you refer to talked about the deployment of ADF air resources, and we're referring to page 7 of Garth Pitman's statement?-- Mmm-hmm.

And it talks about that, "It could have been more effective and timely given the urgency for deployment during the initial phase", and it talks about the process that was involved "that DDC would submit a request to SDC for air support who would then forward it on to Emergency Management Australia, and they would then forward it on to ADF for consideration", and it talks about, "That despite the ADF RAAF having a representative at the DDMG level, this avenue of deployment was not possible with the ADF and request required to be processed as outlined above"?-- Mmm.

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Have you got any comment on that?-- I don't that quite describes how it would have occurred in most occasions.

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Well, what about can you particularly refer to this - this occasion which the Ipswich District Disaster Coordinator is referring to?-- Um-----

If you can't, you can't?-- Well, do we have a date in mind here at all?

He's talking about the initial stage of the flood was problematic?-- So I'm just wondering whether we're talking about the time frame where the Defence assets were more or less concentrated in the Theodore, Emerald and Rockhampton areas. So I'm trying to establish whether it was, well, before or after the Toowoomba floods, I suppose.

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Well, let's just - if it was before the Toowoomba floods, would this have been the process?-- Look, it could have perhaps been the process, but before the Toowoomba floods the Defence concentration was largely further north in the Emerald

and Rockhampton area. It really wasn't until the Toowoomba floods where you saw an increased concentration of defence assets in, you know, the Lockyer Valley region. But-----

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So can we stop there. So after the Toowoomba floods you would expect it to be a bit more streamlined?-- Oh, very streamlined, and I would say-----

For the Ipswich DDC, the Ipswich District Disaster Coordinator?-- For any of the DDCs. I would say that there was a high level of flexibility in the arrangements that were allowed to occur. I describe before that there was not a need on a day-to-day basis for requests to go from the local level to the district level to the State level in order for the Joint Task Force commander or, indeed, the liaison officers that we had in those various levels to consider and approve the task. There are many areas - well, there are some areas where unit commanders were almost co-located with the districts. So if the task was within the resources of that local commander, he would approve the task and just go on and implement it the very next day. It would only - or immediately depending on, you know, when their planning processes occurred. It would only have been if the task was larger than he was able to undertake where he would have to send that request up to the Joint Task Force commander.

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And just in two other matters. You're aware that the ADF worked with the police in the Grantham area?-- I am.

You're aware of the command structure that the ADF had with the police?-- Broadly, I would describe it as the Defence - Defence worked very closely with the Queensland Police Service, but it was defence was in support of the State-based arrangements.

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And the police were directing the tasks for the ADF?-- In many cases, yes.

And this worked well-----?-- Look, I think-----

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-----from the ADF's perspective?-- I think I've described a couple of times that the degree of flexibility that we're able to use in this particular case worked very, very well. Sometimes it may have been the Queensland Police Service who directed a particular task, sometimes it may have gone up to - in consultation with the local Council, the District Management Group, so I think it worked very, very well. And there was a high degree of trust built up with the people who did that day-to-day coordination.

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And finally, we've heard about weather conditions precluding the use of rescue helicopters in certain circumstances?-- Mmm-hmm.

What about ADF helicopters, do ADF helicopters also have to be grounded because of weather conditions?-- Well, ultimately, yes. There will be some weather conditions such as low cloud base, extreme thunderstorms, very low visibility that no

helicopter is going to be able to operate over land. It's a slightly different matter over water, but over land and particularly in, you know, mountainous regions, and if we're talking about the Lockyer Valley here, you know, there would be a risk that at night you may inadvertently fly into cloud, so there would be different considerations from day - daytime to night-time.

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Are you aware of the weather conditions that prevailed on the 10th of January over Grantham?-- Not through my presence there, but I have had the weather described to me and reported, yes.

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Could ADF assets have been deployed in those weather conditions?-- The morning of the 11th of January?

No, the afternoon of the 10th?-- Well, let me answer it this way: I don't think it was a case as to whether the military aircraft would be better able to fly than the civilian aircraft. I would ask whether any aircraft were able to fly during those conditions, and in and around that period I understand that there were periods where helicopters would be undertaking their search and rescue operations, and a particular weather score, might come round, they would have to land, wait for that very low cloud, the rain to pass, and then take off and continue their operations. I think what the crews were certainly trying to do is maintain visual sight of the ground. If you inadvertently flew into the cloud, you're then obliged to fly to safety altitude which might be some thousand or so feet above the highest terrain in the area and you may never get down in that area again. You may be forced to divert to an airfield. So if it was possible for any helicopters to fly, I think it would - an SES helicopter or a military helicopter, you know, would have been able to fly using those techniques I have just described.

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The question, though, is does ADF helicopters, are they - do they have any tools that allow it to - allow those helicopters to fly in worse conditions than normal emergency rescue helicopters?-- I would say it's more largely dependent upon the type and design of the helicopter. Helicopters are reasonably susceptible to turbulence, particularly as you have to manage the connection from the fuselage of the helicopter to the rotor, and that, I think, would probably be the larger risk as whether it is - continues to be safe to operate the helicopter. So depending upon the design of that rotor to fuselage interface would more largely determine whether a helicopter was able to operate in greater degrees of turbulence. Now, there would be some military platforms that are designed this way, but there would be some civilian platforms designed in this way.

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And my final question is military helicopters, ADF can perform rescues at night?-- They can.

Pending the weather conditions?-- Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER: Any questions?

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MR BURNS: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

MR DUNNING: No questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing.

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COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: I have approximately five to 10 minutes.

COMMISSIONER: Look, we might take the break and come back after that. So we'll adjourn until midday.

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.44 A.M.

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 11.59 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms McLeod?

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MS McLEOD: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. Air Vice Marshall, I might start by asking you about in a general sense about the arrangements for the engagement of Commonwealth resources. You mention in paragraph 8 of your statement what I might royally describe as the constitutional arrangement; that is, the State and Territory authorities have a responsibility for coordinating and planning response to disasters and civil emergencies. You mentioned in answer to a question from Council Assisting that Defence or Commonwealth resources become involved when the magnitude of the event or the speed that is required for the response mean that the State resources would be exhausted. That's the trigger, if you like, for Commonwealth engagement; is that-----?-- Yes, that's correct, yes.

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Okay. And your role, as I understand, is a support role, it's not to go in and take over, as it were, the coordination of the response?-- That's correct, yes.

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The coordination role stays at all times with the relevant State or Territory?-- Well, they have the responsibility to lead the coordination, but I guess coordination is - involves all of the parties so we will be involved in discussions perhaps through EMA or direct contact with local commanders, and once a the Joint Task Force has been established with perhaps the Joint Task Force commander, but, yes, as you are

describing there, at all times Defence is in support of the State or - the State-based authorities.

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Okay. And that's not just because of the constitutional or legal arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State, but because there are financial implications for the involvement of ADS resources that may impact upon private operators or Government operations?-- Well, that's true, yes.

The Commonwealth does have a role, does it not, in the planning and preparation work that happens pre-season annually with each State and Territory?-- Yes, I think that is largely the responsibility of Emergency Management - Emergency Management Australia, but I did indicate in my statement there was an occasion in mid-November, I think, where defence - a Defence representative was involved in some of that pre-season dialogue, if you like, to refresh an understanding as to how you would seek Defence assets should the natural disaster or crisis be beyond the State-based authorities.

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Now, in terms of the formal process for requests in emergencies, you explained the Defence aid to the civil community category, category one in particular, or DACC 1, and you asked some questions about the availability or the ability of a Local Commander to initiate or respond to a DACC 1 request?-- Mmm-hmm.

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If a DACC 1 request is likely to exceed 24 hours, let's say, is there a gap before you can initiate a DACC 2 response or does it roll into a DACC 2 response?-- Well, it could roll into a DACC 2 response. The guidelines in our instruction talk about an expectation that it would be a limited period of time and, you know, talks about 24 hours. That's not to say that if it's going to take, you know, 36 hours or perhaps slight - you know, that sort of a period that - I don't believe that would be the reason why a Local Commander might refuse the task. I think his immediate concern would be to save life or to alleviate suffering which was the design of the request in the first place. So I think he's more likely to approve the request provided he's got the resources to do so, get on and provide that level of support, and then very quickly start consulting back up through his chain of command as to what we might do if it goes for a longer period of time, and that's when you might roll into, you know, category two which would more than likely require a Chief of Defence Force or ministerial approval, and we would - we might need to look at re-enforcing or augmenting the Local Commander with additional resources, additional types of capabilities. You know, the Local Commander may not have helicopter assets at his base, we might to deploy some there in order to provide that enduring support. It could very quickly move from a category one to a category two, yes.

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How do the DACC responses, how do they relate to the activation of COMDISPLAN which is the - the Commonwealth Disaster Plan Response, which was activated in this case on the 28th of December 2010?-- Well, I think they're complimentary.

Yes?-- It's the Commonwealth Disaster Plan and it is underneath that arrangement that the Defence assistance would be provided, so our - you could say in a sense although it's not purely a hierarchical, you know, command chain or document chain there, but the Defence assistance to the civil community, once you start to get into an enduring level of support of the magnitude that we have here, we're talking about in terms of the floods in South Queensland, the arrangements that we have put in place support the activation of the Commonwealth Disaster Plan. So it's - I believe it's the activation of that plan that allows the Commonwealth assets to be able - to provide support to the State or Territory.

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Now, you talked about the ADF response initially before the end of 2010 being principally based around Theodore and then Rockhampton, Emerald and we have also heard about Condamine and Dalby. That - they were requests made through EMA, Emergency Management Australia, which were then fed through to Defence?-- Largely, yes. The - there were certainly some early communication between Emergency Management Australia and Defence. Now, I had a couple of conversations myself with the Director General of EMA about the type of support and the speed with which Defence might be able to provide that support.

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But very shortly after that, on the 1st of January I think, the Joint Task Force was directed down through Chief of Defence Force to Headquarters Joint Operations Command to stand up a joint task force and at that point you then - we allowed the flexibility of the Joint Task Force Commander and his liaison officers working much more so with Emergency Management Queensland and the Queensland state authorities without requiring each and every task to come back up through Emergency Management Australia. Now, I would point out that there was very in the very early period of time, in the late December period there was a DACC 1 task approved by local commander to provide some evacuation of people. So in those early days it was, yes, a very small amount of our DACC 1 tasks and then we very quickly moved into DACC 2 because the requests started to flow quickly through EMA up from the state-based authorities. Once the JTF was in place, a lot more coordination and communication occurred with Emergency Management Queensland then I'd say it did with Emergency Management Australia.

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Okay. If you look at the timeline that appears at page 24 of your witness statement, it starts with 26th of December, the location of a liaison officer at the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Brisbane and the Disaster Coordination Centre in Rockhampton. Was that - I'll wait till you turn that up?-- I have your page.

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Do you have the entry for 26th of December there?-- This is on one of the annexes?

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Yes, I'm sorry, it is KP-2?-- Yes, I have now, yes.

That movement before the activation of COMDISPLAN, before a DACC request appears to have been made and before the joint task force was established was that a preemptive move, if you like, to put liaison officers in place in anticipation of severe weather events?-- Perhaps I just need to make clear that those early tasks were still DACC tasks. So we very quickly moved to defence assistance to the civil community, DACC, and I think the most important thing was to provide the support that was required in the most timely manner. Officially designated as DACC 2; actually happened a little bit after that.

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Okay?-- Nevertheless, we had requests from the state up through the Commonwealth EMA to provide some Defence assistance. So even in those earlier periods around the Theodore and Emerald area, they were still - they were still DACC support. But to attempt to answer your question regarding pre-emptive support, we would normally wait for the state to request a degree of assistance. We wouldn't - we are probably unlikely to - well, we won't force our activation of support on to the state-based authorities but, unfortunately, Defence has provided our support over the years to similar types of natural disasters. So planning that incurred within Defence looked to posture Defence to best respond to what we thought would be further requests that would come up through the state to the Commonwealth. We had experience from

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Cyclone Larry in 2006 and other natural disasters around Australia, so we knew the type of assets that we were likely to be asked to provide to assist the state in responding to the crisis. It was the establishment of that joint task force that was the beginning of that. In terms of the other pre-emptive planning and posturing, Chief of Defence Forces - Chief of Defence Force directed through his instructions a number of assets be prepared to - is a terminology we use, "be prepared to" - provide this particular asset or that particular asset. So there's official direction to the service chiefs, Chief of Navy, Chief of Army, Chief of Air Force to increase the ability of some assets to respond to what we think might be a request coming. But we wouldn't necessarily move those assets yet and we certainly wouldn't force them on the state.

An example of that might be telling a reserve unit not to go on leave that week if you think something there might be a request coming?-- Well, I wouldn't use the reserve example along this lines. But given the time of the year that this occurred, there would certainly have been some planning within the services to establish where their people were and what assets could be brought to an increased status of readiness. I mentioned before that Defence is postured to provide military response options to the government and there are various levels of standby that we would - that we have on a day-to-day basis to allow that. We might need to provide some instructions to particular units or particular services to get ready support to the Queensland floods rather than any other type of contingency or operations overseas. So that is the type of be prepared to task. We expected that there would be a need to move people and probably food supplies around Queensland because of the rising flood waters. Particularly, communities were likely to be cut off. So, for example, Chief of Air Force, be prepared to assign some airlift assets to the Joint Task Force Commander in order to move those supplies around. Chief of Navy, you know, be prepared to move a couple of ships into the region to provide some support that - you know, requests that might come. So those type of planning considerations are done within Defence. And then coordination through, in some cases, Emergency Management Australia or, more likely in this particular case, requests that have come up through the Joint Force Commander because he is - he has staff and he himself is embedded in the State Disaster Management Group with - I think I have got the terminology right there, that the Premier is actually chairing. So he is very involved at that very highest level within the state to understand where the state is with being able to respond to the continuing crisis and what further requests might come the ADF's way.

And just in terms of how, after the joint task force was established, how EMA's role continued, if you like, in parallel with the joint task force, there may have been requests for assistance requiring movement of personnel from interstate, for example, New South Wales Search and Rescue, personnel from Victoria, Tasmania like that that weren't defence personnel. EMA would have a continuing role with that

in terms of coordinating Commonwealth resources?-- I'm sure they would. There were occasions where we moved some New South Wales police, you know, from the Sydney environment up to the Brisbane environment and changed them over at least once. There were occasions throughout the weeks worth of response and then recovery - I was looking for those two words.

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Mmm?-- Through the response phase and then recovery phase where additional resources were required. I guess some examples here would have been a request from the Premier for some naval assets to provide clearance of the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay environs. The Joint Task Force Commander did not have those assets under his authority at that stage. There was close coordination in this particular case between the Chief of Defence Force, Director-General Emergency Management Australia and the Premier to seek - to make that request and seek a level of understanding as to what would be required and then implement that as soon as possible.

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Can I just ask you briefly about some limitations on the Defence capacity to respond. You have mentioned the primary role of Defence being, obviously, defence of the nation or military requirements. There may be from time to time operational limitations or restrictions on a particular unit being able to respond?-- Look, there might. Clearly, I'm sure you would be aware that Defence has a number of operations ongoing, you know right now as we sit here in this room, both international operations overseas as well as operations mounted in support of Customs in Australia especially. There may also be occasions - and there is forces within Australia that are being prepared to move into one of those operational theatres. So we would seek to lessen any disruption to that preparation. But even a natural disaster of the scale that we are discussing here this morning, you can see that there's still sufficient ADF resources to be able to provide response to the state or the territory.

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As I understand, it is always subject to what you're actually asked to do by the state in each case. So the ADF doesn't say, "Well, we should be doing this and we'll go in"?-- Well, on the grand scale that is - that is correct. In terms of that strategic level of coordination between Defence and EMA, I would say that that is correct. I think in the case of the Queensland floods where we had liaison officers embedded within the District Disaster Management Groups, there was a degree of coordination and I think I have described a couple of times here the flexibility with trying to establish what is the best unit or be it military or state to provide a level of response to the next stage of the response to the crisis.

