

Transcript of Proceedings

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THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

MS E WILSON, Counsel Assisting

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

DALBY

..DATE 20/04/2011

..DAY 9

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.00 A.M. AT DALBY

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

MR URE: Excuse me. If it please the Commission, my name is Ure, U-R-E, initials S N. I am instructed by King & Co Solicitors, and I appear on behalf of the Local Government Association of the Queensland on behalf of the Western Downs Regional Council.

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Ure.

MS WILSON: Would you like us to announce our appearances, Madam Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER: I don't think it's necessary. There are no other changes. I will simply put that on the record. That's right, isn't it?

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MS WILSON: Yes. Thank you, Madam Commissioner. The Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry is sitting today in the Western Downs Regional Council Chambers in Dalby. The Western Downs Regional Council is among the 20 largest councils in Queensland. It is amalgamation of the previous local government shires of Chinchilla, Murilla, Tara, Wambo, Taroom and the Dalby Town Council, also encompassing the towns of Jandowae, Miles, Wandoan and the Condamine, amongst many others.

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Major flooding occurred across this region from 21 December to 17 January 2011. The Western Downs region was declared a disaster situation on 28 December 2010 and this was also extended again on the 11th of January 2011. There were at least seven different floods throughout the Western Downs, spanning December 2010 and January 2011. This flooding caused extensive damage to property, livestock and infrastructure throughout this region. Hundreds evacuated from their homes and had to deal with the impact of the disaster.

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The first flooding event in Dalby occurred on December 27 2010, and at various times throughout the weeks that followed evacuation centres throughout this district assisted Dalby residents and evacuees from the greater Western Downs.

The Dalby Water Treatment Plant was flooded on two occasions, causing the water supply of Dalby to be compromised and requiring water to be delivered to residents in bottled form. Level 6 water restrictions were put in place and water consumption was closely monitored by the council.

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The town of Condamine flooded twice, first on 30 December 2010 and then again following the rapid rise in the river. The river height peaked at 14.6 metres on 14 January 2011.

The first evacuation of Condamine was initially a voluntary

evacuation but due to a changing assessment of the potential disaster at hand, it became a mandatory evacuation for all residents. A little before midnight on the 30th of December, all residents, with the assistance of Miles police officer, Ben Wiltshire and emergency services, were safely evacuated from the Condamine. Residents returned on 6th of January only again to have to self-evacuate on the 14th of January 2011 when the river rose once more, inundating homes and businesses.

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Photographs prepared by the DERM, the Department of Environment and Resource Management, graphically shows the extent of flooding in Condamine. Madam Commissioner, I will tender that photograph.

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COMMISSIONER: You want to tender it now?

MS WILSON: Yes, please.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 108. That's the town of Condamine, an aerial flood photograph.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 108"

MS WILSON: The town of Chinchilla flooded on 28 December 2010 and again on 12 January 2011. Premises were left without power and some were forced to evacuate from their homes. Chinchilla residents had to boil water following the second flood event until receiving the all clear from the council.

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Apart from Dalby, evacuation centres were set up in Miles and Chinchilla, and in a cooperative arrangement between disaster management personnel and private enterprise, Queensland Gas Company work camp "Wyndebri" facilitated evacuees on site, providing food and bedding.

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The first task for the Commission pursuant to the Terms of Reference is to provide an interim report due on the 1st of August 2011 on matters associated with flood preparedness to enable early recommendations to be implemented before next summer's wet season. To that end, we will also examine any practical or legislative changes that will contribute to a more effective response by government agencies.

Today we will call witnesses, including residents from Chinchilla, Tara and the Condamine, who will raise issues, including the adequacy of warnings and information about flood levels. A common theme arises about a lack of warning received of the impending water that, although not causing loss of life, could sometimes be the difference between the preservation of property and livestock that can often be essential to a person's livelihood.

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Any communication gap between the local government and State

agencies involved in the district and local disaster management became privy to this information and when service received by the community will be explored.

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Another issue raised by residents is the distribution of information generally concerning disaster preparation, such as evacuation centres' location. This issue is arising at a number of localities across the State and the way in which people are educated and informed about what to do in times of disaster will be explored.

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We will call Christopher Artiemiew, the Area Director, Central, Southwest Region of Emergency Management Queensland. Emergency Management Queensland, EMQ, is responsible for the SES and it is of interest that we will also call an SES volunteer from Condamine who will give evidence about his experience during the floods and the lack of information provided to the residents of Condamine concerning the rising waters in relation to the first flood.

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Issues are raised by Douglas Bougoure, a Western Downs Regional Council employee, concerning his frustration at the bureaucracy when attempting to arrange a re-supply for the Tara community, a region that has been declared a disaster. Council had arranged a plane to resupply food staples to Tara but were directed by EMQ Toowoomba to get three quotes before food could be transported. In the circumstances, this was not possible and appeared to be ignorant of the urgency required to action such requests in times of disaster.

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Senior Sergeant Antony Chase was the district officer at Dalby from the 4th of August 2010 until the 2nd of January 2011 when relieved by Inspector Terry Kajewski. As the acting district officer, he also assumed the role of Dalby District Disaster Coordinator for that period.

We will also hear from Inspector Terry Kajewski, and one of the issues he raises is the impact of local government boundaries not being in alignment when directing disaster management in regions outside their normal jurisdiction. For example, the towns of Miles, Condamine and Taroom and Wandoan are in the Roma Police District but now come under the governance of the Dalby Disaster District. He suggests that the realignment of these boundaries would assist in command and control of police resources during further disaster events. This issue will be examined and ultimately has relevance across Queensland.

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Sergeant Ben Wiltshire is the officer in charge of the Miles Police Station. He was a vital member of the local disaster group in Miles coordinating meetings in December 2010 to prepare the community for the impending floods. He was of great assistance in facilitating the evacuation of all Condamine residents in the first major flood on the 30th of December 2010. He provides an assessment of the way in which various emergency and government agencies drew on each other's resources to facilitate evacuations and resupply.

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Ray Brown, the mayor of Western Downs Regional Council, and Phil Berting, the CEO, will also give evidence detailing the planning, preparation and response of the council. They will provide recommendations based upon their experience of these flood events.

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The Commission's work does not stop after these hearings are concluded in Dalby. These public hearings are only a part of the Commission's process. There are matters that need further clarification and investigation - this will be done - after the hearings and within the time constraints of meeting the report deadlines.

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Madam Commissioner, may we adjourn for just a short period before we call our first witness?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We will adjourn.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.10 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.22 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Mr Glen Taylor.

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GLEN LESLIE TAYLOR, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Glen Leslie Taylor?-- That's correct.

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And you have a farm outside the Condamine?-- That's correct.

And you farm cotton and grain?-- That is correct.

And it consists of about 5,000 acres?-- That's correct.

Have you made a statement for the Inquiry?-- I have.

Could I show you this document?-- Thank you. Yes. All correct.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 109.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 109"

MS WILSON: Now, you have been living in the district since 1972?-- That's correct.

And you have been involved in a number of floods since 1972?-- Yeah, I have.

Which ones stand out in your memory?-- '83, 1983, 5/5, we had a river height of 14.6, and, of course, our last one in the New Year. 10

Okay. Now, you heard me say in my opening the height of the flood of the Condamine River exceeded 15 metres?-- I did.

When did that occur?-- This occurred on 1/1/2011, 15.25, and the second time we evacuated was 16/1 and it was 14.67.

Now, you have been a member of the State Emergency Services?-- Thirty years. 20

Okay. You work for the SES, the State Emergency Service?-- State Emergency Services under Emergency Management.

In Condamine?-- In Condamine, yes.

Can you explain to me the organisation of SES in Condamine?-- Okay. We have originated back in the late 70s. We were all community-minded people out there and then the State Emergency Service was put under the umbrella of the police department, and Greg Wilson was our man then. We had a police sergeant and a secretary in Toowoomba - they certainly looked after us - and we had a marvellous council who provided us with buildings, equipment, flood boats - this is our second flood boat - and all the training that we required, and in the early stages we had up to 30 members and I think the Emergency Services had volunteers of about 36,000. 30

How many members have you got now?-- We have got about four. 40

Okay. Now, you are the deputy controller?-- That's correct.

Who's the controller?-- My controller is Billy Power.

Okay?-- He is semi-retired and he has been there the whole stint as well.

So, there's you and Mr Power and two others?-- Oh, we have new recruits that have all signed up since the flood, but it's the regulation side of things that are really stemming our progress in volunteers. 50

So, at the time of the floods, there was four of you in the Condamine who were working?-- Who were legally SES members, yes.

You have had flood boat training?-- Yes.

Now, if I can take you to the 30th of December 2010?-- Yes.

Now, on the morning of that, the river was still rising?-- It was.

Now, you say in your statement at paragraph 6 - have you got a copy of your statement there?-- I have.

Can I take you there?-- Yep. Yes.

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You say you could not get any information on the heights regarding the river?-- Yes. This is one of our main problems. We just - I went up there on the Boxing Day. Billy Power, my controller, called us up and we got all our boys together and that's - when I say all of us, there are a lot of people in town that do assist us - and we had our meeting and we sat there for a couple of days wondering - working on our old previous flood heights that came in '83, was our highest one, and like I said there, we just - we were trying to get information from the Met Bureau from their readings, we tried to ring our people up the river a bit, but they have since moved on. We used to always have people up the river just below Chinchilla that we could ring and get some honest heights and things. Well, that was gone, and yeah, that was-----

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I will just stop you there about ringing the farmer in Chinchilla-----?-- Mmm.

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-----about honest heights. How would they get the honest heights?-- Well, they lived on the river and they used to - all our previous floods, they used to be able to go down and they made marks on their trees and things and they had - could tell us what it was doing.

Okay. So, it wasn't in terms of measurement, it was just where the water was on on the tree?-- Yeah, that's correct.

Okay. And then they would ring through-----?-- Yes.

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-----to you?-- They would ring through. Nearly every day we'd have a - in the previous floods, they'd let us know what the height was doing, coming up or down, and when we'd have about two to three days for that water to come from Chinchilla to the Condamine.

Okay. So, is it the case that you know when the water hits that mark or a mark on a tree that you know to a certain degree what-----?-- Well, they just say, "That's what it was - that's what it peaked in '84 or '83.", and we knew it was there and then that was 14-odd in Condamine.

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Okay. Now, that property has now since been sold?-- Yes, we haven't got contact with those folk any more.

So, you no longer had access to that?-- We didn't have access to that gentleman.