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You mentioned that the liaison officers can make on-the-spot decisions, as it were, about the allocation of resources they have in a particular district and an example might be where personnel were involved in search and rescue of creek systems in the Lockyer Valley. If the liaison officer is told, "We need to search again", he might make the decision, "Fine. We'll do it again." He would not necessarily have to refer

back to the joint task force for that?-- Well, in some cases he would and in some cases he wouldn't. It would depend upon, in this particular case, whether we had a unit or a subunit commander who was collocated or, you know, in discussion with that disaster management group. There were some examples where there was an understanding of the type of requests that was coming through and some checking from the district level up to the state level: "Have you heard about this request? Have you thought about how you might fit that into the plan?" "You don't need to worry. That's already been taken care of at the state level. We have some state-based assets or commercial assets being brought to that task tomorrow." So I would say within the - you know, within this particular response and recovery, there was a high degree of flexibility in coordinating that response be it military, commercial or state.

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Were there any issues that you were aware of that required I think the term is deconflicting?

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COMMISSIONER: What does that term mean?

MS McLEOD: Perhaps I'll ask you. What does that mean in terms of military arrangements?-- Did I use that term in my statement? I didn't think so.

You probably used it with me outside?-- I would have tried not to. Look, we might use "deconflicting" in a variety of terms. If I take an aviation context, I'm sure, given the poor weather that was in existence at the time, that it would be better to separate, deconflict, separate some areas of responsibility between this particular unit or platform and another particular unit or platform so that there's more - it can be done in a more - you know, more safely. You might less use that term to describe how operations would occur on the ground to, again, separate a particular zone of work to this particular unit from this particular unit so they know exactly what is their responsibility for the day or the weeks ahead. I would describe it in those terms.

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Okay. Can I ask you for your response to some individual issues that have arisen with other statements of other people giving evidence before the Commission. The first is an issue about refuelling from the Amberley base. Were civilian and Emergency Services aircraft refuelling to your knowledge from Amberley over the 10th to the 13th of January period this year?-- Yes. There was fuel supplied to both military and civilian - I'm not quite sure whether Queensland Police Service, probably, but State Emergency Service helicopters over that period, yes.

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Given that the joint task force was place at that time, would a request for refuelling from Amberley from a civilian aircraft or an Emergency Services aircraft had to have gone by EMA or could that have been dealt with at the local level?-- I think it was probably done in parallel. There was a request that came in late afternoon, perhaps early evening - I could check some times perhaps - but on the 10th of January as the

Toowoomba floods was occurring that given the expectation that the next day there would be a surge of search and rescue searching the river, et cetera, and a lot of helicopters would be involved including non-military helicopters-----

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Were there issues-----?-- So I know - sorry.

Sorry?-- So I know that there was a request that went into the - into the joint task force to approve the refuelling of those civilian helicopters. I suspect that that may have gone in a parallel manner up through the state-based authorities but my understanding is that that approval was given locally. It may not have been given by the Joint Task Force Commander, because at that time the Amberley base itself was not under his authority. But I know that there were local commanders at Amberley that approved the ability for civilian helicopters to refuel during the - you know, during the coming days and used the fuel that we had in our stocks at that stage. So I think it probably happened maybe on three fronts: up through the joint task force command; the local Amberley command centre would have made that similar approval; and it probably went up through the hierarchy or the process up to the Air Operations Centre inside joint operations command at the same time. All of that meant that, you know, fuel certainly was available to helicopters almost from first light the very next day.

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The next issue that I wanted to just ask you about, if you're aware of it, is some advice that was sought with a potential need to sink the barge known as The Island. Were you aware of that particular request for advice?-- I'm aware of a request that came in for some advice regarding the Tuesday Islander. Are we talking the same thing there? Is that the same vessel, the same barge?

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I think it was called The Island?-- Look, I suspect we might be talking about the same platform. In any case there was some advice that was requested from Defence about the ability to sink this particular vessel. What I have read through the operational reporting is that it wouldn't have - well, not wouldn't be impossible. I'm trying to think of the words in the report. But it wasn't feasible to sink that vessel, but there were discussions about increasing the shoring up of the mooring to prevent that vehicle from breaking free from its moorings. Now, I don't know for sure but I suspect that the inability or the advice as to not to sink it was probably because of the speed with which the river was flowing at that stage but that's an estimation on my part. But I do know the advice that was provided that it wasn't feasible to sink that vessel.

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Then some issues broadly that have arisen about competing interests if you like. One is that some people have noted that the ADF were not in attendance at their particular locality when they were in strife and others noting the impact that the ADF presence did have on their own commercial operations. So in terms of prioritising tasks and deciding where you should go, ultimately, who makes those decisions?-- Well, the decision is ultimately made by the state-based

authorities. We've spoken about the flexibility that existed between Defence, Emergency Management Queensland and the Queensland Police Service, for example, in terms of providing that coordination, but ultimately it would have been one of the state-based authorities that determined the assignment of a particular task to particular agencies. And, yes, there perhaps is a balance to be achieved with defence not doing the tasks that other commercial agencies or individuals would be able to perform and, also, close arrangement with the state-based authorities and councils in terms of when is the right time for Defence to start drawing down its level of support and indeed, in the end, ultimately withdrawing our operation and allowing the state-based recovery authorities from continuing the task. There were examples throughout the operation where Defence, while it may have been undertaking some particular tasks, an example would be in the Brisbane environment, in the suburbs, providing support to the population where Defence did provide some of that support, but as time passed, less and less Defence support was required for that particular task as some of the state-based authorities and the communities itself was able to undertake that work.

So that would be a trigger for a drawdown of Defence resources?-- Yes, yes. But we would not determine unilaterally when it was the right time to drawdown. We might start to form an opinion about when we thought the right time would be but I know it was well and truly communicated with - at various levels within, you know, the diagram that we've discussed a couple of times. So there were conversations between the Joint Task Force Commander at the time with Major General Slater, who happened to be the task - the Flood Recovery Task Force Commander at the time. Then on to lord mayors, the Brisbane Lord Mayor, the Ipswich Mayor, et cetera, in terms of getting an agreement as to when is the right time for Defence to start stepping back as the local councillors and the state-based authorities, and the community, was able to take over some of that recovery work.

So it was communicated both within the military in terms of up through our command chain, as well as dialogue with many of those agencies I have just described. So it wasn't a unilateral decision for us to withdraw. It was all communicated in the days prior. And, in fact, I think, indeed, at the time we were looking to start withdrawing, the surge of our support in the Brisbane environs was at about the same time as Cyclone Yasi was looking to come across the North Queensland coast and there was discussion as to whether we should delay some of the proposed drawdown because we might be asked to provide some support to North Queensland in Cyclone Yasi. There was a little bit of an overlap. We did some evacuations of a Cairns Base Hospital, and in the end we stood up a new Joint Task Force in support of Cyclone Yasi. So we had the two Joint Task Forces running concurrently there towards the latter part of the time.

Okay. The last thing that I want to ask you is that the Commission is interested in, in a broad sense, what worked well and what didn't work well for its future - for the future planning of the State in responding to the next flood season. Do you have a comment in terms of what worked well and what didn't work in this flood response?-- Look-----

From the ADF point of view?-- I would say from the ADF's point and from the aspects that we were involved in, I think things worked very well. A couple of items I would highlight would be the positioning of the Joint Task Force Commander into the State Disaster Management Group at that level. So the Joint Task Force Commander is able to hear the considerations of, you know, the senior Government department heads, Ministers and the Premier, in terms of how the State is responding to this crisis. So put in the JTF Commander in at that level as a member of that State Disaster Management Group worked very well. I would also highlight the flexibility that I have describe a number of times now, not following the "You must have a request that goes from State, EMQ, to EMA up to Defence", allowing that - allowing the flexibility of the Joint Task Force to consult directly with Emergency Management Queensland, and although there's some activities needed to go to the Commonwealth again and some activities probably went in parallel, the ability for that to be coordinated very, very quickly that those local, district and State-based groups worked very well. And the last point I would add is the positioning or augmenting of the liaison officers in amongst those various State agencies to provide the person with the right level of expertise and understanding to get the best response out of all of the agencies in - in a particular task, be it a Defence task or a State emergency task or, indeed, you know, the community coming together to respond.

Thank you. Air Vice Marshall, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: No downside, Air Vice Marshall?-- I'm sorry?

No downside?-- Look, not from our perspective. I would - I think it worked very well. We had - we were able to respond very quickly to the earlier requests. Some detailed planning

was undertaken. We were able to increase the level of support to the State up to almost 2,000 people. A number of aviation assets and specialist resources, such as naval vessels, and then as the appropriate time was reached to be able to drawdown those resources and allow the State-based authorities to take over and allow the communities to get back as much as they could to normal as possible.

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Thank you. Any re-examination, Ms Wilson?

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MS WILSON: No, Madam Commissioner. May the Air Vice Marshall be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Air Vice Marshall, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Senior Sergeant Cooling.

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JULIE ANN COOLING, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Julie Ann Cooling?-- Yes, it is.

And you're a senior sergeant?-- Yes, I am.

And you're the officer in charge at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre?-- That's correct.

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And you've held that role since 2009?-- Yes, I have.

Now, you made a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I have.

Can you have a look at this document, please?-- Thank you.

Is that your statement?-- Yes, it is.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 339.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 339"

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MS WILSON: Now, if I can ask you some questions about the Toowoomba District Communication Centre receiving triple 0 telephone calls. The communications centre receives the triple 0 telephone calls from a Telstra triple 0 operator?-- That's correct.

So let's take it - walk - let's walk these steps through. A person rings triple 0, that will go to Telstra?-- That's correct.

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And Telstra will ask the nature of the emergency?-- They will ask, "Police, fire or ambulance?"

And if police is nominated, then it will be directed towards the communication centre that is closest to deal with that emergency?-- That's correct.

Okay. Now, as the call has been connected to the Toowoomba Communication Centre, you say that an ICL display monitor displays information. What information does the receiver of the call have on that monitor?-- The information would be the telephone number that the call has originated from, and the name and address attached to the subscriber of that telephone and-----

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And where does that information come from?-- I beg your pardon?

Where does that information come from?-- That comes from Telstra.

You state that the communication centre in Toowoomba has five available lines for people to call triple 0?-- That's correct.

How many operators on a normal shift?-- On a normal day shift, we have one communication sergeant-----

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Yes?-- -----and three operators if possible.

Okay. So there's five lines for three operators to manage?-- The sergeant also answers triple 0 calls.

Okay. Now, in terms of taking calls, what about dispatching and actioning those calls, do you have any further staff to do that?-- No.

20

So the operator at the Toowoomba Communication Centre has to take the call and then also dispatch the call - dispatch an action to that call?-- They do.

Now, you stated that when these five lines are in use, the call redirects to the Toowoomba district communication response lines?-- That's correct.

Can you tell me about what these response lines are?-- The response lines were set up for when a person calls a station, a district station, and they can divert their phone so that the Toowoomba Communication Centre will answer, but in cases with the triple 0, the triple 0 lines when they're not answered go to the response lines.

30

Okay. And you have six response lines in total?-- We do, yes.

So if the five available lines for triple 0 are being used and also the six response lines, would that mean that at any one point in time there are 11 lines being used in Toowoomba?-- That's correct.

40

And that is the maximum amount of calls that can be taken at any one time?-- That's the maximum amount of presentations.

And that - well, that's important to address, isn't it, because you haven't got on a normal shift that many operators to take that many calls coming through?-- That's correct.

50

Okay?-- The operators also tend to the police in the field doing name checks and giving other jobs as well as answering a triple 0.

Okay. So on a normal shift you talk about that there was two operators and a sergeant as well who could take calls?-- That's correct.

So there are three available persons in the communication centre to take calls?-- Sometimes four.

1

Okay. Where's the fourth come from?-- There's three operators and a sergeant usually.

Sorry, three operators. So if those four operators are busy doing other tasks, that is taking calls or redirecting - or actioning these calls, then the unanswered calls ultimately will be redirected to Ipswich and Brisbane?-- That's correct.

10

There's a sequence, isn't there?-- That's correct, they-----

Can you walk us through that sequence?-- They go to Ipswich communications, and I believe they have the same system as us where they go to their triple O lines, then their response lines, and if they're unanswered they go to Brisbane Communication Centre.

How many - how many presentations does it take before the call is redirected to Ipswich or Brisbane to Toowoomba?-- I believe, not being technical, I believe it's one presentation.

20

Okay.

COMMISSIONER: What's a "presentation"? What are you calling a "presentation"?-- I'm calling a presentation where the call is put through to the triple O, and if it's not answered on the lines, it then goes down to the response lines, and it has one - one - one ring cycle there.

30

Okay. Thank you.

MS WILSON: Can you tell us how long your ring cycle is?-- I'm not sure.

Okay. Now, Toowoomba operates what is known as an IMT system, Information Management?-- Information Management System, yes.

Yes?-- IMS, yes.

40

How does that work, the IMT system that Toowoomba operates?-- The Information Management System is a system where we log jobs onto. When a call originates for a job, the operator brings up a screen and on that screen is the Information Management System job where it's got details of how that job was received, who the operator was that took the call, the information of the informant in the instance, where the job is to be - is to - is to be responded to and any other details associated with that job, there's priority codes on there, there's job codes.

50

Okay. Now, Ipswich also operates an IMT system?-- IMS, that's right.

Okay. But the Ipswich IMS system is not compatible with Toowoomba?-- No, not at that stage, but we are moving towards a multi-district IMS system.

Okay. At the time of January this year it was not compatible?-- No, not at all.

And you say that you're moving towards a more compatible system?-- That's correct.

Can you tell me about that?-- The more compatible system is a multi-district information management system where all the districts in the southern region will be linked to one file server and we will have access to each other's jobs.

10

And when is that going to be implemented?-- The next couple of weeks I believe.

Next couple of weeks?-- Yes.

Has this been in the pipeline for long?-- It has been in the pipeline for some time, yes. It's not a result of the flood.

20

Okay. So the capability of this new system would be in the circumstances which we've described, if there is an overload in Toowoomba and the call get redirected to Ipswich. Ipswich communications can put that information into their system, is that the case?-- It's a multi-district system where they - where we will be able to view all the jobs in connection with our district on the system. It will come up on the Toowoomba Incident Management System.

Can you just work with me and we work through these processes? If the call is not answered in Toowoomba and it gets redirected to Ipswich, the Ipswich operator picks it up, gets the information and puts it into the system?-- That's correct.

30

Will then Toowoomba be able to access that information?-- Yes.

Now, that was - that couldn't occur in January this year, could it?-- No.

40

Now, when the information - when Ipswich communications answer the call that was originating in Toowoomba, do you understand?-- Yes.

Then they would enter it into their own system but have to manually feed that information back to Toowoomba?-- I believe that was the case on the day.

Well, you are the officer in charge of the Toowoomba Communication Centre. Wasn't - that was the situation on the day, wasn't it? There was no compatibility between the systems?-- No, that's right, but I believe that's what they were doing on the day, they were faxing and e-mailing the jobs. I wasn't present that day, but I believe that's the system they were using.

50

Okay. Under normal conditions when there is an overload and

calls then are redirected to Ipswich, does the Ipswich communications have to either ring the Toowoomba Communication Centre and say, "This is the job", or e-mail it or fax, so are they the three tools that can be used by Ipswich?-- Ordinarily what has happened in the past is it's passed by telephone.

1

Passed by telephone?-- That's correct.

So that is the preferred tool to communicate that information back to Toowoomba?-- That's correct.

10

Now - but on Toowoomba - on that day on the 10th of January this year, there was an overload of Toowoomba communications and the lines were busy and that couldn't occur?-- That's correct.

Now, on the 10th of January, if we can just focus on - on that day and the communications that were available and operating on that day, we've talked about Toowoomba as an IMS system, we talked about that Ipswich has an IMS system. Brisbane was operating on a CAD system, which was a Computer-Aided Dispatch?-- Yes.

20

Are you aware of that?-- Yes, I am aware of that.

Now, there's no compatibility, is there, between the CAD system and the Toowoomba IMS system?-- No, there's not.