Now, on the morning of the 30th of December, John Fry from Ergon Energy came to the town?-- He certainly did, good mate of mine, John. He's a great fellow and he just - he got out of the chopper and he said, "We're here" - there was six of them - to turn off all the power from every home a metre above 14 metres, and that's when I said to - I said John, "You better come with us, we better go and ring - we will go up and see Bill.", because I said that-----

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Bill Power?-- Bill Power.

Yes?-- I said, "That will be half the town."

Okay?-- Or more.

And then did you and Sergeant Bill Wiltshire-----?-- Yes.

-----and Bill Power have a meeting?-- Yes, we did, we - we got on to Ben and Helen Thomas at the council in Miles and Ben flew in, he came over and said - you know, "Where do we start, boys?", he was very - because he's a new sergeant out there, and he hadn't - he's only been there six months, and we started to explain - we had a meeting with Ergon in our SES shed and they clarified it was going to go to 15 metres at least, and we all pressed warning buttons and said, "We better let the townspeople know.", called a meeting down in front of the pub, and that was at 2 o'clock, and the waters - we were standing in water in front of the hotel then which was about - just about under 14 meets - just over 14 metres, and we were told we could - it was going to be a voluntary evacuation. Once that happened, someone in the crowd said, "Oh, well, we just heard on the ABC that we're going to be mandatory evacuated.", and we said we didn't know anything about that, the sergeant and ourselves. Then we told them what was happening, we said we have got voluntary, we had about 20-odd people that wanted to leave town, most of those were travellers, and we were heading back up in our car - up to the SES shed and Ben's phone rang again and he said, "We're going back, boys. It's mandatory."

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Okay. And where were - do you have any idea where Ben was getting that information from, that's-----?-- Oh, he was talking - by that stage, he was well hooked up - he was hooked up with Dalby here, the police that were coordinating the show.

Now, the SES in Condamine, who's your contact outside Condamine to get information?-- Okay. We worked through the Darling Downs regions based in Toowoomba, Bob Bundy is the boss man and Chris-----

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Yep?-- -----and the crew down in Toowoomba. Being - being the Christmas holidays and things we tried contacts and things and I think Bill may have spoken to them - I haven't read Bill's statement - he may have spoken to someone at Emergency Management at Toowoomba, but we were mainly dealing with Helen Thomas and the police, the council and police was where

most of the dealings were coming from.

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And to your knowledge, was the SES getting any information about the river heights from the SES?-- No, but I'm not always in the SES yet either. Bill was up there most of the time.

Okay. Now, if I can just take you to paragraph 16, which is your recommendations, and your first recommendation is that, "Property owners need to install gauges so that local networks can monitor the rise and progress of flood waters."?-- That's true.

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And do you think that it should be the residents to have that or should it be another government agency?-- Well, look, it worked very well in the previous years. I do feel that electronic devices down the river, I can take people down in the boat now and show them where we did have a few that were doing other things. Well, they're not there any more.

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Very expensive things to erect and maintain. Technology again, it just doesn't work where you want it to. Where if we had the - the Queensland Gas people have offered their services, Wyndebri to read meters if we put them up there and - but it was all very awkward. It was all a very different sort of a flood because there was - we had a lot more water round us and heavy rain that we didn't have before.

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COMMISSIONER: Could I just ask you a couple of things?-- Yes.

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You referred to automatic gauges that aren't there anymore?-- Well, they weren't - we saw them down the river, downstream. In March we went down in the boat and they were erecting - someone was, we don't know if it was Fisheries or who was, but they were under water and two of them were under water when we went down in the boat and we've been down since and they're not there.

When you're talking about residents having gauges, are you just talking about manually-----?-- Manual people on the river that - contacts that are on the river itself. Just a - just a couple, like we had the person in Chinchilla because, like I said, we had three days' notice. We knew it was going to be 14 metres there; it was going to be 14 metres at our place.

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Thank you.

MS WILSON: Paragraph 18, you say that in your opinion there was very little consultation from a local level about issues in Condamine from the EMQ. Could you explain that to me?-- Well, it was a frustrating time and I know all the people at EMQ have been very good in consulting with us. But we just - we had Bob Bundy, we had them out there during the flood itself, and they - and Carl and Chris, they were there, with all the fire department and everyone else. But we just didn't - yeah, we just didn't seem to have the - before we used to always worked to emergency management but now it's-----

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Sorry, I didn't quite hear you?-- Before we always worked to emergency management or SES back in the previous floods but now since the new regime, council has taken over, the police department were running it from here and it just didn't - it just wasn't the same sort of situation at all that we used - we used to have a fair bit of control of its ourselves and knew what we were going to do, but this time we were just over regulated and just - we were floundering for a little while until we took charge.

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Until what, the SES took charge?-- Well, the police, the - Bob, our local sergeant and ourselves, and Helen and the council, we sort of - we sort of had to go and do our own thing.

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So you say that you were floundering for a little while until the local SES and the local police officer took charge?-- And the community.

And the community?-- The whole community.

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Is your complaint that you weren't getting any direction from management?-- Well, direction we - we were getting was sort of contradicting itself. The left hand didn't sort of know what the right hand was doing.

Can you give me an example of that?-- Oh, I can give you an - every day there was an example of some silly little bureaucratic thing but it was-----

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Can you just give me one?-- Okay. Well - oh, look, I don't want to go into that sort of thing honestly, I bloomin - because it's just little silly things that shouldn't have happened. But we - I was told that I - after the 14th day I was in my flood boat. It was in the second flow. A big fire truck pulls up at the western side of town and says, "Boys, you can't run that boat across until we get ourselves ready. We're the swift water fellows." And I said, "Okay", and I said, "Well, I'll just take these people over, I'll come back and we'll take you for a drive." Took them for a drive and they sort of said, "Okay, that's a bit out of our league." They are great fellows and they worked very hard for the whole day and they were going to get down a rugby dingy with pump up - with paddles and they were going to save us if our boat went over.

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Right?-- Just silly little things. That's one. We couldn't take trucks and things across the river, across our bridge when we were trying to clean up because we had a five tonne limit on it yet the army were flying bloody rubber duck - their trucks across in the second flood for half the day and then they were stopped because the Main Roads fellow came down and said, "The bridge is shut. We've got a hole in it." Well, the hole that was in the bridge has been there since '83. Just silly little things. Care packs came in, a load of care packs, eight tonne of it came in in an eight-tonne truck. Thank God the fireys were there that day. And I had to load it all on the boat, two tonne of water or more, 600 care packs, across the river. Got them into Condamine, got them up into the church. I said, "Gee", I said, "Rockhampton are going to be upset." I said, "There's only 150 people in Condamine and we've got 600 care packs." Silly little things. But they all meant well but they just didn't dovetail.

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You say in paragraph 19, "From the SES stand point, the constant need for accreditation and renewal training is killing the membership in the area"?-- It is in the west. I don't know how it goes on over the range. I know it is a different situation altogether. But we have got highly skilled fellows out there that we're signing up now that helped us in town, head of contractors, bloomin earth moving mob, boys - just local fellows that want to be involved but they cannot go and do all the accreditation and courses that the emergency services want us to do now.

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But you do accept, don't you, that training is essential?-- Oh, it's gone - it's gone up to here. Regulation is just

about choking all you people and it's - if it's going to keep going, you won't - we'll just go back to doing what we used to do in the community because no-one can keep the standards up to what they want us to do. And that's the feeling all the people in - the Miles group have started up again. They've got some volunteers and they're trying to do the right - get their courses going and doing things. But as for Condamine, well, our biggest hassle has always been floods or searches and-----

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But in relation to, for example, flood boats, you need to have training to operate a flood boat?-- Well, I've - yes, we've done - we do, but we need competent bloomin - if you look at the flood photos you see on TV, people are in these flood boats with bloody long overalls, hard hats, boots and they're a danger to themselves. If they go overboard they're gone. We go out with our rubber boots on, shorts and our life jacket, and a big hat and sunscreen. The regulations things they want us all to do was a two-day course for two weekends and you have to upgrade it all the time. Come for a run in the river when it's flooding and we can teach you, everything. It is frustrating. I love - we love being in it and we've got a lot of good people that mean well and want to help us but the regulation is going to - well, it is stifling, I feel, the emergency services.

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Thank you, Madam Commissioner. That is the evidence of Mr Taylor. Thank you, Mr Taylor.

COMMISSIONER: Do you see any alternative for local training?-- Sorry?

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Do you see an alternative of local training of volunteers?-- Look, yes, but the emergency management is trying to have local people doing it but we can't go to the courses to get our instructors up to the standard that they want to come back home and teach our - in the early stages we had people coming up from Brisbane for a weekend and it worked really well. They were ex-SAS fellows and policeman one and we just bang, bang, bang. We learnt more in a bloomin afternoon than what you would looking at a screen for two days.

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So that's the sort of thing you think?-- Just practical things - practical things, because all of our volunteers are very competent people. And there is another thing I didn't put in my statement, that's competency and commonsense. That's what we want to bloomin work on because it's - we feel it's just - just gone over the top.

Right?-- But we're still there and we got through it. And if we had have been doing it the way I was supposed to with only people in my boat at a time and everyone else - we'd still be there. And I'm supposed to sign everyone on that got in the boat, and I'm just on the boat side. Bill's up there in helicopters. And Murray Harton wrote - it is a lovely poem. One day you might have time to listen to it and it just - it just puts all the facts exactly where they are.

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Ms McLeod, I might ask you.

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MS McLEOD: No, questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

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MR URE: I have nothing.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, may the witness be excused?-- Thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Robert Sanderson.

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ROBERT PARR SANDERSON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Robert Parr Sanderson?-- That's correct.

And you reside at Sunnyside, a property near Condamine?-- That is correct.

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And Sunnyside is a 3,000 acre property?-- Correct, yep.

And you farm cattle and grain?-- True.

And you have been living on this property for the last six years?-- That's correct.

Now, did you sign a statement before the Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yep.

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And this statement is signed the 12th of April 2011. I'll just show you the statement?-- That's correct. That's it.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 110.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 110"

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MS WILSON: Now, on the 22nd of December you left your property to go to Tambo to celebrate Christmas?-- That is true, yep. Correct.

On the 28th, did you have a conversation with your uncle?-- I did have a conversation with my uncle and he told me that it looks like it is going to be a fairly big flood and get back to home and start preparing for it.

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Now, your uncle had been - is 65 years and he's lived in the area for part of his life?-- Part of his life - well, most of his life, yes.

So you got told by your uncle there is a flood and you should go back home?-- That's correct, yep.