Nor with the Brisbane system with the Ipswich system?-- That's correct.

30

So if the calls then got redirected to Brisbane, then Brisbane communication centre would be in the same position as Ipswich and have to manually forward that information back to Toowoomba?-- That's right.

Using the processes that we have just talked about?-- That's correct.

40

Now, because Toowoomba communications were saturated on the 10th, the - using the telephone and the fax was inherently difficult, wasn't it? For people - for people in other communication centres to communicate with Toowoomba, it was difficult via telephone and fax?-- I imagine it would have been.

Okay. Do you know how well the e-mail system was working?-- Only from what I have been told.

50

And can you tell us that?-- I have been told it was not working at all because people were going on and off shift, that people didn't have time to look at their e-mails.

So what was we're seeing on the 10th day of January is problems arising due to the lack of connectivity between the communication systems used by the Queensland Police Service?-- The 10th of January was an extraordinary event and on that day

it appeared not to be able to cope with it.

1

So the answer to that question is yes?-- Ordinarily-----

Problems arising due to lack of connectivity?-- Ordinarily no, but on that day, yes.

Now, if I could take you to the training that was provided to the operators at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre?-- Yes.

10

Now, you say in your statement that the Toowoomba Communication Centre does not have specific call operators?-- No, we've just covered that.

No. Who - where - where do you get the personnel to man the phones at the Toowoomba Communication Centre?-- I think we may be at cross-purposes. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre does not have dedicated call operators, they do the dual roles. They are some administrative officers who have undergone a 15-week course to become a fully fledged communication operator.

20

How many civilians do you have working in Toowoomba?-- We have 11 full-time and four part-time.

And how many police officers do you have working?-- Six.

Okay. Now, we talked about the usual staff that is available on a - on a shift. Can you tell me about the ratio between police officers and civilians?-- Yes, there's always one communication sergeant and three operators, or maybe one of those sergeants may be an operator on occasion.

30

Okay. And do civilians also take the telephone calls?-- Civilians?

Yes?-- Yes, they take the majority of the telephone calls.

Okay. And what about police officers, do they - they do not take - if they - if the civilians take the majority, then the police officers perform a supporting role, is that what you're saying?-- No. Because the volume of calls that we experience, the sergeants quite often take calls as well.

40

Okay. But I just want to know the make-up of a shift. We have got-----?-- One sergeant.

One sergeant?-- And usually three - two or three communication operators.

50

Okay?-- But on occasion, there may be a sergeant filling a role of a communication operator.

Okay. I understand that. Out of those three communication operators, how many are Queensland Police Service staff and how many are civilians?-- We have only six sergeants who are police officers, and the rest of my staff are civilians.

Okay.

COMMISSIONER: So how does it usually work out on a shift, would you usually get one of the sergeants sitting in or not?-- It depends on the roster.

Is there any average you can give us, any idea of how it works in practice?-- It just works out with roster availability on operational requirements at the time.

10

So would it be a normal thing to see a sergeant sitting there answering triple O calls, an uncommon thing?-- The actual communication sergeant or answering-----

No, not the communication sergeant. You're saying you bring in other officers who I thought you said were sergeants, but I might be wrong about that. How often would you have a uniformed police officer sitting there answering triple O calls? Is it normal, irregular?-- It's - the only people that sit there are the six actual call sergeants, one of those sergeants that normally perform the duty of communication coordinator may be rostered due to rostering on a busy shift as a communication operator. We don't bring in extra sergeants.

20

And now I'm really confused.

MS WILSON: Yes. Senior Constable Wheeler-----?-- Yes.

30

-----what is his role there? He's not a sergeant, so he would be working as a comms operator?-- He was on - yes.

Okay. But where I'm confused, and perhaps you could assist me, that you talked about that the civilians were the comms operator - comms operators, but on the day Senior Constable Wheeler was a comms operator, how does that work?-- On occasion if we have people who are in the centre who may be - have hurt themselves in some regard, on rehabilitation or may be on light duties for pregnancy, they - or if we need - if it's an emergent situation, we get people across the station.

40

Well, do you know the staff that were working on the 10th day of January?-- I-----

The make-up?-- I have some recollection.

Okay. We've got a sergeant?-- Can I just clarify which shift you're talking about? There's 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift or the 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. shift? Because that incident occurred at the changeover shift.

50

COMMISSIONER: Well, perhaps you can give us both?-- Okay. From memory as I was not working on the 10th of January, I think there was one sergeant and three communication operators on the 6 to 2 shift, and one sergeant and three communication operators on the afternoon shift. One of the communication operators on the morning shift, I think, was a police officer;

and in the afternoon it was also a police officer from memory. 1

MS WILSON: From memory.

COMMISSIONER: And then going back, can you tell me how common was it to have a police officer sitting in? I know you've said the circumstances in which it happened, somebody being off sick or something like that, but did it actually in practice happen a lot, a little?-- It happens quite frequently, yes. 10

All right. Thank you.

MS WILSON: And Senior Constable Wheeler had been working at the communication centre for three weeks, was it, prior to the 10th?-- On this occasion, yes.

And why was Senior Constable Wheeler stationed at the communication centre on - for this period?-- I believe it was a management decision to put Senior Constable Wheeler in the communications room. 20

COMMISSIONER: Was somebody missing? Why was he needed there?-- I'm not - I'm not quite sure of the details, but I believe he was put in there based on a management decision.

MS WILSON: Do you know the basis of that management decision?-- Yes.

Why was he put there?-- Not clearly, but he was put there because of - he had an incident a few weeks earlier that he was involved in. 30

COMMISSIONER: So it's less about the centre needing him and more about wanting somewhere to put him, is it?-- No, Toowoomba District Communication Centre is quite understaffed and Senior Constable Wheeler had always performed his duty very well when he was communications coordinator.

MS WILSON: So there was an incident and it was a management - sometime before three weeks prior to the 10th and a management decision was to place Senior Constable Wheeler at the com centre?-- That's correct, to assist us. 40

Does that happen often?-- Yes.

And can you tell us what the incident was?

MR BURNS: Well, I object, Madam Commissioner. The nature of the incident couldn't possibly be relevant in terms of reference. The fact of the matter is he was there, it was a management decision, wasn't Senior Sergeant Cooling's decision, and that's really where the evidence should stop. 50

COMMISSIONER: That actually seems right to me, Ms Wilson, unless-----

MS WILSON: Yes, I can appreciate that, Madam Commissioner.

The only point that would be of relevance is the quality of persons being put - being provided to the communication centre.

1

COMMISSIONER: But that's more a matter of exploring Senior Constable Wheeler experience and training, isn't it, rather than what any particular incident was?

MS WILSON: I can move on. And whilst we're at the training, if we can focus on the training that is provided. At page 5 you refer to the training and you say that there is a 15-week - there is a 15-week training program?-- That's for civilians, yes.

10

What about for police officers?-- For police officers to perform the role, it's usually a two-week bridging mentor course when we bring somebody in, or if they're going to be a communication sergeant we have a three-day communication sergeant course on offer since February last year.

20

So for QPS officers who are being stationed at the communication centre, there is - you come in and there is a two-week bridging course?-- That's correct, you put them with a mentor and assist them for two week.

And what training is undertaken in that two-week bridging course?-- Incident management, system duties, ability to answer the phone. They have to be aware of the standard operating procedures. Just all the normal duties that a communication operator would perform.

30

And is that a standardised course that is offered within that two-week bridging course, or is that just learning on the job?-- No, it's learning on the job, but certain - certain standards must be met during that period and that is checked at the end of that period.

Is that assessed?-- By myself, yes.

Okay. And is there a formal assessment in relation to that two-week bridging course?-- There is a formal assessment as in I listen to their telephone calls and I check their job cards and talk to the person that has been mentoring them.

40

Now, Senior Constable Wheeler, you say, also completed a three-day communications sergeants course?-- That's correct.

Now, was he acting up as a sergeant at this point in time?-- At the point of time the 10th of January, no.

50

No, at the point in time he completed this course?-- No, he had on two previous occasions - two or three previous occasions being the communication sergeant prior to this course. The course was brought about to enhance people that wished to relieve in there their standards to be an acceptable level.

Can you have a look at this document, please?-- Thank you.

You say that you provided the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry a document that states that, "This is to verify that Senior Constable Jason Wheeler completed a three-day communication sergeant course from the 10th of January to the 12th of February 2010. He was deemed competent at the end of this course"?-- That's correct.

You also provided some - a document that I imagine you used to substantiate that - that statement?-- No. This is-----

10

Because I have looked through this document and I can't find this course in this document which is - records the history of Senior Constable Wheeler's training?-- No, the course has been adopted from the Police Communications course in Brisbane which is eight days, and also the North Coast Region course. It was a course that I put together to suit the regional Toowoomba - Toowoomba's capabilities, I guess. I adapted it to suit our needs.

20

So this three-day course is a course that you have devised?-- That's correct.

And this three-day course is not standardised across the State of Queensland?-- No.

What are the issues you address in this three-day course?-- In this three day - we have only had one of these courses.

Sorry, you have only had one of these courses?-- That's correct.

30

And was that for Senior Constable Wheeler?-- He did attend that with nine other participants.

Okay?-- The matters that were addressed in that course were the ability to answer the phone, telephone procedures, incident management system, how to work our main roads, how to work the City Safe, standard operating procedures, priority policing, everything that I thought that they would require in consultation with the other two courses they would need.

40

And did this course have documentation that the students could refer to to assist them in their training?-- They did, they had a complete communication coordinator's handbook.

50

And were they trained - these officers trained in how to take calls from distressed persons?-- That - as in-----

1

Well, a lot of the calls, the triple 0 calls, that you must receive are from people who are in distress?-- That's correct.

And I was just wanting to know the training that was provided to these officers to how to deal with that?-- All these officers were very experienced police officers that had a number of years service dealing with distressed people, face to face and on the telephone, and no specific training was given in regard to that as they - every person that did the course was deemed to be competent in that regard.

10

So in relation to taking triple 0 calls, there was no training provided in this course about how to deal with distressed persons?-- Can you rephrase that.

In relation to the training that was provided for this three-day course?-- Yes.

20

That occurred in February of 2010, there was no training provided to these people who took this course about how to deal with distressed people making triple 0 calls?-- No specific training.

You are relying on past experience?-- And the fact that most of the people that did the course had - had done some relieving in communications. That they were competent police officers with many years' service.

30

But it would have been the case, wouldn't it, that there were different standards between these police officers who took the course?-- That's correct.

Some were better at some things than others?-- That's correct.

And how did you ensure that there was a standardisation that they all met appropriate skills?-- I did it on base level.

40

Okay. And-----?-- To - to the lowest level of the participant.

So the lowest level, if you all met that level, then you passed?-- That's correct.

COMMISSIONER: We might take a break there, Ms Wilson. 2.30 or 2.15?

MS WILSON: Yes. I understand that Senior Sergeant Cooling has to return to - so 2.15.

50

COMMISSIONER: Do we need to go on? We can continue if necessary.

MS WILSON: I understand that she has to return to Toowoomba - beyond Toowoomba by 3, so could we press on?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, by all means.

1

MS WILSON: If I can show you the - if I can show you a statement from a Superintendent Robert Waugh. Have you seen the statement?-- I had a brief look at this morning.

Okay. And if I can take you to page 4 of that statement. Now, Superintendent Waugh is in charge of the communications branch within the Operational Support Command?-- That's correct.

10

He refers to the Brisbane Police Communications Centre. At page 4 he states that, "All staff working within the BPCC" - Brisbane Police Communications Centre" - "from AO3 level to Sergeant are required to complete the Call Takers Course prior to attending the Communications Room Operators Course. Sergeants will then go on to attend the Communications Coordinators Course. The Call Takers Course is conducted over a 9 week content and assessment period followed by a short mentoring period." And it sets out on page 4 the components that are covered in that call takers course?-- Yes.

20

It appears from what you have been telling me that the callers in Toowoomba do not get the same training as the staff working at the Brisbane Police Communications Centre?-- The callers, I don't understand which - who you're referring to?

COMMISSIONER: The call takers I think.

MS WILSON: The police officers who are attending?-- Police officers.

30

Yes?-- No, they don't, they don't get that much training.

The training that is offered at the Brisbane Police Communications Centre seems a lot more extensive than what is offered at Toowoomba?-- It certainly is.

COMMISSIONER: It seems, really, that you give the mentoring period but you don't give the training in advance. Is that a fair summary?-- Yes.

40

MS WILSON: At page 7 of Superintendent Waugh's statement, he states that, "Operators will not start taking calls without direct supervision from a qualified call taker at the BPCC until they have completed the 9 week Call Takers Course including a period of mentoring." That is not the case that that occurs at Toowoomba, is it?-- No. No, it's not.

Is it the case that there needs to be standardised training to all call operators of Queensland Police Service across the state?-- Yes, there does.

50

And that it can't just - at the moment, is it the case that each regional communication centre does their own training package?-- I can only speak for Toowoomba but, yes, that's what happens.

And you devised your own training package for Toowoomba?--
Yes, I did.

1

It did not cover the components that are covered in the
Brisbane training course?-- Not for sergeants, no.

And that is the course that was - that's the same type of
course that you were offering for your three day, the
sergeants course?-- That's right, they offer an eight-day
course. We offer a three-day course.

10

But there also is this fifth - sorry, this nine-week - the
call takers course is conducted over a nine-week content and
assessment period?-- We do not offer that.

Would it be assistance for your Comms officer to have that
course?-- It would be of great assistance.

Do you know why that course is not offered to your Comms
staff?-- No.

20

COMMISSIONER: Are there practical difficulties about getting
them there? Why can't they come to Brisbane and do it?-- It
would be - it would be quite difficult, I imagine, to take
10 persons of an operational experienced level from Toowoomba
to come to Brisbane to do - to do this.

Well, obviously all at once it would, but is it out of the
question for them to do it individually at different times?--
I would not know-----

30

That's out of your hands, is it?-- -----They're not my staff.

MS WILSON: Now, you were not there present on the 10th day of
January 2011 at the communications centre?-- No, I was not.

Have you had an opportunity to look at the statistics of how
many calls were received and how many calls were abandoned?--
Yes, I did.

40

On page 6 of your statement you address that. And you say
that, "The total number of 000 related calls to the Toowoomba
District Communications Centre was 1446"?-- That's the total
number of presentations, yes.

Yes. "The total number of 000 calls abandoned on this day
were 845." What do you mean by the term "abandoned"?-- The
term "abandoned" on that particular system means that the
caller either hangs up before engaging the police officer or
the calls rings out in its duration.

50

So abandoned does not include those calls that were redirected
to Ipswich or Brisbane?-- Not to my knowledge.

And then you say the total number of calls serviced was 601.
What do you mean by the term "serviced"?-- Answered.
Answered.

And responded to?-- Well, I - the system only says that those calls were answered.

1

When you're talking about the 601 calls that were serviced, were they by the Toowoomba Comms staff?-- Yes.

You also state on page 7 that, "Staff stated that due to the time it was taking to answer the 000 calls, calls had dropped out and Telstra had to provide the details of these callers." How does that work? If calls drop out, does Telstra ring you back or provide this information?-- Telstra usually stays on the line.

10

Right?-- And informs the police.

And then is that information recorded and do police try to attempt to ring back the caller?-- That's correct.

Now, have you listened to the phone call that Senior Constable Wheeler took from Donna Rice?-- Yes, I have.

20

Has this call been taken in accordance with the training that you provided?-- Has it been taken according to-----

Has he responded in accordance with the training that you provided?-- His response that day, no. He - he appeared to be very frustrated on that day in the way he was speaking. That's quite out of character for him.

What about the comments about driving through the water? Did you find that appropriate?-- We'd been experiencing - we had been experiencing flood in Toowoomba since early December and we had a lot of experience of people continually driving through flood water and I think all of the Comms staff were getting increasingly frustrated with the fact that people were just continually driving through. Our efforts to warn the public over - over the media were - were not working.

30

So are you saying it was appropriate then?-- No, I'm not saying it was appropriate. I'm giving you a bit of background.

40

Well, that was my question. Was it appropriate?-- No.