How did you get back home?-- We chartered a helicopter from Tambo and flew us back into home as we couldn't - couldn't drive in there because the flood waters were too high at that stage so we flew back in.

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Okay?-- My brother and I - my brother came with me and my family stayed at Tambo, my wife and child, and my brother came with me.

You say in paragraph 3 that you did not receive any official warning and acted only under the advice of your elderly uncle?-- That's correct, yep. 1

Were you looking for information?-- We weren't looking for it but it came to us on the television and we sort of knew it was raining. When we left Condamine to go to Tambo, the river was rising. So we had a fair idea that, you know, it was on the cards so, you know, we were fairly prepared. And I think it was that - my uncle rang me because north of Chinchilla had a heap of rain and he said it will probably flood, and so we made the decision to go back to Condamine, to Sunnyside. 10

When you went back to your property you put whatever machinery you cut on to higher ground?-- Yeah, we took it to the neighbour's place, took all our machinery to the neighbour's place, and we stacked all our tools and everything in the shed onto Roundup shuttles and have everything on high ground and, yeah, we were just getting prepared because we couldn't go anywhere or do anything so we just got prepared if it was the worst scenario. 20

So on New Year's Day you say at about 11 o'clock you received significant flooding?-- Yeah, it was about, yep, 11 o'clock. Knew years' day we woke up at 4 in the morning and it was on our doorstep and then it just - it just kept coming so we-----

And the flood covered 1500 acres?-- That's correct.

About half your property?-- Yep, that's correct. 30

What did you lose because of the floods, what infrastructure?-- We didn't lose any stock or crops as we didn't have any crops down the river country. We lost fences, roads. That was about it. Pastures, obviously. They all died. But no machinery or significant losses as we were - you know, we prepared ourselves for the worst so we were - we were in the right situation at the time.

What about communications? What communications your receiving on your property?-- The only communications we had was the Internet because we still had our power. Our phone went out, I'm not sure about this but I think it was about the 29th it went out and it went out for a month, our landline. Where we live, we've got no mobile service. So we were just working off the Internet on river heights to give us a bit of an idea, which was a problem in itself because the original - the river heights we were getting with an automatic station was at Chinchilla Weir. There is another one at Bedarra, they call it Bedarra site, but it went after about - it was around about the 13 metres it went offline and it was never - never came back on. And Condamine is manually read but when they got evacuated from Condamine, it was some days it wasn't red, some days it was read twice a day and it was - it was all over the place. So really, the only information we had was from the automatic station at Chinchilla Weir. And at my neighbour's place, if we got up on the roof of his house we could get a little bit of service, mobile service, and I was actually 40 50

ringing Glen Taylor's son Sam every now and then. He was
texting me back the river heights in Condamine. So it was
about the only communication we had at the time.

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And I should have asked you this question: are you downstream
from the Condamine?-- We are. We're about 28 ks south-west
of Condamine, so downstream.

Okay. Now, you left your property about the 8th day of
January?-- Yep, the 8th day we left when the river went down
before the second flood and we - I got out and went to
Toowoomba and met up with my wife and child in Toowoomba and
stayed there till - till the water went down after the second
flood then.

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You say in paragraph 9, "As these river heights are extremely
important to predict flooding in our area", you think that
rivers should have automatic stations that report the heights
every hour?-- I do. I believe that Condamine should have an
automatic station in case they get evacuated again and there
is no-one there to read it or it's - it's there for people
who - downstream who can get a bit of an idea. I also believe
that the Western Downs Council were sending text messages to
people in the council area to self-evacuate and things like
that and I believe that there should be mobile towers along
the river, as in a high spot along the river, not on the river
obviously, so that people on the river can get communication
of some description to say, you know, what's coming.

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You did receive a text, didn't you?-- We received a text but
we received it because I was in Toowoomba and that's why we
received a text.

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That's because you could get mobile phone coverage?--
Mobile service in Toowoomba, that's correct.

So when you went back into mobile phone coverage, you received
a text about self-evacuation?-- No, the self-evacuation was on
the second flood and we were in Toowoomba before the second
flood, so it came through. Yeah, it wasn't a delayed message
at all.

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Just going back to the river should have automatic stations
that report the heights every hour, is that important for you
because you're constantly looking at the river height to
evaluate what you should do in relation to flooding?-- That's
correct, yes. In our situation with the flood, Chinchilla
Weir - once Bedarra went out, Chinchilla Weir was our only
one. And below Chinchilla Weir, between us and Chinchilla
Weir, there's Charleys Creek comes in, there's
Wieambilla Creek and a few other local little creeks. And
with Charleys Creek, there was a lot of water came through
there. So without - we didn't really know what was coming.
We couldn't read what was coming. We only - we knew it was
coming down the Condamine at the Chinchilla Weir but between
us and Chinchilla there's a lot of water comes into the river,
so.

50

But because you acted on your uncle's advice and went back the
your property, you were able to reduce your losses?-- That's
correct.

1

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. That is the evidence of
Mr Sanderson.

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: If the Commissioners please, I need to get some
instructions about the specific stations that Mr Sanderson has
referred to. Rather than trouble him with those, I think we
can - if there is any issue with them we'll raise them later
if that's convenient.

10

COMMISSIONER: You can find out what the situation is.

MS McLEOD: I can. I have got forecasts for certain periods
for Chinchilla but not those specific stations.

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COMMISSIONER: All right, thanks. Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure.

MR URE: I have nothing.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, may the witness be
excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, very much, Mr Sanderson, you're
excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Sylvia Naylor.

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SYLVIA NAYLER, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Sylvia Nayler?-- That's correct.

And you live in Chinchilla?-- I do.

And you live in Chinchilla with your husband Robert?-- I do.

10

Now, you've signed a statement for the Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- I have.

I'll get you to have a look at this statement, please. Now, attached to that statement is a document which is the prepared documents outlining issues arising from the Chinchilla floods?-- That's correct.

Can you tell me when that document was prepared?-- It was prepared after a debriefing meeting with the Western Downs Council.

20

And who prepared that document?-- I prepared the document.

Is that your notes from the debriefing, is it?-- Sorry, a correction. The first one was a questionnaire that was sent home from my husband's workplace and we worked on it together and we submitted it back to the council. Further paperwork is relevant to debriefing meetings at the council that I prepared.

30

Okay. So the first document that's there is the Organisational Service Director at Western Downs Regional Council?-- That's correct.

And that was the questionnaire from your husband's workplace?-- That's correct.

Where does your husband work?-- The Western Downs Regional Council.

40

The other document is the Western Downs conference After Flood Debriefing?-- That's correct.

When did that debrief occur?-- I don't have a date on the statement but it was approximately two weeks or three weeks later, after the second flood.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement and the exhibits.

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COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 111.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 111"

COMMISSIONER: Mrs Nayler, what was the debriefing? What was involved in that?-- The council called a meeting where residents of Chinchilla could express their concerns relevant to the floods and the care and information at the time of the floods.

1

I see. Thanks.

MS WILSON: Thank you. Now, you were at home on the 26th of December last year?-- Yes. I - I correct that, it was the 27th, the day the flood - yes.

10

Okay. And at your residence there was water across the road and it was creeping towards your front gate?-- That's correct.

Now, can you tell me how far your residence is away from any waterway?-- From a waterway relevant to a creek, it would be about a kilometre, but waterway relevant to a flood plain, perhaps six or 700 metres.

20

What is that flood plain when you said relevant to a flood main, what are you talking about there?-- When we have excessive rain the rain floods through a park that's situated outside our home.

On the 27th you were getting concerned about the rising water?-- That's correct.

You then rang the SES?-- That's correct.

30

And the SES then referred you to the Western Downs Regional Council in Dalby?-- That's correct.

And when you rang the Western Downs Regional Council you got a recorded message?-- I did.

That directed you to an after hours number at Chinchilla?-- That's correct.

40

So was it about 8 o'clock that you started making these phone calls?-- That's correct.

And then did you ring the Chinchilla council?-- I did.

And when you say Chinchilla council, what do you mean by that? Was it a service desk, or what do you mean by that?-- Well, just a young lady answered the phone and I explained to her that I had been given her number, the number. We were very concerned at the way the water was rising into our yard and could she please tell me did they have some sort of strategy to deal with what was happening with the water relevant to our home and she said to me, "Oh, just a moment, I'll get somebody to talk to you", and she went away. And, probably, I waited for about 10 minutes on the phone and then somebody came back and they said, "Oh, we will contact" - "We'll ring you back. We'll get back in touch with you and let you know what you have to do."

50

Can I just pause just there. And you have this conversation, was that about 9 o'clock?-- By that time it would be, yes, 9 o'clock.

So was it the case that from 8 o'clock to 9 o'clock you were ringing people constantly trying to find information?-- Absolutely, because, you know, when you're in a situation like that it's very difficult to know where to start and we went through the local telephone book and then we went to the Toowoomba telephone book and you're pausing and going through - go from this page to that page to get this number to that number and it was easily 15 to 20 minutes before we actually got to speak to a person.

10

So at 9 o'clock you got told that somebody would ring you back?-- Yes.

And when did someone ring you back?-- Well, we waited until 11 o'clock. The water was rising all the time and at 11 o'clock we had a phone call from the local policeman and he said to ask that - to get all the people and the vehicles off the property now and I explained to him, "Well, we have got three" - "at least three and four foot of water between our house and the road. How are we supposed to get out?" He said, "Lady, that's not my problem. That's your problem." And I said, "Well, you know, what should we do?" and he said, "That's your problem." And I said, "Well, the water is not, you know, up into the backyard yet. Perhaps I could ring my neighbour", which was the caravan park, "and ask him could we come out through his property", and he said, "Well, whatever it takes." And then I said, "Well, where do we go?" and he said, "Go up to the council hall. Make sure you take a pillow with you", and that was the information we received.

20

30

Did you ask the police officer if you should contact the SES?-- I did and I said, "Would there be somebody there that could help us? Should I ring the SES?" and he said, "That's up to you." I said, "Do you have the telephone number?" and he said, "Yes", and I waited for a couple of minutes and he found the telephone number and then when I tried to ring it, it was continually engaged.

40

So after these telephone calls then, did you and your husband make a decision to self-evacuate?-- We got in touch with the caravan park owner. We said, "Could we please cut down a section of your fence and evacuate out through your grounds?" and he said, "Yes, certainly", and so we took charge then. My husband, who is 65, went out into the rain with a hacksaw and trying to cut down the fence so that we could evacuate and it probably took us an hour or so to get to the stage of getting our vehicles out into the next property.

50

Once you got your vehicles out, did you come back then to the house to get out some personal items?-- Absolutely. We were working at the house then. We'd rung some people - we decided because I have a health issue that I couldn't possibly go to the council chambers and live rough there. So we rang around

and we got a friend. She said, "Yes, you can come to our place." So we were there working at the house to about 2 o'clock then, lifting furniture and getting, you know, food and paperwork and we evacuated ourselves at about 2 o'clock.

1

Now, how long were you evacuated from your house for?-- We were evacuated the first time for at least seven days that I recall.

You say the first time?-- Yes.

10

Was there another time?-- The second flood. We'd just moved back into the house, we got our place back to normal again and the second flood happened and this time we realised that we weren't going to get any help. So we decided, well, we've got to take charge ourselves and we started lifting our furniture and doing exactly what we did the first time, except this time we got our vehicles out through the front gate before the water rose. The second time the water rose a foot higher.

20

Now, in terms of warning that you got, were you listening to the radio or trying to get information that would assist?-- Well, obviously we had the TV on and we were, you know, watching the TV and any information that we got was from that source. But, of course, you know, the first time in a flood you just - it's all, "Wow", all, "...", you know. You're not really sure what you should do. It is all quite exciting to a degree where you get to the stage where you start to panic.

30

40

50

Okay. So, what about before the rain came? What information did you get from the council in relation to what you should do?-- None, none at all. There has never been any information that I'm aware of. I have lived there for 10 years, we have owned the house for 15 years, we have never been instructed by any way or means of the threat of a flood or what you should do in this eventuality.

1

Okay. Now, Ms Naylor, you took some photographs?-- I did.

10

Perhaps I can just show you some of these photographs?-- Yes.

Now, there we go. Now, just when was this photograph taken?-- That was taken after the first flood, after it had stopped raining, perhaps a day later. We went back to see how high the water had risen.

Okay. Can we see your house there?-- That's my house with the red roof.

20

Okay. Where was that photograph taken from?-- That was taken from the caravan park next door.

Okay. And how high did the water go? Did it come in to your house?-- No.

Okay. Now, your stumps, I think - how high are your stumps?-- The stumps at the back that you can see there, they would be about 1.5 metres high and at the front they're possibly twice that height. The land slopes down like that, so the stumps at the front are much higher than the stumps at the back.

30

Okay. Now, perhaps if we can see the next photograph? Now, when was this photograph taken?-- That was taken at the same time.

Okay. When you came back a couple of days later?-- Yes.

We can see the tank?-- Yes.

40

And did the water get higher than that?-- Not the first time, no, it had stilled at that point.

The second time did it get higher?-- Yes, it came about to about six or eight inches beneath the stump cap.

Okay. And is that at the front or the back?-- That's the back of the house.

Perhaps if we could see the next photograph, please?-- That's the front of the house.

50

Now, when did you take this photograph?-- That was taken at the same time.

And are you in the house?-- Yes, we'd gone in to the house and that was taken from the front veranda.

Now, we're looking in the distance. What's in the distance?--
As far as you can see, back there would be Charleys Creek,
behind that tree line is Charleys Creek, yep.

1

Perhaps if we can see the next photograph? That's again your
house?-- Yep.

When was that taken?-- All of these photos were taken on the
same day.

10

Okay?-- Yep.

Now, where was that photograph taken from?-- That was taken
from the fence line and that's my next door neighbour's house,
and the reason we took that was because they were in
Goondiwindi at the time and they had no - nobody was able to
access their home to turn off power or to help lift furniture.

Did you turn off your power when you left?-- My husband
turned it off when the water was waist deep, yes.

20

And if we can see the next photograph?-- That's the
neighbours - in the neighbours' backyard.

What is that? That seems to be a tent-like structure?-- Yes,
he keeps his caravan under it. It is just a little bit worse
for wear.

And the next photograph?-- That's friends rescuing their
chooks.

30

It seems the chickens are in the wheelbarrow?-- The chickens
were in the wheelbarrow and they were heading to get the
cockatoo out of the cage.

Now, we talked before about the debrief meeting?-- Uh-huh.

At paragraph 12 you say, "As a result of the community
consultative meeting I attended, the council indicated that
they knew the floods were coming."?-- Yes.

40

Can you give me some more information about that?-- Yes,
there was another lady present at the meeting and she asked
the question why did the council not warn the community that
the floods were coming, based on the fact that many of the
neighbours or many of the outlying farm people had been there
for many, many years keeping records and in times in the past
that information had been forwarded on with enough time to
help people, you know, do something about their situation
before it happened.

50

What was the council's response?-- The council's response
was, "Yes, along the river we have water meters but they have
all been washed away.", and my question then was, "Well, how
did you know the water was rising?", and they said "Oh, we
have a map and we were downloading information from the
internet.", and I said, "Could I please see the map and that
information and could I have a copy of it?", and they made it

available to me, and that was when I realised that the information was there in council's hands before the flood had got to the height that it had, and I believed that that information could have been used in a much better way to warn people.

1

Okay. Perhaps if you can have a look at these documents, please? What I am handing you is a map?-- Yeah.

And another document with some figures on it?--

10

Let's just go to the map first?-- Yep.

Was that the map you were handed at the meeting?-- Absolutely, yes.

We talked about before, we tried to particularise that time of that meeting?-- Yes.

Have you any idea when it was in relation to the flooding events, if we can work backwards from there?-- Well, on the bottom of this piece of paper it's 13/1.

20

13th of January?-- Yes, so it would have had to have been-----

Might have been some time after that?-- Yes.

Where was this meeting held?-- The meeting was held at the Civic Centre in Chinchilla.

30

Okay. How many residents came?-- To my knowledge, three.

And you were one of those?-- I was one of them.

How many members of council were there?-- To my knowledge, remembrance, at least 14.

And how did you know about this meeting?-- Because I have several people who knew that I was making notes because of the number of upsets that there were, they said, "You must go to a meeting that's being called at the council." I don't know how she had the information, but she passed it on to me and so I went, based on her giving me that information.

40

Okay. Now I will just take you back to that map you were looking at?-- Yes.

Can you just show that map and we will pass it around in a moment? If you could show it to Madam Commissioner and the Deputies? Now, there's some markings on that map. Who made those markings?-- The blue line-----

50

Yes?-- -----it was already blue on the council original.

Yes?-- As was the pink.

Yes?-- And after they gave me a photocopy, I made sure that I

coloured in exactly the same lines so that I knew that the documents were accurate to each other.

1

And what's the relevance of the blue line?-- The blue line is the flow of the river that comes up from - it starts here at Warwick, comes all the way up through Chinchilla, down to Condamine and down through to Surat, and the relevance of the pink is that's the rain that comes north of Chinchilla and when that rains there at Dark Creek and those places, it flows down into Charleys Creek, and so eventually around Chinchilla they meet and if there's any sort of a backlog, that's when the flooding occurs.

10

Okay. And what did the council representatives that day say in relation to the information that they held before the flooding in relation to that map?-- As part of the conversation, the person made the comment, "We knew the flood - we knew what was going to happen, we just panicked."

Okay. Do you know who that person was?-- Yes, I do.

20

Who was that?-- Her name was Tania Thornton.

So, "We knew that the flood was coming.", is that what they're telling you?-- Yes.

But they panicked?-- Yes.

Now, another document that I gave you was - had some figures?-- Yeah.

30

Did you also get that at the meeting?-- I did.

Okay. And there seems to be some highlighting on that document?-- There is, and that highlighting is particular to the Condamine River at the Chinchilla Weir and the - Charleys Creek, Chinchilla, so they were particularly marked as rising or falling as was pertinent, saying what heights they were at particular points and what time. So, at 8.20 a.m. on Thursday, it showed a height of 14.5 metres, which was 4.5 metres above the road.

40

And you were provided that document by the council?-- I asked for a copy and they gave me one.

And why was that document relevant to the discussions that occurred that day?-- It was relevant because we were talking about the markers that were on the river and, according to this, as I can see it, it appears to me that there are stations all along the river that - where markers are and so I was interested to see whether the markers and the indicators were on this map and, therefore, I assumed that, you know, it was information that was available and readily available.

50

Madam Commissioner, I tender the map and I also tender the figures attached to the readings.

COMMISSIONER: The map will be Exhibit 112 and the figures

attached to the readings, as you described them, will be Exhibit 113.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 1912 AND 113"

MS WILSON: Thank you, Mrs Naylor. They are all the questions I have for you.

10

COMMISSIONER: Mrs Naylor, are you pretty sure it was the 27th not the 26th?-- Yes, because Boxing Day was the 26th. We'd had all of the family at home.

You don't have to tell me why, just as long as you are confident?-- It was after they'd gone.

I might get you then to change your statement. So, if we get that exhibit. If you just change the date on it and put your initials next to it, nobody will get mixed up. Thanks for that. Ms McLeod?

20

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: No thank you.

30

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: Yes, thank you, Madam Commissioner. Mrs Naylor, there are just a couple of matters I would like to deal with. Can you go, please, to your statement and look, please, at paragraph 3? I am interested in the telephone call that you made to the person you describe as a receptionist from the Chinchilla Council. Do you see that?-- Uh-huh.

40

You say, "It was now about 9 a.m.."?-- Mmm-hmm.

Well, understandably you would have been very anxious at the time?-- Yes.

And I assume you weren't making notes or jotting down the time so you may recall precisely?-- It wouldn't have been precise but it was an - approximate, yes.

50

All right. Well, I suggest to you, in fact, that you made a call to the Chinchilla centre and it was 9.30 on the 27th of December 2010?-- What grounds do you suggest that?

Well-----

COMMISSIONER: You can't ask Mr Ure questions-----?-- Okay.

-----Mrs Naylor. You can either agree or disagree.

1

MR URE: Is that possible?-- No.

Not possible?-- No.

All right. And I suggest you spoke a young lady and you told her your name?-- Yes.

And your address, and that you you lived next to the caravan park?-- Mmm.

10

And that you were concerned because the water appeared to be rising about an inch an hour?-- Mmm.

And that you wanted to know how and where to move to. Does that all sound familiar?-- That sounds familiar.

And I suggest that she said that she would get somebody to call you back and you were called back by a policeman, but it wasn't at 11 o'clock, as you say in paragraph 5, it was, in fact, at 10.39?-- No, that's not correct.

20

So, I suggest that the two calls were separated by a little over an hour, rather than two hours?-- You can suggest that, but that's not right.