Would you have answered this call in similar terms?-- I was not there on that day with that volume of calls with that event.

But you saw what was being asked of the triple 0 operator. You've heard what Donna Rice was asking?-- Yes, I heard Donna Rice ask for a towtruck.

50

And how would you have responded?-- I would not have provided her with a towtruck.

COMMISSIONER: Would you have asked her a few more questions about her circumstances?-- With my local knowledge, I don't know if I would have on that day because that intersection of

James and Kitchener rises and falls quite rapidly and I may have asked her could she get out of the car, but I don't - I was not there on that day and by the sound of what my staff have told me, it was - it was a terrible event.

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MS WILSON: I have no further questions, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns.

MR BURNS: With your leave, Mr MacSporran has agreed to go before me if that's suitable.

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COMMISSIONER: All right. Now, Mr Dunning, did you have any questions?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: I might check. Miss McLeod?

MS McLEOD: Yes, no questions, thank you.

20

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: Senior sergeant, just in terms of the conditions on that day, they were unprecedented in your experience in Toowoomba?-- That's correct.

The staff working in the communications room at Toowoomba, all of them were under extreme pressure?-- Yes, I would say they were.

30

And one of the difficulties with the way the calls are re-diverted is that if they come back to Toowoomba, they come back to the response lines?-- That's correct.

Which are ordinary landlines?-- That's correct. Normally.

Situated within the communications room?-- That's correct.

40

So that, to be answered, they would have to be answered by other staff inside the room who themselves are struggling to deal with the volume of triple 0 calls?-- That's - yes, that's right.

Because when there's the volume that we know occurred here, what happens, isn't it, that when you answer a call and you finish dealing with that call, immediately your screen rolls to the next call to be taken or available to be taken?-- They do. It is very, very noisy in there when there are a lot of triple 0 calls going off. It - and, yes, they just click the next call.

50

So to answer what ultimately may be a diverted triple 0 call on a response line, to answer that you are taking an operator away from his or her role to answer the triple 0 call that's come to their screen?-- They're all linked up to the one

screen, yes.

1

And the call coming on the response line cannot be predicted to be a diverted triple 0 call. It might be just an inquiry to the response line, a general inquiry?-- On normal circumstances, yes.

So there are obvious difficulties in the call coming back to those lines in terms of them being prioritised to be answered?-- Yes.

10

Now, on this particular day in relation to the call to Jason Wheeler, you said that his response, his way of dealing with the call, expressing the frustration that you've heard was out of character?-- Yes, it was.

He had relieved on prior occasions in the communications room?-- He had, yes.

He had done the courses that were available for qualification for work in that room?-- That's correct.

20

And he had adequately and appropriately performed those duties to your satisfaction on prior occasions?-- Yes, he had. I've in fact done good work reports on Jason's abilities as a communications-----

In terms of-----

COMMISSIONER: I'm sorry, I didn't get the last of that. Could you just say that again?-- I've actually done good work reports on Jason's ability to be a communications sergeant.

30

Right, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: He'd actually qualified for that role by the courses he had done?-- Yes, and his policing experience.

And his general experience. Now, in terms of how he dealt with the call itself, there are various factors to be considered by anyone taking such a call, aren't there?-- Under ordinary circumstances, yes.

40

One of which you've mentioned, which is your knowledge, the person taking the call, in this case Senior Constable Wheeler, his knowledge of that intersection and the way it behaves in flood conditions?-- In ordinary conditions, yes.

At the time that call was taken, it was 13.50 on that Monday afternoon on the 10th of January, there was no information at that time that this was other than a normal flood situation so far as that intersection was concerned?-- That's correct, from - from what I have been told.

50

The situation rapidly escalated after that but at 13.50 when he took that call from Mrs Rice, he had no way of knowing that that intersection was going to behave in the way - catastrophically differently to the way it behaved on many

occasions in flood conditions previously?-- Previously and after.

1

And the experience generally in the police service and in the communications room in respect of flooding events at that intersection was that people might ring triple 0, a car might be dispatched because people thought they were in danger but by the time the police car arrived, the waters had receded and the car had driven off?-- That's correct.

10

So that is a relevant factor when you are looking at how someone might have reacted in the position of Senior Constable Wheeler on that occasion?-- That's correct.

There is the next consideration which you've articulated: the building, understandable in some ways, the building frustration with all communications officers in that room with the pattern of the public, for whatever reason, seemingly routinely ignoring the very public awareness campaign that had been conducted to warn them against driving into flooded waters?-- That's correct.

20

When those warnings were ignored, often there would be valuable police and other emergency services necessarily diverted to rescues that should never have been necessary?-- Yes, that's right.

Thirdly, perhaps, a relevant consideration was that Mrs Rice was asking for a towtruck?-- That's correct, she asked for a towtruck.

30

Is there a police policy or practice in respect of people who on any occasion request assistance with the provision of a towtruck people?-- We do not provide people with towtrucks.

Is there a reason? To state the obvious, can you tell us briefly the reason for that?-- I believe that we could be seen as being impartial to one carrier if we were to order a towtruck.

40

I assume it is not a proper use of police resources to be phoning and providing that sort of resource to a member of the public as a police officer or a communications officer?-- No, that's not our duty.

It is not an emergency?-- No

In the proper sense?-- No, it is not a triple 0 related matter.

50

The fourth and relevant consideration, do you agree, would be whether the caller appears to be in distress?-- When I listened to the call I did not think Donna Rice was in distress.

Now, the evidence to the Inquiry has been from her partner that he could detect in her manner and tone that she was in distress and was deliberately trying to conceal it for the

sake of her two sons, who were also in the car. But if you didn't know her as Senior Constable Wheeler didn't, and you didn't, you might not be able to detect any tone of distress in her voice. Is that so?-- I could not detect any tone of distress in her voice.

1

So if you combine all of those features, they're relevant matters, aren't they, for consideration when looking at the way that call, in particular, was responded to?-- That's correct.

10

Now, there were, as you've said, a very large volume of calls received in the room that day?-- There was an amazing amount.

All of the people who worked there, including Senior Constable Wheeler, were competent, in your view, to be performing the role they were on that day?-- All the staff at the Toowoomba District Communications Centre are very competent at their roles and they had been in flood situations since early December and they were all acting appropriately.

20

Is it the case that despite the very large number of calls taken and dealt with, this particular call taken at 13.50 by Senior Constable Wheeler is the only call taken that day that is the subject of any investigation?-- That's correct.

In terms of how - the total number of calls and how they were dealt with, do you defer to the expertise of Chief Superintendent Pitman, who has also provided a statement to the Inquiry?-- In regard to?

30

In terms of what it means that the total number of calls received was 1400 and some?-- Yes.

Have you read or had - or do you have knowledge of the statement provided by Chief Superintendent Pitman?-- I have knowledge of it but I can't recall what he's saying about the number.

All right.

40

COMMISSIONER: It is a little hard to defer to it then, isn't it?

MR MacSPORRAN: No, no, I understand. I'm just asking whether she was. I won't take you to it. But you know he has provided a statement about those issues?-- Yes, I do know he has provided a statement.

Yes, all right. Thank you. I have nothing further, Commissioner.

50

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr MacSporran. Mr Burns.

MR BURNS: Thank you. Senior sergeant, is it the position that Senior Constable Wheeler first started relieving in the communications centre in Toowoomba about three years ago?-- That's - would be about right, yes

1

He was at that time, you may recall, on light duties after surgery?-- That's correct.

And from that time on he's relieved from time to time but mainly in the role of CommCo?-- Yes, he has.

10

That's the Communications Coordinator?-- That's correct.

But on occasions as a call taker and radio operator?-- Yes, he has.

Because apart from CommCo, the staff in the centre perform that dual role-----?-- That's correct.

-----of telephone and radio?-- That's correct.

20

Is that the case?-- That's correct.

Now, as officer in charge of the communications centre, you perform monthly audits of triple 0 calls?-- Triple 0 calls and other - other category calls, yes.

That's to maintain standards?-- That's correct.

And there are standing orders which you've prepared in terms of how staff are to conduct themselves?-- That's correct.

30

And those standing orders apply to the civilian operators just as they apply to the police who serve under you?-- That's correct.

Now, prior to the 10th of January this year has there ever been an occasion when the manner in which Senior Constable Wheeler performed his duties in the communications centre has caused you any concern?-- None at all.

40

And I should be specific, as CommCo, in the role of CommCo?-- No, he's done a very good job as Communications Sergeant.

And as a call taker radio operator?-- No, I've had no concerns.

Specifically, has there been any instance prior to the 10th of January 2011, any instance of non-compliance with any standing orders that govern his or govern the performance of his duties?-- No, not at all.

50

In fact, you had a very favourable opinion of Senior Constable Wheeler prior to the 10th of January?-- Yes, I always thought he did a very competent and professional job.

And you still do?-- I still do.

In fact, you were anxious for him to relieve whenever possible?-- That's correct. I sought him out and requested him to relieve because of the very good job that he had done.

1

He had very good local knowledge?-- Yes, he did have very good local knowledge.

Could I ask this about the courses he actually undertook and I'm interested here in formal training. Am I correct in assuming the only formal training for the work he did in the communications centre was the three-day course you have referred to?-- That's correct.

10

Now, that was a course designed for CommCos, wasn't it?-- That's correct.

And although, of course, there would be some cross-over, one would assume it was not a course designed for call takers or radio operators?-- No, it was not.

20

Now, you were asked some questions about the different communication systems in Toowoomba and Ipswich and, indeed, in Brisbane. The Brisbane system is a CAD system which goes by the acronym of ESCORT, E-S-C-O-R-T?-- Yes.

Are you familiar with that?-- I don't know much about CAD at all.

But the system you have and the system that appears to be in place in Ipswich requires the operator or call taker to enter quite a bit of data on the screen?-- That's correct.

30

While the call is in progress?-- That's correct.

And that can give rise to pauses during the call, if you're listening to a tape?-- That does, yes.

Also, it increases, perhaps on one view, the time it might take to service a call?-- That's correct.

40

There are other systems, are you aware, where a lot of informational data is automatically generated and will present on the screen in front of the call take ever?-- That's with the CAD system I believe, yes.

Which you understand is in use in Brisbane?-- That's correct.

But you don't have a detailed knowledge of?-- Not a detailed knowledge, a very brief knowledge of.

50

Now, whilst we're dealing with that system, could I ask a couple of technical questions. When a triple 0 call arrives at the centre or arrives in the system, it has been sent there by Telstra in effect?-- Yes.

And there is a Zetron - that's Z-E-T-R-O-N - screen in front of each operator?-- It's shared between two operators, yes.

I beg your pardon, shared between two operators?-- That's correct.

1

But also one on the CommCo's; correct?-- That's correct.

And it consists of a - or, visually, a number of boxes, coloured boxes?-- Yes, that's - that's - oh, sorry, I thought you were talking about the monitor. But, yes - you're talking about the actual telephone system?

10

No, no, it's my fault I'm sure. But the Zetron display?-- Mmm-hmm, is a-----

Has a number of boxes?-- It does have a coloured boxes, yes.

Coloured boxes which light up if a triple 0 call comes in?-- That's correct.

And light up if a response line is ringing?-- That's correct, yes.

20

And also lights with radio channels?-- That's correct.

And so, if there are more than five triple 0 calls and more than six response lines in use, the whole screen is lit up. The whole - all of those boxes are lit up?-- That's correct.

So if there's - if you add to those 11 calls one additional call, it's in the queue somewhere, is it not?-- It is.

30

And unseen by the operator?-- No, it's also lit up.

So there's another box for calls waiting?-- There's another box for just ordinary landline calls that people can call in on, yes.

So they're not there in addition to the response lines?-- They are.

So triple 0 and response lines?-- And then you have normal - normal people - you have the calls that generate from the actual Toowoomba - Toowoomba area itself and you also have a CommCo telephone, you have QAS, City Safe, Main Roads, there's a - there's a lot of boxes on there that can light up all at once.

40

Well, if a witness was to give a description that the screen was lit up, that's really a description of a system overwhelmed?-- That's correct.

50

Have you ever in your experience, and I think you've been Communications Sergeant at Toowoomba since 2002?-- That's correct.

Have you ever seen a situation where all five triple 0 boxes have lit up?-- Yes, but not frequently. Only for major incidents on the Range or major traffic accidents.

Now, so we can get some idea of the scale of the crisis, you've described in your statement that for a major incident one could expect somewhere between 20 and 30 triple 0 calls, for a major incident?-- That's correct.

1

And that would be, obviously, not a frequent occurrence fortunately?-- No, it is not a frequency occurrence.

But you can recall some instances where all five triple 0 boxes have been lit up?-- Yes, I can.

10

Can you recall any instance where then all six response lines have been lit up?-- No, not off the top of my head.

In your statement at the bottom of page 6 you say, "My staff have informed me that 000 emergency calls were being received all over the Zetron telephone system including the normal landline numbers. My experience is that this has never happened before"?-- That's correct.

20

So is that - you're referring then to all of the additional lines as well being lit up?-- Yes.

On page 6 of your statement, you were taken to that by my learned friend Ms Wilson, there are some statistics there of the number of calls received on the 10th of January?-- Yes, on our system.

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50

I just wanted to ask you about that briefly. That's not information provided by Telstra, is it?-- No. 1

That's your system?-- That's correct.

So there's some sort of computer retrieval of that information?-- That's correct.

And of the calls serviced, 601 calls, so just I have got this clear in my head, they - they would have been a mix of calls answered on the first presentation, calls answered on the second presentation and perhaps even calls that have then bounced to Ipswich, Brisbane and come back again to Toowoomba. Is that right?-- They could have been, yes. 10

Possibly?-- Yes, possibly, they-----

Because what was occurring was a crisis of biblical propositions, wasn't it, and not just confined to one small area?-- That's right, it was an overwhelming event. 20

Thank you.

MS WILSON: I have no re-examination, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks, Sergeant, Cooling, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED 30

COMMISSIONER: We'll adjourn until quarter to 3.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1.30 P.M. TILL 2.45 A.M. 40

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.43 P.M.

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MS WILSON: I call Warren Day.

COMMISSIONER: Is everybody here that needs to be here, do you think?

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WARREN EDWARD DAY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Can you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Warren Edward Day.

And you are the Gold Coast Local Disaster Coordinator?-- That's correct.

20

And you're also the Director of Engineering Services?-- Yes.

Now, you provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes, I did.

Can you have a look at this document, please?-- Yes.

And that is the statement that you provided?-- That's it.

30

And in that statement do you refer to a number of documents?-- Yes.

And those documents are-----?-- They're all attached.

Attached to that statement. Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement with its attachments.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 340.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 340"

MS WILSON: In relation to your statement, the issue that I wish to address is the - regarding the provision of disaster management training, the issue of training. You address this in paragraph 78 and onwards in your statement. Effectively you state, "There is a need for effective disaster management training in Queensland"?-- Correct.

50

You state that, "EMQ provides introductory level awareness courses in the Queensland disaster management arrangements", is this not enough?-- Well, no. There's a need for substantial training. We actually carry out quite extensive training within Gold Coast City Council and we have provided

that training to some other local Government authorities as well.

1

COMMISSIONER: What's the training that you do and who have you provided it to?-- How to run the operation centre, training in AIIMS, Australian Inter-service Incident Management System, that sort of thing, so that when you do actually get hit with the event, everybody's trained up and knows what the system is.

10

Which Councils have you provided-----?-- Cairns has come down and we have had some other Councils in South-east Queensland. How we actually work it is if we - there's a special request from another Council we try to deal with that, but generally speaking we'll be training our own people, and while we're training our own people we make positions available to other Councils should they require it.

MS WILSON: The training that you provide fulfils a need, you say, because it assists in building interoperability between agencies?-- That's correct.

20

And why is that important?-- Well, on the day it becomes extremely difficult if you've actually got to work out issues of interoperability between different agencies. If you have that sorted out beforehand, if you have your systems in place, things are much simpler.