All right. And the police officer that you spoke to gave you the SES phone number and said to call the SES if you felt you needed assistance. Do you recall that?-- I asked where would we get assistance and he said would - I said, "Would I ring the SES?", he said, "Yes, you could."

30

And I suggest he also advised you that there was an evacuation centre at the Civic Centre?-- Yes, that's correct.

Right. Now, you said to the Commission that you received absolutely no information from the council. Do you recall that?-- I do.

40

Were you aware that the radio advertisements that you hear and the television advertisements that you see are in the main caused by the council to be published on those media?-- No, I wasn't aware of that.

COMMISSIONER: Which advertisements do you mean, Mr Ure?

MR URE: Alerts that Mrs Naylor was talking about that she heard on the radio and television, general sort of things?-- I didn't mention radio.

50

I'm sorry. Have you listened to the ABC Radio?-- At the time my radio was tuned to a Christian broadcasting station.

And did that particular broadcasting station interrupt the programming for flood alerts and things like that?-- No.

Were you aware that also on the 27th of December the council

organised for the area of Chinchilla that was going to be flood affected to be door-knocked?-- I wasn't aware of that.

1

You live in North Street?-- Yep.

Is that correct? I suggest to you that your house was door-knocked on the 27th of December at noon, but I think you have told us that by that time you would have been gone?-- No, I think - if I can recall, I said that we started to cut the fence down at 11 o'clock, which would have taken at least half an hour, and then we stayed on the property till 2 o'clock, lifting furniture and getting paperwork and food and, we did not vacate the premises until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

10

Well, I suggest that a police officer door-knocked the house - well, I can't be precise, but at noon door-knocked the residence?-- Well, he didn't, because we were there and there was no policeman came to our door.

20

All right.

COMMISSIONER: Could I just ask you, did you leave with the vehicles, though?-- No. I was there in the house the whole time and my daughter also was in the house with me while my husband was moving the vehicles to next door.

MR URE: I am not in a position to deal with the Ms Thornton circumstances. It's not in the statement. Thank you, Commissioner.

30

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: No re-examination, Madam Commission. Can Mrs Naylor be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mrs Naylor.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Deborah Cummings.

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DEBORAH JANE CUMMINGS, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

1

MS WILSON: Is your full name Deborah Joan Cummings?--
Deborah Jane Cummings.

Deborah Jane Cummings, I apologise. And did you prepare and
sign a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of
Inquiry?-- I did.

10

Can I show you that statement?-- Yes.

Now, is that the statement that you prepared and signed?-- It
is.

Now, you see at the top it says, "Deborah Joan Cummings."?--
It does too.

Now, perhaps-----

20

COMMISSIONER: You can change that.

MS WILSON: -----you should amend that?-- I guess I was
looking at the information more so.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 113.

30

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 113"

MS WILSON: Ms Cummings, you are, as you said, the owner of
the Condamine River Caravan Park which you purchased
in October 2010?-- That's correct.

40

Now, can you tell me where the caravan park is in relation to
any waterway?-- Approximately 120 metres.

Sorry, I didn't quite catch that?-- Approximately 120 metres.

Okay. From where?-- Probably from the - one of the
boundaries.

Okay. And which waterway are we talking about?-- Well, it's
the waterway that comes back, creeps back through the rivers
across there like that and it just creeps back, past the
police block, I believe, and the old hall, yes.

50

It's a creek?-- Not normally, no.

Not normally?-- No.

Okay?-- When I purchased it, it was just dry land.

When you purchased the caravan park, you were told the water from the river would come into the park itself but not into the home?-- That's correct.

Now, you had to evacuate on the 30th of December 2010?-- That's true.

How far did the water come on to your land before you evacuated?-- It was probably about 10 to 15 metres-----

10

Okay. And-----?-- -----from the house, yep.

And did water get into your house at any stage?-- It did.

How far in to your house did it get?-- Approximately 15 to 18 inches-----

Okay?-- -----inside.

20

Is that above the floorboards?-- Above the floorboards, yeah.

Let's just go to the 30th of December 2010. That was the day you were evacuated. You say in paragraph 3 you did not receive any warnings about the flood waters rising?-- I don't recall any warnings, no.

Were you looking, were you listening to the television or listening to the radio?-- At times, but not in a big way, because the caravan park was quite busy at the time, you know, between cleaning rooms and cooking and - it didn't sort of - and attending to people that were coming in to the park, didn't tend to listen to the radio a lot.

30

Okay. On the 30th of December, on that morning, did you have any contemplation that you would have to evacuate?-- No, I didn't really, no.

Now, during the day of the 30th, was the water rising quite rapidly?-- No more than, say, the day before. It was still coming up, it was moving all the time.

40

Okay?-- But I guess you're in - kind of in shock at the time, I suppose, in a way, you are not sure what's happening from minute to minute really.

Now, a meeting was called in town at 2.30 that day?-- Yes, at the hotel.

And the police sergeant and the SES ordered everyone to the meeting at the Condamine Hotel?-- That's true.

50

How did you know that you had to go to the Condamine Hotel?-- They arrived - I think it was Ergon and the police arrived at the caravan park.

Yes?-- And they came to see me. They came around to see me.

Yes?-- Yeah.

1

What did they say?-- That quite possibly we'd be evacuated today. It was quite a shock, I suppose.

Yes?-- Yep, and go to the meeting.

There was a meeting at the hotel at 2.30?-- Approximately.

Now, you said you'd been listening to the ABC Radio between 1 and 2 and that's when you heard that, "We are going to conduct involuntary evacuations at Condamine."?-- Well, actually I didn't hear that, my friend who was with me he heard it.

10

All right?-- Mmm.

So, before you went to the meeting, did you think that you were going to have to do mandatory evacuations?-- Didn't really think about that at all.

20

Okay. So, you went to the meeting?-- Yeah.

And at the meeting it was suggested that people should evacuate?-- If we wanted to at that point in time.

Did you want to?-- I was going to, yes.

Okay. And you say that, "About half an hour after the first meeting at the hotel we were told to attend another meeting at the SES sheds."?-- That's true, yes.

30

How did you get to know you had to go to the SES sheds?-- Just word of mouth.

Okay. Were you back at your caravan?-- I was at the house, yes. I actually didn't attend the second meeting, but I received information about what the consequences were.

And the consequences were that there was going to be a mandatory evacuation?-- That's right.

40

So, you were told, was it, from a friend that there's going to be a mandatory evacuation-----?-- And park people, park residents, yes, that were staying there. There were six stranded there as well and we all kept in touch.

So, you found at, what, about 3.30 there was going to be mandatory evacuation?-- Approximately. We had half an hour to gather our belongings together.

50

Okay. And then you went to the evacuation zone?-- That's right, yes.

And you say that you did not have a chance to put any furniture or things up to stop flood damage?-- Not at that time.

At paragraph 11 you say that, "You did not see the council at

all in the early part." What do you mean by that?-- Well, I don't recall anybody. There wasn't anybody to talk to about it, I suppose, about the flood.

1

What about before the flood, did you have any information about what to do in an emergency from the council?-- No, not really.

When you say "not really", did you have any-----?-- Pardon?

10

When you say "not really" did you have any?-- No, I had never dealt with a flood before, so.

And you were new to the area?-- Yes, that's right.

At paragraph 14 you say, "The SES and police appeared uninformed prior to the evacuation but were fantastic during the clean-up after the first flood." What do you mean when you say "they appeared uninformed"?-- We didn't - we didn't know exactly what was going to happen. I guess that's all I can say.

20

Who, the SES and the police?-- No, we didn't, but they did.

Right?-- They told us around - at the meeting, yes.

At the first meeting-----?-- That's all I-----

-----you attended at the hotel?-- Yeah. I think they might have said that we were - probably could be leaving that day, but, you know, a lot's happened since then, especially when you come back and you have to deal with the clean up and that.

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Thank you, Ms Cummings. That's all the questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

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MR MacSPORRAN: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

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MR URE: Just one matter, Commissioner. Mrs Cummings, as a caravan park operator, you probably have internet access; is that the case?-- I'm computer illiterate but my daughter does, she's got a computer.

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Were you aware that the regional council has a website?-- Probably.

And were you aware that-----?-- Actually-----

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Sorry?-- Sorry, I don't think we had a computer there because we'd only been there about two months and I was very busy at the time.

Are you aware that the website of the Western Downs Regional Council has a section particularly with respect to disaster management that gives advice with respect to floods, fires, et cetera, thing like that?-- Not really, no.

All right. I think you said that you didn't really listen to the radio alerts, is that right, or did I mishear you?-- No, I wasn't listening because I was an owner operator and-----

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Too busy?-- Busy enough with other things.

Are you aware that the council publishes media releases and they're then picked up by the media, television media, the print media, and the radio media? Are you aware of that?-- Mmm.

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Yes, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks. Any re-examination, Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: No re-examination, Madam Commissioner. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Ms Cummings. You are excused?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Sergeant Benjamin Wiltshire.

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BENJAMIN WILTSHIRE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Benjamin Wiltshire?-- Yes, it is.

And are you presently a Sergeant of police?-- Yes, I am.

And are you currently the officer in charge of the Miles Police Station?-- Yes, I am.

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Now, you have signed a statement on the 12th day of April 2011?-- Yes, I have.

Can I show you this statement, please? Is that your statement?-- Yes, it is.

Is that statement true and correct?-- Yes, it is.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 114.

MS WILSON: Now, have you got a copy of your statement?-- I don't have a copy here with me, no.

We will just wait one moment.

COMMISSIONER: 115.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 115"

MS WILSON: Whilst that is happening, can I just ask you a couple of questions. The officer in charge of the Miles Police Station, you held that position since May 2010?-- That's right.

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And the Miles police division includes the township of Condamine?-- Yes, it does.

And the surrounding area?-- Yes.

Now, you can look at it up there-----?-- Sure.

-----if you need to. On the 29th of December you say, at paragraph 11, you received information that flood levels of the Condamine River were expected to reach record levels and it was expected that six houses in Condamine would be inundated?-- That's right.

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Where did you receive this information from?-- I was in regular contact with the District Disaster Management Group at Dalby. I don't recall whether I got it directly from them or

from the Bureau of Meteorology, but I believe it was from Dalby.

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Now, when you were in direct contact with the District Disaster Management Group in Dalby, who were you actually speaking to?-- It varied from time to time.

Okay. Who were your contacts there that you-----?-- Usually Brett Hunter, but-----

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He's the sergeant, Brett Hunter?-- He is, yes, and then on occasions directly with Acting Inspector Chase, Inspector Kajewski or Inspector Bianci in the later stages.

The contacts that you were speaking there were in relation to the police?-- Yes.

Now, you also had a conversation that day with Bill Powers, who was with the SES in Condamine?-- That's right.

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And then he told you that he expected numbers of inundations at various river heights, but he was expecting numerous more inundations than what you first believed; is that the case?-- Yeah, I had a phone call from Bill at about 11, it was just after 11, where he had said that he'd received some information that the water was going to be a lot higher than what either he or what he'd believed was going to occur, and he gave me some rough estimates on what he believed that effect would have at different river heights.

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And can you just tell us what those rough estimates were at this point in time?-- If I can just refer to my statement?

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Sure?-- He's said that it's - about 14 and a half metres half the town would be inundated and at 15 metres the entire town would be inundated.

What time was this conversation around about?-- Just after 11 o'clock in the morning.

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So that's what he was telling you?-- Yes.

What information were you receiving from government sources?-- At that point we didn't have any estimates beyond that it was going to be around a record peak similar to - or around the 1942 peak of 14.25. At the time that Bill called me, he told me that it was already at 14.25.

So you then told Bill that you would try to get to Condamine to assist?-- Yes.

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How you did that was you hitched a ride with a helicopter that was going back into Condamine?-- He wasn't going to Condamine but he was kind enough to divert that way for me, yes.

You found a helicopter in Roma?-- In Miles.

Sorry, in Miles. It had come from Roma and landed in Miles?-- Yeah, it was based in Roma. It was in Miles just refuelling for the 10 minutes and I asked him if I could get a ride to Condamine.

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And he obliged?-- He was kind enough to do so, yes.

And that was Peter Clatworthy?-- Yes, of M1 Helicopters.

Did that take him out of his way for you to get there?-- Yeah, it did, yeah. He was picking up someone from a property between Miles and Chinchilla and delivering him to - I don't recall where he was taking him to, but he wasn't going to Condamine. He had to go to Condamine to help me.

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So it was a bit of luck that you were able to get that ride into Condamine?-- Very much so, yes.

Did you try to access any police helicopters or government helicopters to be able to get there?-- In relation to the first comment, police helicopters, the - government helicopters, no.

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Now, when you arrived you met the Condamine SES controller Bill Power?-- Yes.

And the deputy controller Glen Taylor?-- Yes.

You did a tour of the town?-- Yes.

And after that tour you then spoke to Acting Inspector Simon

Chase, who was the Dalby District Coordinator?-- Yes.

1

Dalby Disaster Coordinator?-- Yes.

Now, at that point in time, voluntary evacuations were being considered?-- At that point I wasn't aware of any decisions that had been made from Dalby. I started to gain some interest, I guess, in voluntary evacuations as to who was prepared to leave at that time if voluntary evacuations could be arranged on that day.

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And you called a meeting at the Condamine Hotel?-- There was a natural gathering of people at the Condamine Hotel and word had spread that - I guess, that we were there considering things. So it was an impromptu town meeting at that time and, yes, I addressed the town in a meeting there.

Now, was it your decision to address the town that they really should consider voluntary evacuations or did you get that direction from Inspector Simon Chase?-- No, I believe that was my decision to gauge the level of interest in evacuation.

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What was the interest?-- Twenty-eight people said they would like to evacuate on that day.

And how many were at that meeting?-- I don't know how many were at the meeting. Another request I've made of Bill Power from the SES was to find out how many people were in town, because that can be very fluid.

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Mmm?-- And he estimated around 135.

And the people that expressed an interest, did you action that interest so that they could be evacuated?-- I got their names and I then spoke again with Inspector Chase.

How did you anticipate that they could be evacuated?-- I was - I was going to leave that to the - to the Dalby District Disaster Management Group. I would have anticipated by helicopter.

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Now, things moved very quickly after that meeting?-- Yes.

And you were informed that there was mandatory evacuation?-- Yes.

And who were you informed - who told you that?-- Inspector Chase.

And that would have been almost an hour after that meeting, within an hour?-- Within an hour, yeah, I don't recall the exact time that I was told. It was somewhere around the 2 o'clock mark I think.

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Then how do you get that information - when you've been told by Inspector Chase that there is now mandatory evacuation, how do you get that information out to the town?-- At the first meeting at the suggestion of the SES in Condamine we arranged,

at the first meeting, that if there was anything that was going to change or if there were any announcements or any further information, that we would sound the SES siren. It is similar to an air raid siren I suppose you could call it. And that if that - if siren was to sound and if people could gather at the SES shed, we could address them from there.

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Now, at this point in time too the electricity had been cut to Condamine?-- No, not completely. I believe at that point electricity was being cut on a house by house basis. I don't recall whether it was that day or the next day that the main lines into the town were starting to - started to be shut off.

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Did you speak to the Ergon representative who'd come into town to cut the electricity off?-- I spoke to a number of the Ergon people, yes.

Do you know where they got their information that they should be there to come in and cut the electricity off?-- No, I don't.

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So after mandatory evacuation was declared, then helicopters came in to get the people out of Condamine?-- Yes.

Now, was there some delay in those helicopters coming in?-- There was. I think initially I was told they were going to be - to have people ready for helicopters at around 4 o'clock and then that was delayed a number of times and I think they arrived around quarter to 6.

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Were they told what they could bring?-- A small overnight bag was the advice that we were given. Initially, we were told they could carry small animals and take them with them. However, that changed throughout the afternoon and I was then told that they couldn't take animals with them.

I am going to ask you now about pets and animals. Were the residents concerned about leaving their pets?-- Yes, definitely.

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And was that an issue that was hampering the evacuation?-- It certainly made it a lot easier when people were told they could take small animals. There were a lot of people that were going to have to leave other animals, larger animals behind and they were understandably reluctant to do that.

And so, how did you deal with this issue about who is going to look after the pets?-- During the afternoon there was - I can't remember the time but during the afternoon and prior to - it was before dark, a group of young people who were going to be evacuated - young men who were going to be evacuated by flood boat approached me and asked if they could come back and help us the next day to look after the animals. At that point there were only going to be the four police plus Bill Power from the SES were going to be remaining in town. And as I'd been going through the town that afternoon, I began to realise the scale of the number of pets and animals being left behind and that it would be very difficult for us to

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undertake that job as well, looking after the animals. So we - I've agreed to let them come back in the next day.

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Now, if I can take you to paragraph 49 where you say, "Glen" - that's Glen Taylor - "and I agreed that the flood boat evacuations were to cease at dark due to safety issues and those remaining after dark would be evacuated by helicopter"?-- Yes. Yes.

What were the safety issues that were in play at that point of time?-- Well, the flood boat was operating over the Condamine River. It was unlit. There is no lighting around the river where the flood boat was operating. There was a large amount of debris coming down the river and operating at night, that would have been unable to be seen by the operator. The primary operator was Glen Taylor and I took his advice on the operation of the boat after dark and I agreed with his assessment that it was dangerous to operate after dark.

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On the morning of the 1st of January, you say at paragraph 6, "The water had risen further and again with the assistance of the group of the Condamine residents, we fed and rescued animals in the township. We also rescued property where possible and as a second priority to animals"?-- Yes.

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It seems by going through your statement the issue of animals keeps on arising?-- It was an issue that was, I guess, very close to the residents themselves when they were evacuated, and after the evacuation, the feedback we were getting from the evacuation centre was a lot of concerns about the animals. So that was, I guess, a significant part of what we were doing when we were left behind, was to do everything we could to make sure that those animals were looked after to the best of our ability.

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Have you got any suggestions how this could be dealt with better in the future, in flood events and dealing with animals?-- Not really. I think the way we handled it, whilst in an ad hoc basis, I think it worked well.

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Because it appears from what the residents say, some of the residents were reluctant to leave because of animals; is that the case?-- Yes, that's right.

And did it require some pressure from you to get them to leave?-- If you say - when you say pressure, there was no physical pressure, no-one was forced to leave.

No, of course?-- But, certainly, it took some persuading for some people to leave and I had to speak to a number of people on a number of occasions before they agreed to leave.

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And that was because of their animals?-- Animals and property but in a large part animals, yes.

If I can take you now to paragraph 72, you say that, "During the evacuation of Condamine and subsequent policing of the township there was some difficulty in establishing and

maintaining communication. This was largely due to the power loss in the township and subsequent failure of the mobile telephone tower in Condamine. This was overcome through the use of satellite telephones made available on the second day of the evacuation"-- Yes.

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Did the lack of communications hamper your response in Condamine?-- No, I don't think so. I think on occasions it was difficult to speak to the Dalby District Disaster Centre but I don't think it hampered our actions on the day.

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You say in paragraph 73 that, "During the initial phases of the evacuation I was the only officer present to conduct the evacuation until the arrival of army evacuation helicopters." So when you're talking about officer, are you saying police officer?-- Police officer, yes.

So up till that point in time were you the only police officer in town?-- Well, Condamine doesn't have a permanent or any police officer based in Condamine. It's policed from Miles and Miles was cut off from Condamine. So when I flew in by helicopter, I became the only police officer in town.

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And so, is it then the people that were managing the evacuation was you and the SES?-- Yes, it was - I had a lot of assistance from Bill Power and Glen Taylor from the SES and Andrew Smith from the - from the council and without those gentlemen, it certainly wouldn't have happened probably at all.

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You also talk in paragraph 73 that, "There was a very limited availability of helicopters and inability to direct task helicopters." Can you explain what you mean by that?-- On the - on the first day it was certainly directed by Dalby. It was - in that comment I refer more - more to the second and third days of the evacuation where we were following up the evacuation of the town with checking on residents up and down the river, making sure that they weren't isolated and in need of rescue. Telephones had been cut off by that point and a lot of - and mobile phone reception was down. So there were a large number of residents up and down the river that we had no idea whether they were still in their residence or whether they were in need of rescue. Glen Taylor certainly worked both of - all of those days going up and down the river checking on people and rescuing people. I think on the second day he evacuated a further 40 people that were in that vicinity from surrounding areas. But in relation to that comment, it was that from Condamine we were unable to directly task helicopters. We couldn't talk to helicopters. We didn't have helicopters on the ground. If we wanted to have a helicopter check on a residence or check generally if there were people stranded, we had to then pass that - pass each individual task back through to Dalby for each individual action. We didn't have the ability to have a helicopter in the town available to do those jobs immediately. And when the helicopters were tasked, we didn't have communications with those helicopters then.

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And so you couldn't even further task them to go-----?-- No. 1

-----to other places?-- No, no. If they were doing one task, we couldn't then task them to do another job as it arose. We had to pass that request back on to - back on to Dalby.