Now, you have talked about the training that you provide to the Gold Coast City - provided the Gold Coast City Council officers and training that also can be available to other regional Councils. Have you provided any training to the Somerset Regional Council?-- Well, we actually did that during the last event. We sent some of our own staff up there to assist in the operation of their Disaster Management Unit, and we trained them as we were there in the operation, and we also went up for I think it was a day or two days when our direct involvement was finished and just made sure that they were actually operating satisfactorily.

30

Okay. If I can take you to your submission, which is Exhibit 1 to your statement. You have a section there that is stated "The Lessons Learned". One of the issues that you raise is is you say, "The impacts of disaster events are felt beyond the boundaries of Local Disaster Management Groups, even in areas not directly impacted", and this is - you use the example of the Gold Coast City Council in the last flooding events where although the Gold Coast City Council wasn't directly affected to the scope as other regional Councils, you still needed to activate the Local Disaster Management Group?-- That's correct.

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50

And one of the reasons why it was necessary to do that was to provide the assistance to other regional Councils as they required?-- Yes. We actually activated for a number of reasons. When the storm event was coming towards us, of course, we weren't sure that we weren't going to get hit in the first place. So we have a number of different levels of

activation, so that was really just normal operations for us. Then we were fielding quite a number of queries from the public as to what was happening, whether they could expect to experience some of the problems that the other communities had, and also where our own community wanted to know what happened in surrounding areas. So we kept operating right through that and then as part of that, of course, we were in a very good position to be able to assist when other Councils actually required some assistance later on.

1

And was it because that the LDMG had been activated that you could assist in a timely way?-- I don't know if I could actually say it that way because under those circumstances it wasn't the LDMG being activated, it was our actually - it was actually our Disaster Management Unit. The LDMG was on standby for most of that time, but we actually run a full-time staff within Gold Coast City Council and we had them fully activate and they were actually able to deal with most of the requests for assistance.

10

At 4.2 you discuss "the capacity of smaller local governments and the fact that they are limited to coordinate disaster effectively given the resources required to do so"?-- Correct.

20

And this seems - this issues seems to be addressed on a number of basis. One, the capability of smaller local regional Councils to access to resources to be able to deal with the issues in their - in their region?-- Yes.

30

And you also addressed the issue of the fact that the - they have not had the training that larger Councils have had?-- That's correct. If I can expand on that a little bit. I have actually had the same role in a smaller Council within New South Wales, and the resources in a smaller Council are just, in my opinion, not sufficient to be able to deal with the sorts of events that were hitting south-east Queensland at that time.

So what's the answer?-- Well, what I have suggested in here and what I think is the way to go is that the State needs to look at in one of two ways. One of them is to increase the resources that EMQ has so that they can actually send resources out to some of the smaller Councils when they require them, and I know they do that to some extent already. The other suggestion is that other Councils that are not affected, for instance Gold Coast City Council in the last instance, should be able to operate and provide assistance in a structured manner. I think it was pretty successful the way it was actually handled, but I think it would only be better in the future if we actually sat down beforehand and we actually worked the systems out so that it was seamless.

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50

When you say "sat down beforehand", you're - the support that the Gold Coast City Council provided was to Somerset Regional Council?-- Amongst others, yes.

Amongst other things, but Somerset Regional Council was where

you deployed staff to be able to assist in the disaster management in that region?-- Correct.

1

Now, when you say act beforehand, are you envisaging that the Gold Coast City Council has a strategic alliance with the Somerset Regional Council and before the wet season sits down and looks at the issues that may come to hand?-- I think we probably need to just sit down and work out exactly how specifics of this would work. I think that all that is probably really required in the first instance by the State is to say that there may be a requirement for Gold Coast City Council, Logan, Brisbane, somebody like that, to assist another Council in those circumstances and to set up the ground rules for that. Whether we actually go to the extent of having an individual strategic alliance with an individual Council, I'm not sure if that's actually required.

10

Well, it was - that was something that the Gold Coast City Council did engage in during the flood events having an alliance with the Somerset Regional Council. Do you see any benefit in continuing a relationship with Somerset Regional Council so the Gold Coast City Council would gain local knowledge and be able to assist better in the next event?-- My only reaction to that would be there's no guarantee, of course, it's going to be Somerset Regional Council next time. It might be another one that we're not talking about today. And I think that what we're really talking about is areas of expertise and resources that might be made available almost regardless of where it is. For instance, you know, choose something, St George or some place like that might require some resources and we can send the resources there. I think it would be very difficult to just set up a specific alliance and be sure that you'd ever actually activate it.

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30

It seems to be that the common theme that's coming from your submission and your statement is the need for a more effective program of training?-- Well, that's not the only point that I've made, but, yes.

No, it's not the only one, but it is a constant theme that arises in your submission-----?-- That is true.

40

-----that greater training could assist all Councils, regional Councils, and Councils in disaster management?-- Absolutely.

And this training needs to be coherent, that there's got to be a more coherent program of training offered to all the regional Councils?-- Yes, I agree with that.

More structured?-- Yes.

50

Who do you see as the best agency to offer that training?-- EMQ.

Now, if I could take you to your final issue that you raise in your submission, "That there is a need for effective and consistent State coordination of resources during large events". The examples that you provide there are well into

the recovery phase. Have you got any comments about the strategic direction by the State Disaster Coordination Centre during the response phase?-- No, because we really weren't involved.

1

Okay.

COMMISSIONER: Do you use the Guardian system that we have heard a bit about?-- No, we're actually going up and having a look at that. We actually use EM2000. We've had that - I have to think to myself - perhaps 10 years we have utilised that, but we are actually going up to have a look at Guardian to find out whether or not it will suit our requirements.

10

It seems the charm of that is that it - well, if a lot in a lot of Councils use it-----?-- Sure.

-----you have got that kind of-----?-- Absolutely.

-----ability to move from to the other?-- Yep.

20

But presumably other systems would do as well, it's just if everybody has a consistent system?-- If the Guardian system is satisfactory and I - from everything I've seen I believe it probably is, I think there would be a great advantage for the entire State to be using the same system.

MS WILSON: I have no further questions, Madam Commissioner.

MR BURNS: I have no questions.

30

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Yes, Commissioner. Mr Day, just a couple of questions. My name is Dunning, I appear on behalf of the Brisbane City Council. Just on the sharing the resources between large Councils and small regional Councils, it's the case though, is it not, that the Local Government Association of Queensland in fact run a system whereby smaller authorities can ask for assistance from larger authorities? Or indeed perhaps more broadly, any local authority can ask for assistance from any other local authority?-- Yes, but I actually believe that that system runs right across the - the point of single-point accountability, and one of the other points that I made in the submission was-----

40

Well, sorry, just if you can deal with my question. The answer is yes, the Local Government Association of Queensland do run a system whereby any local Government authority can request assistance from any other authority?-- Correct.

50

All right. And it has its perhaps most frequent use when smaller authorities through necessity seeks assistance from larger authorities like, for example, the one for which you work or the one for whom I appear; agree?-- We probably send more resources to Ipswich and Brisbane than we did to small

authorities, so.

1

Right?-- Not necessarily the small authorities.

Okay. And your - any criticism you have got of that appears to be in relation to accountability, not its effectiveness?-- I don't know that I would necessarily say yes to that.

All right. But by the sounds of it, you wouldn't necessarily say no either?-- Well, if you like me to expand on that I certainly can. The existing system as I see it crosses the lines of responsibility and communication that should exist in any disaster management situation where you would have people looking at the planning of logistics and operations, and there should be one single point of accountability for logistics, and I believe that having two points of accountability for logistics is not a good idea.

10

But that proceeds on the presumption obviously that you're talking of logistics only in the disaster situation. This is a system that operates generally, not only in circumstances of disaster?-- Well, all I'm talking about, you're right, is in case of a disaster. But if you are actually responding to a disaster, you need to look at the planning logistics and operations, and the logistical issue is the one we're talking about which is resource requirements from one Council, or any other body, to an organisation that requires it. So that is a logistical issue.

20

Certainly. So when a disaster comes along it's the case that there are pre-existing arrangements and protocols between local authorities for the sharing of resources?-- Well, as I have actually indicated in the report, I think that that's the problem because we actually if you have a look through the report, we had a number of requests for our resources that actually came through the SDCC which is as I would see it, the appropriate response agency, and then we had other requests for assistance that actually came through LGAQ.

30

Certainly, but-----?-- So we're getting them from two sources.

40

Yes. My question and your answer are really are at a bit of cross-purposes. The concern you're raising is in a situation of disaster management or recovery, there should be one point of contact?-- Correct.

Yep. But there's no reason why that can't sit conformably with making use of existing arrangements between local authorities; that is, in the disaster situation you make use of by your various disaster hierarchy arrangements those pre-existing arrangements; you agree?-- Well, I don't agree with that.

50

No. All right. Thanks, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have no questions.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

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MS WILSON: No re-examination.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Thank you. Thanks very much, Mr Day. You're excused?-- Thank you very much.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Kelli Docherty-Tanaskovic.

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KELLI LOUITA DOCHERTY-TANASKOVIC, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Can you tell this Commission your full name, please?-- Kelli Louita Docherty-Tanaskovic.

And you're a fire communications officer?-- Yes.

And you are presently stationed with Firecom South-west?-- Yes.

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And for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service?-- Yes.

You're employed by the Department of Community Safety?-- Yes.

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

Can you have a look at this document, please? This is the statement, this is your statement?-- Yes.

20

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 341. There seems to be two - oh, one's for the witness to look at, is it?

MS WILSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. 341.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 341"

MS WILSON: As your role as a communications officer, you - includes taking incoming fire and rescue calls?-- Yes.

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And that is from the triple 0 lines?-- Yes.

Now, in relation to your training, your initial training for the role was more than 15 years ago?-- Less - just under 15 years ago.

Just on the 15. And is it the case that that training was on-the-job?-- At that time it was on-the-job training, yes.

And the training involved at that stage, was it, sitting at the console of an experienced communications officer as a mentor?-- Yes.

50

How long did - did the mentoring occur for?-- Possibly for a period of three weeks.

Okay. And then were you allowed to take-----?-- We were allowed to take solo calls. At that time it was a

single-operator communication centre too.

1

Okay. Since that initial mentoring that you received some 15 years ago, have you had any formal training in relation to taking triple O calls?-- After my first two years of my career, the Service introduced formal training as a communication - a certificate in communications level 3. I participated in that and then was assessed accordingly as everyone else is these days now.

10

And that certificate three-----?-- Mmm-hmm.

-----training, how long did that go for?-- That's 14 modules are involved in that, all different facets of communications including the call-taking which we're talking about. It's not school-based back then like it is now. It was again on-the-job and doing separate units of study throughout that early period - early days or early period of that time.

And you say "it's not school-based like now", what do you mean?-- Now, a communications officer trainee is sent away for a six-week period to school in Brisbane. They then finish that schooling. They come back to their centre, for example south-west, and then they're mentored by someone, possibly like myself who's a senior communications officer.

20

And when they're sent away to school, does that cover training in relation to answering triple O calls?-- Yes.

And how long would the component be in relation to that?-- I can't answer that. I'm not privy to that information.

30

Now, is it the case that since January 2010 training has become State centralised?-- Yes.

And there's web training and leadership and team workshops?-- Mmm-hmm.

Now, you talked about the schooling. Are you required to come to Brisbane or all Firecom officers who wish to do this communications training-----?-- Yes.

40

-----required to come to Brisbane?-- As centralised training came about, anyone who is a brand new communications officer is sent to Brisbane for their six-week period, and then they're sent back to their respective centres throughout the State and they're mentored by a mentor in their centre.

You might have said it before, but how long does that mentoring take? How long of mentoring is required once you're back in your centre?-- We call our shifts two 10s, two 14s a tour-----

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COURT REPORTER: Sorry, can you just repeat that.

WITNESS: Two 10-hour days, two 14-hour nights are called a tour.

MS WILSON: A tour?-- A tour.

1

T-O-U-R?-- A tour of duty. A tour of duty like the army.

Tour of duty, yes?-- Yep. We can have up to four to six of those tours a mentoring period.

And how long would that be spread over?-- Six weeks.

If I can take you to the answering of triple 0 calls generally?-- Mmm-hmm.

10

If you can go to paragraph 12 of your statement. There you say that, "All calls should be answered in a calm, concise and controlled manner, and most importantly your role is to capture where the call is coming from, the exact location of the incident and the nature of the problem". You refer in that statement to the Fire Communications Directive, Emergency Call Management, and you provided a copy of that to your - attached to your statement-----?-- Mmm-hmm.

20

-----at KD-3. Can we go to KD-3? Is this the directive that you're referring to in paragraph 12?-- Yes.

And item 4 of this document sets out the procedure for taking triple 0 calls?-- Yes.

Now, this document, is this document provided to all comm officers?-- Yes.

30

And would this document be the subject of further training at the courses you've described?-- Yes.

Now, 4.11 is the immediate taking of the call where you say, "Queensland Fire and Rescue, what is the location of the emergency?", so that's just standardised?-- That's standard, yes.

Then 4.12 sets out the pieces of information that you must obtain; that is, the confirm the location?-- Mmm-hmm.

40

The type or the detail of the emergency?-- Yes.

The persons involved, is that requiring how many people are involved?-- Dependent on the type of - the problem type or the incident type.

It says there a question to be asked, "Are there persons involved, injured, trapped, how many"?-- Mmm-hmm.

50

And if there's an affirmative to that, "What is the nature of the injuries"?-- Yes.

Okay. And then you must get the caller details?-- Yes.

Are these mandatory fields, these confirm location, type, persons involved, and caller details?-- In ESCAD we create an incident on an ECT screen, which is an emergency call-taking

screen-----

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Yes?-- -----they are mandatory fields that must be filled to create the incident.

Okay. Now, perhaps if you can have a look at this document then. Now, was that the screen that you were referring to when you just gave your answer?-- No.

No. That's the screen dump, isn't it?-- The second page is.

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The second page?-- Second page.

Thank you. The second page of that document then, that's the screen dump that you're referring to?-- Yes.

Now, what are the mandatory fields on this document that must be filled in?-- The suburb town, the address, the details, the problem, the phone number, caller type and - yeah, the caller type.

20

Okay. On this there is no caller name put in on the screen?-- Once the triple 0 call is received at Firecom, we have what's called a caller line identification. That automatically populates those fields where the call is coming from.

And there is also a box there for the priority; you can see that?-- Once I have created the problem type, the priority is automatically populated too. So once I have chosen something, for example rescue, water, all types-----

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Then that automatically a priority one?-- -----that will automatically populate as priority one.

And in your statement later on you refer to an automated system of it determining the resources that are required?-- Correct, that is actually on the other page of this document.

Okay. So if you can just take us through priority one. What are the scales of priority available?-- A priority one incident type is something like a structure fire, like a-----

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Sorry, what was that? I didn't quite-----?-- A structure fire, house on fire-----

Yes?-- -----rescue water all types, anything that requires rescue, road traffic crash, anything that's fairly - I guess it's a priority response is a priority one type incident.

Okay. And there's a scale, isn't it, to five?-- Yes. So something that would be a five would be the crews doing an exercise.

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Okay. Now-----

COMMISSIONER: Did you want that as an exhibit or is it-----

MS WILSON: I will tender that, yes. Thank you,

Madam Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: 342.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 342"

MS WILSON: Perhaps if the witness could be shown Exhibit 98. You had a listen to the telephone call that Jordan Rice made?-- Yes.

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And you have seen the transcript of the - of that telephone call?-- Yes.

We're just going to get you a copy of that transcript. In relation to the information that you gathered from this call, you confirmed the location, you confirmed the time of emergency, that it's in a vehicle, nearly drowning. You do not get the number of persons involved, is there any reasons why?-- It was difficult at the time to have the person on the phone focus on me. There was a lot of noise in the background with screaming. I had to ask him to tell the woman behind him to stop - to stop yelling. It was difficult enough to get him to tell me where he was let alone how many people were with him. On the day it was extreme conditions. At that stage it was good enough, I guess, it was good enough to get enough detail from him to know where he was and, yes, they were in water and, yes, they were in a vehicle and get a crew to them.