You say-----?-- Dalby did - sorry, I just want to follow that up. Dalby did the best they could with passing those on but we didn't have that direct communication or the ability to task from the - from the centre of where things were happening. 10

What would be required to have that ability?-- Well, in my assessment, the only way that you could do that directly would be through a police helicopter. I guess a secondary way of doing that would be to temporarily task a private helicopter to - to be on the ground at Condamine. However, communications with that helicopter would be very difficult then also, so. 20

You also say that, "There was exclusive reliance on private and military helicopters"?-- Yes.

Did private helicopters also come in and assist?-- Private helicopters that had been hired by the likes of Ergon, the gas companies, and even, I think, on a number of occasions private residents from around the area actually flew in in helicopters. On one occasion a private helicopter landed on the - landed on the oval and the pilot approached us and said he's had in the vicinity of 20 minutes' worth of fuel if we wanted to use him for anything. So we did use him to go and check on residents that we knew were isolated but we didn't know whether they were still there and whether they were okay. So on that occasion that was again luck that he was there at the right time and the right place to do those checks that we couldn't have otherwise done. 30

And how many people did you evacuate from the town ultimately by helicopter?-- By helicopter, I believe there was 84. There was another - as I said, there was an estimated 135 in town. So the remaining 50 or so were evacuated by flood boat to surrounding areas. 40

We pick that up again in 75 where you say, in your assessment, the only reliable method of travel, resupply or evacuation of remote persons during a flood event would be by a police helicopter?-- That's right.

And one of those reasons that you base that on is the ability to communicate directly?-- Yeah, the ability to communicate directly with the pilot or the operators and also to re-task them as needed rather than passing individual tasks on up to the Disaster Coordination Centre, no matter how well it's run, still takes away that ability of the commander, I guess, on the ground or the people on the ground to task as needed. 50

What about if a communication was able to be set up between the commander on the ground and the pilots of the

helicopters?-- If there was direct communication and a dedicated helicopter for that purpose, that would still work but it would be a dedicated helicopter with communications which then, I guess, becomes a police helicopter.

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What restricts you if you had the communication ability to be able to communicate with an ADF helicopter? Is there some rules and regulations that you can't direct an ADF helicopter where to go?-- Yeah, I believe the ADF operate on their own command structure. We can't direct them. Like, I would have to take advice on that but I don't know that we can direct military helicopters to do tasks if they haven't already been tasked by their own command structure.

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And so, for that to occur that had to go through Dalby and for that to be directed from Dalby?-- Yes, or even - or even for the - for the army helicopters, I believe that was directed from the state level.

From a state level?-- But you'd have - you'd have to speak to Inspector Chase on that.

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Certainly. So if you were wanting an army helicopter to go to a certain area to pick up people, you would have to contact the State Disaster Coordination Centre?-- Well, the procedure is I would contact Dalby and then Dalby would contact the state and then the state would contact the military, who would then task the helicopter.

And what was the lag in that, what was the lag time?-- I couldn't give you an exact time frame. I know that we wanted to check on these residents on the second and third day of the evacuation, so I guess the 31st of December and the 1st of January. I know that an army helicopter arrived on the 19th of January to do some of those checks on residences.

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Thank you, Sergeant Wiltshire. That's all questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod.

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MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have none, thank you.

MR URE: I have no questions.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: You wish Sergeant Wiltshire excused?

MS WILSON: Can the witness be excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Graham Cooke.

GRAHAM CECIL COOKE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Graham Cecil Cooke?-- That is correct.

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Are you an inspector for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service?-- That is correct, at Dalby.

You're an employee of Department of Community Safety?-- That is correct.

Do you hold in your work for the QFRS the role of Area Commander of Dalby?-- That is correct, Dalby Urban Command.

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Dalby Area Command?-- Urban Command for the urban division.

Can you explain to us what this role is?-- This role is actually looking after - I have a responsibility for the urban stations based at Dalby, Cecil Plains, Tara, Jandowae, Chinchilla, Miles and Meandarra and I have a responsibility to ensure that they are - those stations have sufficient staffing to respond to any incidents in their area and also to - I maintain a response capability or have a significant role to play in any major incident management.

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Can I show you this document, please. Have you got a copy of your statement there?-- I do have.

Just wait one moment and we'll get you a copy of your unmarked statement.

COMMISSIONER: You might want to go on questioning him while that's turned up.

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MS WILSON: Yes, Madam Commissioner. It is just about to come, Madam Commissioner. Can you have a look at that statement, please?-- Yes.

Is that your statement that you've made?-- That is correct.

Dated on the 7th day of April 2011?-- That is correct.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 116.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 116"

MS WILSON: If I can take you to the topic of swift water training?-- Yes.

At paragraph 5 you talk about swift water training?-- Yes.

And you say that, "Consideration was given to the technical rescue staff in west of the Range"?-- Yes.

"And the issue of not having swift water rescue teams in the Auxiliary Firefighter manned stations across the Dalby area"?-- Yes. Yes. 10

A couple of issues arise from that. How many swift water rescuers have you got in the Dalby area?-- No - we have no technical rescue staff in the actual Dalby area. Our technical rescue support capability actually comes from the permanent stations in Toowoomba and Warwick.

So if swift water rescue is required, you have to rely on personnel coming either Toowoomba or Warwick?-- That is correct, yes. We have a regional response capability from Toowoomba and Warwick. 20

How long would it take to get a swift water rescuer from Toowoomba or Warwick?-- If it's by road it will be an hour, because there's always swift water technicians and technical rescue technicians on - on shift in Toowoomba. So there's always two on per shift and so it's just a matter of responding as the call comes in. So, within an hour. 30

Is it true that when swift water rescue is required, it is an immediate response that is required?-- That is correct, yes. It can be, yes.

Well, more than most, isn't it, that you need someone there immediately?-- Yes, yes.

How does that work then that if you have to rely on someone coming that would take at least an hour?-- It certainly can delay but, you know, it is a matter of staying in contact with the person at risk and managing that situation. We also have to link up with - because we - they may have some small inflatable dinghies. At the same time we may also have to respond SES crews with flood boat capability to actually allow our crews to enter that water. The issue out here in some of these areas is that the expanses of water we're talking about are not just 100 or 200 metres wide we can get in a lot of urban environments. Out here we can see flood water five, 10, 20 k wide and sometimes the rescues, and certainly happened in these last series of flood events, that these rescues may take - well, the crews may actually have to go in several k to actually effect a rescue. So we often have to link up with our SES brethren to effect these rescues. 40 50

You say in paragraph 5 that you considered upskilling officers and members, and incident management skills were looked at and reviewed?-- Yes, yes.

So was it your approach that you were going to, from your original members, send them off to get further training to become swift water rescuers?-- No - yes, it was the Dalby Station Captain, Captain Ian Captoln, that we were sitting down one day thinking about, you know, where we need to go with our strategic - with our direction with training and that and because of the flood season, and the weather patterns at that stage were indicating that we were into a flood season, there hadn't been a real flood season here for 20 to 30 years and we thought, "Well, this is an area that we should get into to have that immediate response capability somewhere within our area." Now, because that was mid-December, we discussed it and I did run it past our regional training department but because of the time of the year and then our flood events did us shortly after that, we didn't progress it much at that point in time, because swift water training does require, significantly, time actually selecting staff and they actually have to go through physical testing and to determine whether they are suitable for that role.

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And QFRS has an all hazards approach?-- That is correct, yes.

That means that you just don't deal with fire but you deal with all hazards?-- That is correct.

Including flood?-- Yes.

And the swift water rescuers fall under the umbrella of the QFRS?-- That is correct, yes.

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Now, you talked about the lead time. How long would it take then to uptrain one of your members of your staff to become specialised in swift water rescue?-- Because it's not a compulsory thing, it is not part of our core training with - like with permanents and that - because not all permanent staff are swift water trained. There's only a select group. Now, here in Dalby and these stations, we do not have permanent firefighters. They are all auxiliary manned - firefighters. So, initially, I'd actually have to call for expressions of interest. Once the organisation goes down this path of selecting people or doing training or upskilling staff in auxiliary manned stations, we would then call for expressions of interest from persons interested in undertaking this role and explain to them the rigours of the role and the physical requirements to undertake this role and then organise or link up with any training courses that may be scheduled somewhere in the state that undertake this training. So it could take several months to carry out, yes, and go through that process.

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You talked before about - that you were aware of the weather pattern?-- Yes. 1

And that it was expected that it would be a very wet season?-- Yes.

Did you get any briefing in relation to that?-- We were talking about that at the LDMG meeting here in October, the 7th or 8th of October we discussed that, and there was an indication that even though we had had reasonable rain up until then there hadn't been any significant flooding, but we - we suspected that, yeah, there's certainly - with the SOI, the index, and the projections, you know, were that it would be a wetter summer than normal. At that point if time, there's still no indication of, you know, what level flooding there could be. 10

But was it at that point in time that you appreciated that you would require some swift water rescuers to be part of your team for the wet season?-- Yes, and our regional technical rescue response capability was then based around Toowoomba and Warwick. 20

Did you make any request to get a swift water rescuer trained person to the Dalby area?-- We did in that mid-December, that - you know, that - around about the second week in December, I think it was.

Did you get the personnel that you requested? Did you get a swift water rescuer?-- Oh, as far as - we - yes. When the floods started to occur, yes, we had swift water personnel out here on standby, yes, during the flood season, and that we had some come out for the first event on the 20th of December, and then from the 27th of December on, yes, we had swift water personnel based here for the - a number of weeks. 30

But it would be of some assistance that the Dalby area always has a swift water rescuer trained person in your Department?-- We believe so. 40

And are you taking steps for that to occur?-- We will be, yes.

And what steps will they be?-- It will depend on the policy and the organisation's direction it takes whether these trained swift water personnel, whether they will come from auxiliary or permanent ranks or auxiliary - manned stations, so that's an issue that we will - we need to - a policy issue for the organisation. 50

Perhaps that would be a convenient time for you to explain to me the difference between auxiliary and manned stations?-- Auxiliary manned stations are - the personnel have a primary employment elsewhere, they are paid for attendance at training, they attend training sessions, weekly training sessions for two hours on one of the nights, and then they carry a pager and they respond upon activation of that pager to any calls if - in their particular locality. So, they have

primary employment elsewhere, and that primary employment can be within the town or outside the town areas. A permanent firefighter is actually on duty for his allocated shift, you know, X number of days and X number of nights.

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If I can take you to paragraph 7?-- Yes.