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And the other piece of information that you did not get was the caller details. Does that fall under the same type of reasoning-----?-- Reasoning-----

-----of why you didn't get that?-- -----yes.

Did you have enough information?-- I believe I had enough information to create the incident, yes.

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And was that your assessment that you just had to action this?-- Yes.

And action it as quickly as-----?-- Quickly as we possibly could.

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Now, if I can take you paragraph 13 of your statement, there you describe that as a Fire Communications Officer you are sometimes faced with a caller who is distressed or who is in the presence of other person who is are distressed. You say that as it is your responsibility to capture the location and nature of the emergency, there are times when you are required to be assertive to gain focus from the caller and to gather the information necessary to assist them with the emergency?-- Yes.

1

The requirement to be assertive, is that a technique taught in training?-- I guess over time it is and probably not necessarily in training, more from mentoring from your senior staff that you're mentored with. It is a learnt behaviour, I guess, over time when you're mentored. A little bit is taught in training but mostly on the job when you're - in a mental phase when you're actually live on console doing the real work.

10

What is the importance that you say of being assertive?-- To control the call, to be clear, concise as I stated there previously.

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You say that, "Techniques for dealing with difficult callers are discussed by experienced call-takers during the training module entitled receive request for assistance"?-- Yes.

Have you undertaken that training module?-- Yes.

Is there any material that you have in relation to that?-- I have actually got the training module here with me.

30

Oh, did you bring it with you?-- Yes.

If you could provide that when you leave to the Commission staff, that would be of assistance?-- Mmm-hmm.

Now, can you tell me, after taking this triple 0 call what did you do after that?-- My duty that day, if I can create a picture of that day, I was actually on annual leave and called into work. It is one of - that call was one of the first triple 0 calls I took upon arriving into Firecom South West. My task for the day was call taker only, not dispatcher. I took the triple 0 call. As it says there in the transcript, there was a female voice that I heard first which was screaming which was very panicked. A young voice came on the phone. I questioned - I couldn't hear him at first. As it says there in the transcript, "Can you calm down and tell me where you are?" I couldn't get that out of him. He kept saying, "We're stranded", "We're stranded", "We're stranded". I couldn't get the actual location of his whereabouts from him. Eventually I got that. Once that - once I have filled out those mandatory fields in the ECT screen I was able to create the incident. That incident then automatically sits on the dispatcher's screen and the dispatcher then dispatches it.

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We have got a screen dump in front of you?-- Mmm-hmm.

That's the information that you put into the computer that is registered on the screen?-- Yes.

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Then you say you pressed the "exit/save" button?-- Correct.

And that information was sent to an awaiting incident queue?-- Yes.

And then a dispatcher would dispatch appropriate resources to respond?-- Yes.

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So you don't do the dispatching?-- No.

Another person working in Firecoms does the dispatching?-- On a normal day if it wasn't those extreme conditions, on a normal day you have two operators on and the operator like myself would either call take or dispatch. But because of the extreme conditions that day, we had three operators on that day. Two of us were call takers, one dispatcher and my task that day was solely call taking.

20

Now, we're talking about that - the priority code is automatically registered depending upon the information that you put in in relation to the problem?-- Yes.

Then does that have to be manually dispatched? Does a person from Firecoms have to manually ring up some teams on the ground to go and action that?-- The next step after that ECT screen is created, I've finished with that and that sits on the waiting incident queue. The dispatcher - it's - the priority 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 jobs are all colour-coded differently. So, for example, priority 1 jobs will sit on a screen and await an incident queue and flash in red until the dispatcher recommends an appliance or pump or fire truck to it and dispatches it. That day there were many priority 1 jobs flashing red on that screen.

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Now, there has been a disc that Firecoms have provided of the recordings?-- Mmm-hmm.

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Have you listened to these?-- Yes.

Can you confirm that this is the chronology that occurred after that. At 14.03 317A was dispatched by a male person to James and Kitchener?-- Yes.

Now, what's 317A?-- 317 Alpha is a Highfields fire appliance.

Sorry, what was that?-- Is a Highfields fire appliance. Highfields is 20 minutes from Toowoomba.

50

So that was within 20 minutes - that would take 20 minutes to get to Toowoomba?-- They were already tasked earlier to come into Toowoomba as extra resources.

Then at around about that same time that 311Y is also dispatched to James and Kitchener?-- Yes.

What's 311Y?-- 311 Yankee, as its known, is a Toowoomba pump or appliance, or fire truck. 1

COMMISSIONER: Can I just get this straight. Was the Highfields appliance actually in Toowoomba when it was dispatched?-- Yes. Yes.

MS WILSON: So was 311 - and as well as 311Y?-- Yes, mmm-hmm.

Now, at 14.08 311K, an additional unit, can't get through water to get to James and Kitchener. Was it also being tasked to this job as well?-- Yes. 10

At 14:11:40 311Y has a conversation with you?-- That's the station officer of that truck, yes.

And they self-divert to a landslide on the Range with numerous persons being washed away?-- They had come from - they were - they couldn't get through to James and Kitchener Streets so they - they were self-diverting up to the Range, yes. 20

And at 14.17 311Y is at James and Kitchener?-- Yes.

So that has now arrived at the scene?-- Mmm-hmm, yes.

And 311K seems to have been redirected to James and Kitchener and is heading to the downstream side of that intersection?-- Yes.

Okay. Thank you. I have no further questions. 30

COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns, do you-----

MR BURNS: No questions, thank you.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran. 40

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. In terms of the training you receive in your module to be on occasions, if necessary, assertive to gather the information, is that in the written material - module to your knowledge?-- No, I don't think it is in the written material.

But it is part of the training you receive in that module?-- It is part of training as - for example, myself, I'm a regional trainer. It's something that we put in our lesson plans to teach the new staff. So it is something that's learnt within the module but not in the written program. 50

And is that a technique that you have on occasions employed?-- Yes.

Occasions other than this particular occasion?-- Other than, yes.

We can probably see or hear for ourselves, but it obviously worked on this occasion. You were able to, by that technique, get the information you needed?-- Get the information, yes.

And a call having come in at 13.58, the first appliance was deployed at 14.03?-- Mmm-hmm.

Is that a good response time?-- That's a reasonable response considering the weather conditions that were happening that day.

10

And those conditions were so severe that the appliance or two appliances that had been deployed initially couldn't get through?-- Couldn't get through, yes.

The issue of 311 Yankee calling you, that is the-----?-- Station officer on the truck.

-----station officer of the appliance calling you to indicate they couldn't get through to the intersection and was self-diverting to the Range where there had been a serious incident that they were going to?-- Yes.

20

That's appropriate?-- That's appropriate. It is actually at the discretion of that station officer as he is out there on the ground. I'm not. I'm in a little fishbowl and I don't - can't see the outside world. It is appropriate for him to self-respond or next - task himself to the next task.

30

So the only information you have is what you are being told by often distressed persons who are calling in for assistance?-- Assistance or what we call as word back, which is radio from the crews on the ground as to what's happening out there.

But for that reason, the commanding officer of the appliance has the call as to whether he'll go to the job you've dispatched for him or has been dispatched for him?-- Yes.

Or he makes the call to go to what he considers to be a more appropriate incident?-- Yes.

40

Now, if we were listening to the tapes of these calls that you received and made and we were to draw a distinction, which there obviously is, between your demeanour when taking a call and extracting information and when you're deploying appliances or performing a dispatching role, are they two different functions entirely?-- Yes.

When you're dispatching, is it much easier to relay the details in a calm and detached way?-- Definitely.

50

You often know - personally know, do you, the personnel?-- I'm very familiar with the crews that I work with. As a permanent officer, we are on a particular shift so I work with that shift regularly. So I'm quite familiar with those crews.

That's all I have, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: No re-examination. May the witness be excused.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, very much, Ms Docherty-Tanaskovic,
you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Glenn Walker.

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GLENN ANDREW WALKER, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Glenn Andrew Walker?-- That's correct.

And are you the executive director of ICS Systems?-- I am.

IC Systems?-- I am.

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Which is the corporate division in the Department of Community Safety?-- That's correct.

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

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is this your statement?-- It is.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 343.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 343"

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WITNESS: Madam Commissioner, if I may make a minor amendment to my statement?

COMMISSIONER: Tell us what it is then?-- If I can draw your attention to paragraph 15, in paragraph 15 I go on to describe the presentation logic behind triple 0 calls within the south-west region for Toowoomba Communications Centre. My statement reads that the presentation is Toowoomba for 27 seconds; re-presented at Toowoomba for another 27 seconds. If the call goes unanswered after that point it is re-presented to Brisbane. And on a fourth attempt it is re-presented by the Telstra Communications Centre operator - the Telstra triple 0 operator to Queensland Police Service. That is actually incorrect. The statement should read that the presentation logic of Toowoomba, Toowoomba, Brisbane continually repeats until such time as the Telstra triple 0 operator redirects or diverts that call to a Queensland Police communication centre as a last resort.

40

All right, thank you. I don't think that's something we'll get to write in but it is in the transcript now. What about Ipswich? Does it not feature in all this?-- Ipswich Communication Centre, my understanding, those calls go to our south-east region, which is our Gold Coast Communications Centre.

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But no - well, I thought there was a Toowoomba/Ipswich-----

MS WILSON: That was the police service, Madam Commissioner

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MR MacSPORRAN: Police.

COMMISSIONER: I'm sorry. That's right. Thank you.

MS WILSON: I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: I think I said that's Exhibit 343.

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MS WILSON: Your statement provides an overview of the QFRS triple 0 communication systems. That's the case?-- That is correct.

I'll take you through a couple of those matters, please. In paragraph 9 you set out that for organisational purposes the state is divided into seven regions?-- Yes.

And each region has a dedicated QFRS Communications Centre?-- That is correct.

20

And they are the seven regions?-- That is correct.

Now, Ipswich does not figure in that list of regions?-- That is correct.

So where would Ipswich, for example, be done?-- My understanding is that Ipswich calls would be handled by the Southport Communications Centre.

30

Now, the relevant communications centre for a call from James and Kitchener Streets in Toowoomba is obviously the Toowoomba Communications Centre?-- That's correct.

You state in paragraph 11 that, "The Toowoomba triple 0 Communications Centre generally operates with two people per shift"?-- That's correct. That is my understanding.

"Under normal conditions the operators conduct both the call taking and dispatch activities"; is that the case?-- That's correct. So a single operator would both take the call and dispatch the appropriate resources to respond to that call.

40

Can we now go to paragraph 12, which refers to what occurs during peak times, peak demand?-- Mmm-hmm.

And you say that the QFRS implement load management procedures?-- Yes. My understanding is that one of the procedures that QFRS will implement to better manage load is that they may split the call taking and the dispatch functions to enable someone to focus on a higher call volume for a particular incident and allow another operator to focus on the management of local resources responding to that incident. And that that is indeed a load management practice.

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If we look at the process of answering triple 0 calls by QFRS, a triple 0 call made by a member of the public is initially answered by a Telstra triple 0 operator?-- That's correct.

And that determines which emergency service is required?--
That is correct.

And that will transfer the call to the appropriate
communication centre, which in this case was Toowoomba?--
Correct.

Now, paragraph 15, which you've already spoken about, is the
presentation logic and the presentation logic is how these
calls are processed if they are not answered immediately?--
That's correct.

10

Now, you talked - you wanted to make some amendment there, but
let us work through this presentation logic. The first
presentation at the Toowoomba Communications Centre and if
that call goes unanswered for 27 seconds, it is then
re-presented at the Toowoomba Communications Centre again?--
That's correct.

20

How does that occur? Does that just immediately ring through
again?-- No, the entire triple 0 call management process is a
manual process managed by human beings. So the Telstra
triple 0 operator is responsible for the presentation of that
call at a communications centre and what they will actually do
when they present a call, they've got a timer that runs, so
they can see how long that's actually been running for. If
they were to re-present that call as per the protocol, the
Telstra operator actually re-presents that call into our
environment which brings it back up to top of the call queue
specifically. So that process of that hand-off between
Telstra and Emergency Services is a people-based process
that's managed in that manner.

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And if after two presentations of Telstra bringing it back to
the top of the queue it is still not answered, then you say it
goes to Brisbane?-- That's correct.

And then that's where you wish to add some additional
information in relation to paragraph 4, that it - how it is
redirected at that point of time?-- That's correct. What I
would like to add is that that process that you have just
described will repeat until one of two states occurs: either
someone within Emergency Services answers that call or a
Telstra triple 0 supervisor determines that it is no longer
viable for that call to be answered within Emergency Services
and as an absolute last resort they would transfer that to a
Queensland Police communication centre.

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Which Queensland Police Service communication centre would it
be transferred to?-- I'm not aware of exactly which
communication centre it goes to.

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Would it go back to Toowoomba?-- I don't know.

Now, QFRS, do they have compatible communication centres with
QPS?-- Could you elaborate on the question.

Well, QFRS - what system does QFRS operate under?-- In which regard? Telephone environment for taking triple 0 calls-----

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The taking of triple 0 calls and the recording of that?-- Yes. So to answer your first question, no, my understanding is the Queensland Police and Emergency Services use different telephone systems. However, we do currently have a project established which is standardising on a common type of triple 0 telephony environment across Emergency Services. Within Emergency Services specifically, so Queensland Fire and Queensland Ambulance, we typically use a standalone triple 0 telephony environment. So it is not integrated across all of our regions.

10

And is there - excuse me for one moment. If I could take you to paragraph 30 where you talk about, "The joint nature of QAS and QFRS systems facilitates the use of associated incidents"?-- Mmm.

So there's compatibility between QFRS and QAS but that's where - but that same compatibility does not exist between QPS and QFRS and QAS?-- No - sorry, could you repeat the last part of that question.

20

Well, if you look at paragraph 31, you say that this same capability does not exist between QPS and QFRS and QAS?-- That is correct.

So what happens in the situations where you need to share information between QPS?-- So it's a manual process whereby someone in the communications centre will call through and will relay information verbally.

30

Now, you state that DCS and QPS are currently working towards developing interoperability between the systems?-- That's correct.

Where is that at?-- So it is currently in the planning phase. My understanding is that Queensland Police are moving through their detailed implementation planning for the rollout of a new computer-aided dispatch environment and myself and my partner CEO from Queensland Police Service both exchanged formal letters agreeing that we will develop an interoperable interface between our CAD systems.

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Is that in relation to responding to triple 0 calls?-- Absolutely.

What about radio communications network?-- Radio communication networks across all public safety organisations are currently standalone in as much as they do not interoperate.

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Let's just stop there and pause and break that down. That means that an operator in a QFRS truck cannot talk to an officer in the QPS car?-- In the current state, that's absolutely correct.

So how is that being improved?-- How is that currently being improved; Queensland Police and the former Department of Emergency Services have an agreed policy and partnering agreement in which we have undertaken a large amount of detailed strategic planning in relation to the development of a public safety wireless network and we are currently exploring options in relation to how we may pursue that with the final intent being an interoperable radio communications environment across public safety.

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Is that something that is very long term?-- It is long term.

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When we are talking long term are we talking years?-- Yes, I would say up to 10 years.

So it is 10 years away before QFRS and QAS and QPS can have interoperability?-- At least subsequent to the development of - of a business case around that particular aspect.

Okay. So we - there needs to be a business case developed and then once that is developed and approved, then you're looking at 10 years away?-- That is correct.

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Why does it take so long?-- The way in which our radio communications environment have - have grown up, as the organisations have grown up over the years, has always been they have been designed in a standalone manner because that is a how a lot of the bureaus used to run many, many years ago. So, unfortunately, to be able to undo that and put in place an interoperable radio communications environment is, as you would imagine, a quite expensive and detailed exercise which is not only a technological question, it is a question of business process as well.

30

You say that the QFRS and QAS radio network is based on analogue technologies?-- That's correct.

And they are susceptible to interference during major weather events?-- That's correct.

40

Is the QFRS and QAS considering moving into digital?-- It certainly is a consideration at this stage.

And does a digital radio communications network, does that improve the issues that occur during major weather events?-- Most certainly.

Why is that?-- It is due to - without getting into too much technical detail, it is easier to regenerate and retransmit a digital signal than it is an analogue signal. So you get higher levels of clarity and also a number of other features within the environment as well.

50

You talk about at paragraph 40 that the QFRS and QAS have an ongoing program of work to enhance the radio network. What is that ongoing annual program of work?-- So one of the elements of the services that my team deliver to the organisation is delivering that program of work across the state of

Queensland. So we have a very detailed process in place whereby we baseline, catalogue and understand where black spots are and we formulate a yearly program of significant investment, millions of dollars, into increasing radio communications coverage in response to two main elements: either black spots in certain areas or, obviously, demographics growth as well, so new communities.

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If I can just go back to the triple 0 calls and the interoperability of the triple 0 calls in relation to the QAS and QFRS. In paragraph 15 you went through the core presentation logic. Say, for example, that there was a caller who was requesting assistance from Toowoomba and it couldn't be answered in the Toowoomba region and got diverted to the Brisbane region. Could those details be entered into the QFRS system in Brisbane and the QFRS computer system in Toowoomba would pick that up?-- Absolutely. One of the key transformations that we have been able to put in place through the development of a joint CAD environment is exactly what you have just described. So a call can literally be taken anywhere throughout the state and that job will appear immediately in the region in which the resources need to respond. So there is no need - even though we do have manual voice procedures to follow up and make sure that's been acknowledged, it is transparent in much as calls taken within the Brisbane region will transparently present within a Toowoomba communications centre.

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And then, which communication centre will action that and deploy resources?-- Typically the region in which the incident has occurred.

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Can Brisbane Communication Centre, if they have picked it up, can they be assured that that has occurred?-- Yes, they can see the status of the job within our computer-aided dispatch system within the queue. So they can see when it has been picked up, who has picked it up and that it has been actioned accordingly.

I have no further questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns.

MR BURNS: Yes, thank you. Your system synchronises with a website, doesn't it?-- That's correct.

And that occurs on a regular basis?-- It does.

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So that you're confident the whole QFRS system is synchronised in the same way?-- That's correct.

But it is not synchronised with the Queensland Police Service system?-- No, it is not.

And it is not synchronised with Telstra?-- I can't comment as

to whether it's synchronised with Telstra or not.

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It's a wholly independent system though, isn't it, the QFRS?-- Yes, it is an independent time synchronisation system, that's correct.

So when you're comparing times that are often as data from other systems, you need to be careful because the - I've mentioned police. If you're comparing with police, for example, you need to be careful because the time synchronisation may be different?-- That's a very valid point.

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In terms of the data that is available, the starting time for a triple 0 call that is recorded on the QFRS incident report, is that when the call commences or when it is dispatched?-- That is the time in which the triple 0 communications centre operator opens the emergency call taking screen. That would be the initial timestamp within the log - and I can't see what you're actually looking at there but if that's - that's an incident report. Am I able to have a look at that?

20

Yes, certainly. For the record, it is a Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Incident Report dated 10 January 2011?-- Thank you. Just for clarity's sake, may I ask you to restate the question.

I'm interested as to - I was asking you questions about when there is a time noted - noted in the data provided by the QFRS for the commencement of the call, is that when the call is actually received or when the job is dispatched?-- So, yes, it is when the call is received initially. So the call will be received. Immediately upon that operator answering that call, they will open the emergency call taking screen and that creates a timestamp in the system.

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All right?-- So the initiation of the call is the opening of the emergency call taking screen in which the operator will start entering the details of the incident.

While we're at it, could you have a look at document, please, which I believe is a copy of Exhibit 342?-- Thank you.

40

We're told in earlier evidence that that's a copy of a screen dump. There doesn't seem to be any space there for time or date?-- Yep, that's correct.

That's correct? So where do we go to for that information?-- So that is an automated process within the system itself. So the system will time and date stamp that based on the information it has within its time synchronisation environment.

50

So do we then look at the voice files for those - for that coding or is there a document?-- No. So in relation to the incident report specifically, all timings come directly from our emergency services computer at a dispatch environment. Alternatively, if we are referring to voice recordings, they

would be timestamped from the voice recorder, which is
synchronised to the same time source, and should match up in
terms of timing.

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I'm sure they do, but is there a document that prints out that
shows the time and a date apart from that incident report?--
No. We intentionally use a single point to be able to track
all of the actions within the Emergency Services
computer-aided dispatch environment and do that in a
simplified automated manner that makes it so that the
dispatcher doesn't have to be keeping track of time. It is an
automated process for a reason.

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I think I follow that. Thank you. Could I have the document
back, please?-- Of course you can.

MS WILSON: I'll tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: It was an incident report?

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MS WILSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 344.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 344"

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Mr Walker, just a couple of things. The project that's looking currently at upgrading the fire service's ability to take these calls and process them, does that predate the events we're concerned with here, January this year?-- It does, that is not as a result as the events. This has been part of the continual improvement process around service delivery to the community.

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And is that the same position with respect to the project that is dealing with the - to make the fire service and police service communication system compatible?-- Most certainly, that well and truly predates the incident on the 10th of January.

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They're both very complex issues?-- They are.

And more to the point perhaps they're very expensive exercises?-- Correct, yes. There is significant cost involved in some of the strategic priorities we're currently investigating, that's correct.

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Because as you've intimated, I think, the system you have currently in place and similarly to the QPS system, you can't simply patch that to make it connect. You have to replace the entire system, don't you, effectively?-- You have to leverage a common interface to be able to speak to each other. So if I was trying to break that down into a simple analogy, if we had someone speaking two different languages, we need an interpreter in the middle to be able to make sure that we both have a common understanding of the same language.

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And that's not easy to achieve?-- No, as you've mentioned it is a complex issue.

But it's underway and everything that can be done is being done to see if it can be made to happen?-- That's correct.

Can I take you to the events of the 10th of January in Toowoomba. Have you looked at the statistics for the number of calls that were, in fact, received that day by the fire service?-- Yes, I have received some statistics in relation to calls throughout that specific day on the 10th of January.

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Can you tell how many triple 0 were received on that day?-- Toowoomba received 102 calls throughout the period of the day, but I think most importantly the telling statistic is that 62 of those calls were received between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. on that particular day. If we were to baseline that against the number of calls taken over a similar period in previous years, it's significantly more. Generally speaking it's a much lower number, under 10, that would be taken over that same period, you know, over previous years.

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All right. Now, have you done a further breakdown to ascertain the time or when each of those calls were, in fact, answered?-- Yes, we have. We have done a high level breakdown there, and if I may, I'll just walk through that quickly. The first-----

Just bear in mind it has to be taken down by the reporter, so if you speak slowly if you wouldn't mind, please?-- Will do. The percentage of calls answered at presentation one, so the first time they were presented at the Toowoomba Communication Centre, 80 per cent of calls were answered within the first presentation. So that means 80 per cent of calls were answered within 27 seconds. The percentage of calls answered at the second presentation at Toowoomba was a lower number, which you could expect obviously because the team were very busy answering those calls that had been answered on the first presentation, was a much lower number at two per cent. However, the third presentation, 15 per cent of calls were answered on the third presentation, and those calls were taken within Brisbane. So just some numbers in terms of what that would mean based on the protocol for waiting, you know, those third presentation calls would generally be about 81 to 90 seconds before those calls were answered. And obviously a Telstra triple 0 operator was on the line with those citizens of the community during that particular time.

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Okay. Now, that's the presentation one to three inclusive. What about presentations four to five?-- Look, on that particular day there were only two calls out of a total of 102 that made it to the fourth and fifth presentation representing under one per cent which were - which, as I have mentioned, the fourth presentation was answered at Toowoomba and the other call that went to a fifth presentation was answered in Brisbane.

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All right. Overall that's a pretty good result, isn't it?-- Absolutely.

All right. Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

MS McLEOD: No question, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Ms McLeod. Ms Wilson, anything further?

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MS WILSON: No further questions, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Walker, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Edward Middleton.

EDWARD GEORGE MIDDLETON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Edward George Middleton?-- It is.

And are you the acting fire communications manager?-- I am.

For the specialist training command for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service?-- That's correct.

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And you're employed by the Department of Community Service?-- That is correct.

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

Can you have a look at this document, please? Is that your statement?-- It is.

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Is there any amendments that you wish to make?-- No.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: It's 345.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 345"

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MS WILSON: In fact, have you got a copy of your statement there?-- I most certainly have.

Can I take you to the issue of Firecom training, and you'll find that on page 2 that you address in paragraphs 9 and onwards. You state that, "Firecom officers must obtain the qualification of certificate III, Firecom operations"?-- That is correct.

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Now, can you give me some idea how long that course takes?-- Currently it's a centralised training course delivered at our academy at Whyte Island. It commences with a one-week familiarisation in the regional communication centre of origin; that is, where the recruit is either coming from or being deployed to. It is then a five-week live-in training course at Whyte Island. They then return to their deployment region and then undergo, it can be up to six weeks, a mentoring process at the end of which they undergo a further assessment. When I say "up to six weeks" because they actually do it on a shift and we work a - oh, well, technically some shifts are - some centres are 10/14s, others 12/12s, but the main thing is it's on a tour basis of where you work two days, two nights, four days off. So obviously if you lay that over a week's period then it can be up to six weeks.

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Okay. It's assessed?-- It is assessed. It's actually a cert III. It actually comes under the Australian Quality Training Framework. It's a nationally recognised training qualification.

And how much time in that course is taken up with answering triple O calls and dealing with triple O calls?-- Off the top of my head, I'm not-----

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COURT REPORTER: Sorry, "I'm not familiar with"?

WITNESS: I'm not familiar with the actual session or lesson plans associated with the cert III because that's not my area of expertise. I'm actually the manager of specialist training. Cert - the delivery of the certificate III is another section, that's the base training that recruits get. And then whilst some of my officers actually in the specialist training do deliver modules of that cert III, our area lies specifically in the computer-aided dispatch area which is part of the specialist training.

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Okay. So you can't assist?-- Not in the specifics of how much time. I am aware that there is a - there are sessions conducted where I believe they actually use regional communication centres to actually assisted in that, but they - because they get experienced officers to ring in and run dummy calls to the recruits.

In paragraph 10 you describe the system that, "Prior to January 2010 where all Firecom training at cert III level was provided by each regional Firecom centre". Now, that's changed now?-- That has changed the last couple of years, yes.

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Why did it change?-- Basically we moved from a one type of incident recording program to the current VisiCAD program. It also was a policy that was adopted by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. There was a clear recognition that the amount of training or level of training or the accountability or the recognition of the training that was delivered prior to that certainly wasn't sufficient or wasn't recognised by any national body or whatever, didn't carry any weight of credibility or whatever. Therefore, the move was made to establish these cert III, certificate III, and that progressed then obviously with the introduction of the VisiCAD product into the centralised training program that we now deliver.

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And what are the roles that Firecom staff must perform? What is the role that the Firecom staff must perform?-- Well, obviously basically it is the taking of triple O calls and-----

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Is that a primary function of their role?-- That is, yeah. I guess if you were to boil it all down, that is why they're there, to take - primarily to take triple O calls, to identify the appropriate resources to meet that - the demands of that particular problem type or incident type, and then to dispatch

those - and dispatch the required resources. I guess in some cases you might say that they are the initial IMT. They form the initial management of that incident until such time its escalation, from the advice from the attending SO establishes, then he takes the control of the - of the incident.

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So all persons wanting to work in Firecoms, they must come to Brisbane to get that training?-- That is correct, now, yes. It is a very rigorous recruitment program now. It is quite involved. Once they are selected they must - they must undertake that one week initial familiarisation in their deployment region, after which they then are required to partake in a residential course for five weeks here in Brisbane out at our academy my at Whyte Island.

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How does the training of Firecom officers take into account the local conditions and the knowledge of local conditions and using such knowledge in - in deploying assets?-- Familiarisation - regional familiarisation is actually in fact one of the training mechanisms - one of the training modules delivered. That is delivered - well, it can be delivered in basically in two formats. One, because the computer-aided dispatch system we employ is a Statewide application. For example a communications officer at Southport can, through a function called view controller, activate, say, far northern Cairns, they can actually visually see what's going on in - in Cairns as far as their incidents and things like that. The mapping application which is directly linked to the - to the incidents through a geo verification process also enables one region to have a look at the specific incident locations, deployment situations as far as what vehicles are on jobs and things like that. Through the application of AVL, which is Automatic Vehicle Location, here in south - sorry, South-east Brisbane and parts of North Coast, they can actually see the pumps being responded to incidents along the routes. But mainly the intricate area of knowledge is delivered back in their deployment regions under mentoring.

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The monitoring of the training, you say that, "There is no centralised core skills maintenance program for the cert III training for the monitoring of it"?-- Not from a centralised point, no. Each region has developed or is in the process of developing their own core skills maintenance programs, and they are at varying - at varying stages of development or implementation. Now, we are moving to a, if you like, a centralised communications command. That decision presently lies with the executive management of QFRS. Once that - once that decision has been made, my unit actually is more - is moved from its current location at Mary Street and will move to Whyte Island where we will be integrated into that team that's currently using the cert - delivering the cert III training. Once that's done, we can then work together probably more cohesively to combine a more comprehensive core skills maintenance program to cover both the certificate III and the ESCAD or the computer-aided dispatch system mechanism. Just to make one clarification here, though, bear in mind that the ESCAD training, the ESCAD which is - comes under module, I think, QFCCAD1B actually forms part of the cert III, but

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because it is such a major component now and so important to the delivery, you know, of the triple 0 - or client service delivery if you like, that is why the executive management of the organisation have identified that there is a requirement for a specialist training unit because they understand the importance of having skills levels at taking triple 0s and doing the dispatching of the appropriate resources is so important that we've run, round the State actually, we actually go out to the regions, we've done obviously the initial implementation of that training, we've done a revision course and we've also done a - first stages of the next version upgrade with the mapping application. That was delivered in November/December last year. The next one will be delivered in June this - or June/July, there has been no schedule developed, but the - about the middle of the year the next upgrade is expected to be brought online.

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If I can take you to the answering of triple 0 calls and where you state, "That triple 0 calls should be answered in accordance with the training given in the certificate III training course", you can see in paragraph 17 of your statement?-- That's correct.

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And then you go in paragraph 18 and talk about the three most important details that are required-----?-- Yes.

-----when taking a call. The most important details: determining the exact location; do you see that?-- Yes.

And you say, "The second most important detail is to determine what is taking place"?-- That is correct.

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"And the third most important detail is who is involved"?-- Correct.

"Including the number of people involved"?-- Correct.

Now, you regard this as the minimum critical details?-- That is correct, and that follows the sequence of questioning as detailed now in the what we call the ECT screen, the emergency call taking screen, where the town or suburb is initially identified, followed then obviously by the exact address within that location. Then the - what incident is being experienced or wishing to be reported and then, of course, if any life is being threatened or involved.

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You say at paragraph 18, that there are other mandatory determinants?-- That's correct.

What are they?-- There's the actual code of the problem type, its priority, the call - and caller details plus the response plan.

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But you say, "The necessity of these calls can be left to the initiative of the call taker"?-- That's right. In an emergent situation where a person is distressed to the point of - well, literally to the point of distraction, or indeed if someone's injured or whatever, they can be overridden. I

guess to give you an example, if someone was to ring up and say, "I'm having a heart attack", and then hang up, well, you can be safe in ensuring that somewhere in Queensland someone was having a heart attack. However, if you asked the question, "What town are you calling from?", and you were to say at "Roma", at least you would have the capacity to know that somewhere in Roma someone was - there was a major incident going or it was a car accident or something. So, yes, basically that's the predeterminant to try and get as accurate as information in the shortest possible time.

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So while they are regarded as mandatory determinants, they're not required, they're mandatory but not mandatory?-- No, because of the sequence they're in on the screen, I - I guess that someone's triple - mobile phone number isn't as important and that's why it's in the sequence it is. It is located as one of the last determinants.

Perhaps if I can take you to this document then, please. If I can show you Exhibit 341, and an exhibit attached to that document. If I can take you to - it recorded as KD - identified as KD-3 and it's the Fire Communication Centre Directive at the back of that document. Have you got that document?-- Where is the KD-3 indicated?

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There should be exhibits attached to that document?-- Oh, sorry. I apologise.

Now, have you seen this document before?-- Yes, I have.

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Okay. And this is a Fire Communication Centre Directive?-- Yes.

And it sets out the procedure when taking a triple 0 call?-- Correct.

Now, if I could take you to 4.12 which is across - over the page, has this been designed by priority, the "Confirm location", "Type", "Persons involved", "Caller details"? Do you see those headings?-- Yes, I do.

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So this is the information that must be gained - gathered from a telephone call in response to a triple 0?-- Correct.

So "Confirm location" is that the most important?-- Yes, confirm the location, yes.

So is this by priority, these are the most important details to get out?-- That's correct.

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Location first, then type, then persons involved, then caller details?-- Yes, yes. I guess that when you - when you say "are these", I mean, it goes on a priority - the questioning would be depending on the circumstances of the call. I mean, some people volunteer the information straight off the bat. They might say, "I'm at 24 Smith Street, Bracken Ridge." Well, there's no point then in spinning around and saying, "Well, what suburb are you calling from?"

No?-- So, I mean, yes, so basically whilst it's in - it's in that order because of the priorities. If they don't volunteer that that is the cause of action. You have got to prompt in accordance with that - with those - the list of those priorities.

Have you listened to the call taken by Kelli Docherty-Tanaskovic?-- I have, yes.

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Okay. On the 10th of January?-- I have.

If I can show you this transcript, please? Have you seen the transcript as well?-- No, I haven't.

Okay. And it's exhibit-----?-- Oh, I tell a lie. Yes, I have seen it, yes, in conjunction with the - listening to the tape.

It's Exhibit 98.

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COMMISSIONER: Is somebody going to show it?

WITNESS: Is it attached to this?

MS WILSON: No, someone will give it to you, the document, in just a moment.

COMMISSIONER: It's on the screen now anyway.

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MS WILSON: Can you see it on the screen?-- Sorry, yes, I can.

Now, Miss Docherty-Tanaskovic did not ascertain the persons involved nor the caller details?-- Correct.

Does this failure affect the response that can be provided by QFRS?-- No, no, way at all.

Why is that?-- The response of the QFRS is dependent upon basically two parameters. One is a geo verified location which basically identifies the response plan; and the second one is the problem type which identifies the appropriate resource to be deployed.

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If I can take you to the tone of voice and language used in - in responding to these triple 0 calls?-- Yes.

It is critical that Firecom officers maintain control of emergency calls at all time?-- That is correct.

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And it would often be the case, wouldn't it, that people calling triple 0 may be in a distressed, panicked or hysterical state?-- Most certainly.

How do Firecom officers respond to this? What is their training?-- From what I can understand from the cert III is that they are - as I indicated earlier, there are calls made

by arrangement from other outside sources from the academy to the recruit trainees, and through that mechanism they're taught different mannerisms in which to handle the call. Myself and Miss - Miss-----

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COMMISSIONER: Docherty-Tanaskovic?-- Docherty-Tanaskovic undertook a training course many years ago, I think it was 1998, 2000, or something like that, from an outside service provider. I think it was a two-day course and it was directly involved in how to go about dealing with irate or various - it was just various callers, whether it be a call centre as such, whether it be an emergency call centre. So it was about controlling people or the mechanisms of being able to use your tone, modulation and things like that to be able to grab the attention, if I can use that terminology, of a caller particularly in our industry where it's usually distressed, panicked types of callers, and direct their focus back to answering the questions as explicitly as possibly.

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You have listened to the call?-- I have.

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Can you comment on the appropriateness of the language used by Miss Docherty-Tanaskovic?-- I can assure you that it was exemplary. It's one of the best calls I - under those circumstances, one of the best calls I've ever heard.

You've heard her to say, "Tell the woman beside you to stop yelling"?-- Yes.

What is your view on the appropriateness of that?-- It was neither offensive or abusive. It was very assertive, but it was an indication - and I have heard the tape, the amount of white noise, if you like to use that terminology, that surrounded made the hearing of that - and I can only imagine how more difficult it would be with a headset on, to try and get the caller to focus on the questions that were being at hand. Now, the call-taker, I believe, was raised - born and raised in - and spent all of her working career in Toowoomba. She knows that intersection. She has seen the situation. I think you can actually hear the water rushing in the tape. The manner in which she was able to sum up the entire situation in such a brief period of time and using, as I said, assertive (sic) to try to focus on those - on those salient points of what your location is was exemplary.

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Can you comment on the appropriateness of the tone of voice? You could hear her having a very loud tone of voice, quite aggressive?-- Oh, no, not aggressive at all, no. Very assertive, very focused. She quite - it was quite obvious that she was fully aware of the ramifications of this call.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I check then on the question of numbers, when you know that it's a passenger in a car - on the question of numbers and identification of people, when you know a passenger's in a car and they're in dire straights like this, do you need the extra information about precise numbers and exactly who they are?-- No, in this case - in - in a millionth of a second she would have realised that there were

at least two. There was obviously the person on the phone and there was obviously the person that was making the other noise, and obviously there was a male voice and there was a female voice. So, you know, one or two or whatever, she - there was no point in - and the distressed state, there was no point going down the line of saying, "Well, I know there's two there. Is there anymore?" No. The gravity of the situation dictated that she knew there was more than one person in the car.

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All right. And as for pressing for identification in this state of affairs, what do you say about that?-- It wasn't necessary because, you know, the call had obviously come in on a mobile phone. There was no need to - to seek a call-back number. The gravity of the situation dictated that that there was - I mean, if you lost - or if there was a requirement to ring back to clarify some sort of information that you'd missed, there was no time for that, and that's clearly articulated by the assertiveness of her voice, her modulation and her tone.

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MS WILSON: One other issue that I wish to take you to is operational changes. You talk about in paragraph 27, "The implementation of the VisiCAD ESCAD application and the adoption of a centralised training regime for Firecom recruits as identified, and action the need to standardise delivery of all aspects of Firecom operations"?-- Correct.

Beyond that you say you're unable to make general comments regarding operational policy?-- Insofar as the delivery of training within the - of the ESCAD components and things like that, no, that's my area of expertise, and basically outside that I wouldn't have any specific details to add.

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Is there any improvements that you could suggest that would improve the operation of the training?-- Basically anything I would add has already been identified prior to this. The introduction of the ESCAD product was - was so wide reaching that it's had quite a cultural change quite across the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service for an amazing amount of good. Not only that, but we actually worked this computer-aided dispatch system in conjunction with Queensland Ambulance Service. The great asset and the great benefit that we've got here is that immediately upon an incident, if it's identified as what we call an associate - associated incident, immediately appears upon the screens of the - the associated QAS comms consoles. That is the greatest asset. There is other avenues by which, you know, various applications of the ESCAD or the VisiCAD product is now available to senior officers via laptops and things like that.

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But as far as the appropriate identification of appliances or resources as such, or capabilities, such as if a - once upon a time if an SO or a senior officer called for a swift water capability, it would be up to the fireys to - to be able to identify - this is pre-ESCAD. Under the old system that was never recorded. But now with the identification of resources, capabilities includes swift water. So if there is a requirement for a swift water we just literally go into the additional resource area, seek out the capability of swift water and the system will identify which appliance has a qualified officer on it. There are various features like that right through the - this application. I guess that the only thing I could say as a specialist ESCAD - or specialist trainer is that we don't have that same capability unfortunately with QPS.

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Thank you, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns?

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MR BURNS: No questions, thank you.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: Mr Middleton, just one matter. You gave us your opinion as to the appropriateness of the officers taking that call?-- Yes.

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In those circumstances. Is that reflected in the fact that you are going to seek clearance within the service to use the tape of that call with appropriate anonymity involved for training purposes?-- I would like to, yes. It's - as I said, without a doubt it is the best call I have seen under those circumstances and it is ideal for recruits. There is no identification on that but, once again, under the, you know, various provisions of privacy and things like that. But I would be seeking to have that call. I think every recruit fire communications officer coming into this organisation - into our organisation should hear that because I guess its relevance is quite fresh at this point in time. Ten years' time it may not be because of the people coming through, but certainly for the next 18 months, two years there are people who may well have seen the floods, they may have been on the bank of the creek or not only here but Cairns or whatever, and if they can actually see that this is the stress and the pressure that not only fire communications officers but also ambulance officers, communications officers are under, because they're humans as well and when you see them sitting there - and I guess the general public never get to see the inside of a communications centre where you are isolated from the world and all you're seeing is the massive impact flowing into that room with - you're not getting any closure. I mean, it is a little bit different to the fireys. They go out, put wet stuff on the hot stuff. The fire goes out, they feel a bit of

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elation, good job, they go home. Comms officers don't get that closure. They just know all the jobs - the fireys did their job. So when you get an incident like this - that is something that when you do training you only aspire to try and give examples of but when you have someone in real life you can actually show this to recruits, it is a major asset.

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COMMISSIONER: Have you thought of asking the Rice family how they feel about it?-- No. As I say, there is a process that I - there is no identifying situation on that but obviously there will have to be quite a number of - but I would like to think that out of this tragedy - and it is a tragedy, there is no two ways about that, out of this tragedy that some good can certainly come.

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Yes, thank you. Thank you, your Honour.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Any re-examination?

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MS WILSON: No, re-examination. May the witness be excused.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks very much, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Superintendent Waugh.

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ROBERT WILLIAM WAUGH, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Robert William Waugh?-- It is.

And you're a superintendent of police in the Queensland Police Service?-- I am.

And you're in charge of the communications branch within the Operations Support Command?-- I am.

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

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is that the statement that you've made?-- It is.

Is there any amendments that you'd wish to make?-- No, thank you.

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Now, in that statement you have referred to seven documents?-- Yes.

Can you have a look at these documents, please?-- Yes.

Are they the documents that you referred to in your statement?-- I believe so.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement and the documents that are referred to in that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 346.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 346"

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

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Can I take you to page 2 of that statement where you raise the issue of interconnectivity. You say there, "The BPCC" - that's the Brisbane Police Communications Centre?-- Yes.

"Utilises a computer aided dispatch CAD system known as ESCORT CAD"?-- Yes.

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And that manages calls for service to the subsequent dispatch of QPS resources?-- Yes.

Now, the BPCC CAD system has some connectivity with other police communication centres but that is limited?-- Yes, it is.

That is limited to Beenleigh, Broadbeach, Townsville and

Cairns?-- Correct.

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So is it the case that for the calls that are received at the Brisbane Police Communication Centre and registered with the CAD system, then police communication centres in Beenleigh, Broadbeach, Townsville and Cairns could access that information?-- Yes, they can be switched between centres.

But no other police communication system within Queensland can access that information?-- No, that's correct.

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Now, the remaining police communications systems uses a standalone incident management system, an IMS?-- Yes.

And they do not have interconnectivity to CAD - that is, to Brisbane?-- Correct.

Or each other?-- Correct.

They're standalone?-- Yes.

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You also raise on page 2 the issue of staffing where you say that, "The Police Communication Centres are reliant on staff being specifically trained and in times of demand, capacity can only be drawn from those currently trained staff"?-- That's correct.

And you say that, "This limits the ability of most Police Communication Centres to maintain any enhanced capacity for long periods"?-- It poses challenges, yes.

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Where are staff to operate police communication centres recruited from?-- They're recruited from within the public service environment. You have unsworn and sworn staff that make up the composition of the staff at the centre.

Is there a recruitment process that takes place to ensure that the PCC staff are suitable to working in triple 0 call centres?-- Yes, there are.

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Is that undertaken before they are accepted into the training required of PCC staff?-- Yeah, there is an interview process as part of the recruitment, a selection process, and then the training process builds on that.

Is there any type of attributes that you are looking for when you are seeking staff to work in these centres?-- Usually it's not specific, as in a certain set of criteria, but the general ones that you look for would be maturity, level headedness, calmness, ability to make decisions, the ability to assess information, ability to record.

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Now, is it the case that the information that you provided in this statement in relation to training is only in relation to the training that is provided at the Brisbane Police Communications Centre?-- That's correct.

What is your knowledge about the training that is provided in

other police communication centres?-- I understand that they use the Brisbane police communications training manuals and programs but they are adapted to the environment with which that training has to be provided. For example, a smaller centre may have a one-on-one training environment available to them whereas in Brisbane, for example, our current course has eight members on it. So it is more regimented for the time frame.

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If I can take you to page 3 of your statement where you state the training for police communication centres across Queensland is a regional responsibility?-- That's correct.

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So are you aware of the modules or the components that make up the training for PCC staff in regions?-- I'm advised that they - as I said, they all come off our training skeleton, if you like, and are adapted to that regional environment and, for example, the IMS system as opposed to the CAD system. So it would be that each of the regions would adapt a majority of that course but then tailor some specifics to their region.

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Let's just move on to the courses that BPCC staff officers are required to undertake. You say that the training that is offered is set out in page 3. They're the following training courses that are offered?-- Yes.

If I can take you to the call takers course?-- Yes.

The nine weeks course. Is that a minimum standard that is required before police officers take triple 0 calls?-- That is for Brisbane.

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That is for Brisbane. So if we can just go across the page where you say that, "All staff working within the Brisbane Police Communications Centre from A03 level" - so that would be civilian?-- Yes.

"To Sergeant are required to complete the Call Takers Course prior to attending the Communications Room Operators Course (Radio)"?-- Correct.

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Are officers also then required to complete the communications room operators course before they take triple 0 calls?-- No, they would - they would do the call takers course first and then be placed on the floor to receive calls. Then at an appropriate time they would be able to do the radio operator's course before being allocated a different task, as in the dispatch process.

If you could assist me at page 7 where you say that, "Operators will not start taking calls without direct supervision from a qualified call taking at the BPCC until they have completed the 9 week Call Takers Course including a period of mentoring"?-- Yes.

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Can you just assist, is it the case that officers who wish to work in the BPCC first of all have to complete a nine-week call takers course?-- Correct.

In that nine-week call takers course, that may include a period of mentoring?-- A period of one to two weeks of mentoring.

Within the course?-- Within the course.

After that course, can they then take calls without direct supervision?-- Yes, they can but our process is that they would be placed alongside an experienced call taker just to make sure that they have support and in case they come up against a difficult call or some problems with the processes that are required. So they wouldn't be left alone in a room to take calls by themselves and isolated.

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Now, if you can go back to page 4 where it sets out the components that are covered in the call takers course. Is this assessed?-- Yes.

Within this course is training given to how to answer a call appropriately?-- Yes.

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And what information to seek?-- Yes.

And that's within the call takers course?-- Yes.

Now, this call takers course is not implemented across the state as you know. Regions may take bits and pieces from the call takers course. Is that how it works?-- I would suggest not bits and pieces. The majority of the course would be taken from Brisbane and applied in the regions. It may be condensed in a timeframe because of the one-on-one training opportunities that may arise in smaller centres and it may have some additions or deletions in relation to that particular region.

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Can you advise whether the call takers course in some form is being implemented right across the state?-- Yes.

Every PCC across the state is using a form of the call takers course?-- A form, yes.

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A form?-- Yes.

Would it go as long as nine weeks?-- I don't think so. I think it would probably be compressed in the smaller areas because of that one-on-one opportunities that may arise.

Would it cover all of the components as set out on page 4?-- I would expect that it should.

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Is this information from the call takers course, is that disseminated across the state to all the PCCs?-- Yes, it is.

Are you aware whether the PCCs have a training regime where they have trainers in those PCCs to take the calls?-- Specific trainers, I don't think any of the other call centres do because of their size and I think Brisbane would be the

only one that has a dedicated training system.

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Should there be a standardised training that all call operators who are taking triple 0 calls should come to Brisbane or large regional centres to undertake the same training?-- I believe so.

So the training that is offered by the BPCC should be the same training that is offered across the state in every PCC?-- I think it is optimal to have consistent training across the whole of Queensland.

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Madam Commissioner, would that be a convenient time?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, it would. 10 o'clock tomorrow.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 4.30 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY

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