You explain there that on the 20th of December 2010 you were in the Anzac Avenue Fire Station in Toowoomba and you were made aware that a male had fallen in a creek at Dalby?-- Yes.

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And a swift water rescue crew had attended. However, the rescue boat capsized and numerous people attended that incident?-- Yes.

Can you explain that incident to me?-- The actual incident itself was there was one male, I believe there was about three persons because the flood - I will just go back. That creek was in flood at that time, not high level flooding, but some local males decided they'd go and - in the creek and have a bit of a play around, they did get into trouble, and one found himself that - stuck in the middle of the creek up a tree. We - our local crews responded but also at the same time a swift water crew responded from town from Toowoomba. Because of the expanse of the water, the local crew just - the person himself was up the tree, he wasn't in any immediate danger, but we had help on the way and we were actually liaising with him to ensure that help was on the way. The swift water crew that came out from town, they linked up with the SES, went into the SES boat and went across and that boat run into difficulty, and that's where it - then we actually had to respond a - further resources to assist those ones that had got into trouble. So, it wasn't - it was also the - so, it was - finished up the initial person who was up the tree, but also two of our staff, plus the SES boat driver.

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And what additional resources did you have to get?-- We had another crew come from Toowoomba and also there's another SES boat that came from - from Chinchilla.

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So, from the time the fellow was stuck up in the tree until the first rescue came-----?-- Yes.

-----what was that time?-- It would be approximately one hour.

Okay. Then the time that the capsized occurred-----?-- Yes.

-----from the first rescue until the second rescue, what was the time then?-- It would be greater than one hour, additionally, another hour, hour and a half, yes. So, it would be about two and a half to three hours went by the time it was effected.

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So, is there anyway that this could have been managed better so that that time could have been reduced?-- It was unfortunate that there was an incident with the boat, you

know, and it capsized, and apart from that, you know, if the boat had not capsized, that rescue could have been effected within that one hour.

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Was that an issue with training or was it an issue with infrastructure, the quality of the boat?-- The boat was not Fire Service, it was an SES boat, so we had our trained swift water person on board.

Was the boat adequate to perform that rescue?-- I believe so, but I'm not sure of the mechanical considerations there.

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You have made some recommendations which I could take you to, which are at paragraph 39?-- Yes.

And one of the first recommendations, what we pick up from that, is you were talking about the additional training that is required to obtain swift water capability?-- Yes.

So, that the Dalby area also has a permanent swift water trained personnel?-- Yes, one of our auxiliary members trained - or perhaps two or three, because we don't know - with their work, their primarily employment can take them out of town, they may not be in town on that particular day, so I would think it would be a core group of two, three, four, something like that, and that would cover the area. It's virtually impossible to have somebody, like at that level and maintaining competencies to have them stationed at all of those centres, but I would think somewhere within that Dalby area, Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles, a core group who would provide that local area assistance.

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How do you access these areas when there is an incident? How do you get a swift water rescue out there-----?-- That is - we will have to rely on air support.

Air support?-- Yes.

And how does that work? Do you contact Toowoomba?-- Yes, yes, either goes through my Regional Operations Coordination Centre, which is the ROCC, or we can also do it through the DDMG.

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You say also that, "Additional equipment is required for specific incidents." What are you referring to there?-- What we're saying is that it might be personal flotation devices to go in with the swift water people, or throw bags that you can throw something out to the persons who may be at risk and - just to assist them to maintain life until further resources or trained personnel are in the vicinity, so-----

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Presently you haven't got that equipment?-- Not the personal flotation devices or throw bags, so, yes.

And the reason you haven't got that equipment is because you haven't got the swift water trained staff to use they equipment?-- Exactly.

It comes as a package?-- Yes. Our current crews actually have a swift water awareness trained - or package, what to do what not to do around swift water, but that prevents them from entering swift water.

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You say that you are well equipped for wildfire but less so for flood events?-- And that was where I was making the comparison is that perhaps there's - I don't know that there's much more equipment we need to handle fire, whether it's structural or wildfire. However, flood events, some equipment like that at that local level, with personal flotation devices, throw bags and that would be advantageous.

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QFRS has an all hazards approach?-- Yes.

That includes responding to flood incidents?-- Yes.

Yet your capabilities to respond to flood incidents in the Dalby area is limited?-- Yes. Probably not only the Dalby area, you know, right across the region, there would be - this region is comprised of, what, 42 stations and at this stage we have a technical rescue staff in three stations. When you say it technical rescue staff we're not only talking about flood waters, we are talking about USAR, Urban Search and Rescue, the confined space, divert rescue, so it's the whole range of lots of skills there that's - requires a lot of competency maintenance and that's why it's a certain - a number of key staff are specialised in that department. So, it's maintaining that capability or trained staff in all those disciplines is the issue for us.

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And presently you just have not got that capability throughout the district?-- No, that we have that structural fire fighting capability, wildfire, road accident rescue, Hazmat, Hazardous Materials Management, and that, but to do the confined space, the Urban Search and Rescue, all those other disciplines, it's such a specialised role, it's - and especially with staff who - I am not being derogatory, but they're part-time staff, they're not permanent firefighters. It would be different if we had permanent firefighters, you can actually train them up in all these disciplines, but when they actually have their primary employment elsewhere, and getting them to balance their commitment to the fire service, with, you know, not only weekly attendance at training but incidents, all other incidents, you know, it's a big chunk out of their life when they balance it with family and work life.

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And so what is the answer?-- Good question. But I feel that we could - I'm pretty sure that we if we threw out the expression of interest, I pretty sure we'd get sufficient staff to put their hand up to say, "Yes, I might be able to go in to be a swift water trained.", but whether we can - whether they have got the time to be trained in all technical rescue disciplines is the issue.

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When you say that, "Dalby does not have any technical operatives.", in paragraph 39, that is the technical operatives that we were just discussing?-- Yes, yes.

COMMISSIONER: If you got this core group in Dalby, who were swift water rescue trained auxiliary members-----?-- Yes.

-----would that cover your region? Is that enough, taken with Toowoomba?-- No. It would probably cover the Dalby area, because we are getting back to that lead times as far as response, you know, getting them on site, and you are talking about the region, the region goes right to the southwest to the border.

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I understand?-- And I would think there would be - my view is that probably Roma would be another key location, there might be somewhere down the border, it may be Goondiwindi or somewhere, but that's just my view, that's not the organisation's direction at this stage, but-----

It's your opinion I'm interested in?-- My opinion that somewhere throughout the strategic locations throughout the region, but no, not only Dalby, I see it more than that.

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

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod, do you have any questions?

MS McLEOD: No, I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: No, thank you.

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MR URE: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Thanks very much, Mr Cooke. You are excused?-- Thank you, Commissioner.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Senior Sergeant Simon Chase.

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SIMON ANTONY CHASE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Simon Antony Chase?-- It is.

And are you a senior sergeant of police?-- I am.

And are you currently the officer in charge of the Dalby Police Station mitigation?-- Yes, I am.

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Have you prepared a statement?-- Yes, I have.

That was signed on the 9th of March 2011?-- Yes, it was.

Can you have a look at this document, please? Is that the statement that you prepared?-- Yes, it is.

And signed?-- It is.

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Is it true and correct?-- It is.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 117.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 117"

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MS WILSON: Now, senior sergeant, during the flood events from December to January, you were the acting inspector acting district officer up to the 2nd of January 2011?-- I was.

Perhaps this might be an opportunity to tell me what the acting district officer's role and obligation is?-- In my role as the acting inspector district officer for the Dalby district, I am also the Dalby Disaster District Coordinator or DDC as it's referred to normally. During an event or a disaster, my role is to coordinate the disaster operations for the disaster district and those roles include chairing District Disaster Management Group meetings and providing information to the State Disaster Coordination Centre on a daily basis in relation to our performance and what's occurring in the disaster district.

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Who attends the District Disaster Coordination meeting?-- There's a large number of people that attend that meeting, obviously the members of the Disaster District Management Group, including council, Q-Build, TMR, Red Cross, there's various - basically all the members of the group.

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Okay. And how does the District Disaster Management Group coordinate with the Local Disaster Management Group?-- We have meetings - we did have meetings twice daily. A member of the Local Disaster Management Group would attend our meetings.

Obviously we would liaise with them closely. From our meetings, we would then refer and send reps again twice daily to the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

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Now, there is also a Local Emergency Coordination Committee?-- There is.

Okay. And they sit below the Local Disaster Management Group?-- That's right, so in places like Miles and Chinchilla, they would have an LECC in place. They would report to the LDMG who would then report to the DDMG, who would report to the SDCC.

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So, that's adding another level into the disaster management plan, having the LECC?-- I suppose it is, it's - they are - because the LDMGs were basically based in Dalby and because Miles and Chinchilla was away from that area, they have to have people on that - on the ground in that area to report back to them so they can subsequently report to us with any events that are occurring in those areas.

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So, in terms of the LECC, who would make up that group?-- Well, for example, at Miles it would be an officer in charge of the police station, a member of the council or the customer service centre out in those areas, and any other persons that they see fit to be a member of that committee.

And then they would report the local conditions and then they would report that up to the LDMG?-- That's right in.

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Would then come up to-----?-- That's right.

-----the DDMG?-- Yes.

And in terms of disaster management and communication with residents, does the LECC have a role in that?-- They do, only because, as I said, members of the police service are on those committees. I suppose in the event of a major disaster occurring in places like Chinchilla and Miles, it's important to have people that are actually present at those locations to conduct things like door knocks, letter drops, and to speak to people that have local knowledge of that area.

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And they would be in constant communication during a disaster event giving that local knowledge back to the LDMG which you also would be tapping into?-- That's correct.

Now, in terms of disaster management, if we can look at the communication of disaster management to residents across this region, if I can direct your attention to that?-- Mmm.

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One of the important parts of disaster management is evacuation centres, for example?-- Exactly.

Does this district have dedicated evacuation centres?-- Yes, it does.

So, would a resident in, say, Chinchilla know where their

evacuation centre is?-- Yes, they would.

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How would they know that?-- That would be part of the plan, the Local Government Disaster Management Plan. How they relate that back to the community, I am unsure of. It's obviously through media alerts, through the web page, through communications through the - that group back to the community.

Now, you have talked about before that the LECC structure existed in towns like Chinchilla and Miles?-- Yes.

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Do that assist in the disaster management, having that local knowledge on the ground?-- Most definitely.

And in other places where you do not have that LECC, does that put extra burdens up the line?-- It does. We count a lot on the information from people on the ground and, as I said, that's where the LECC provide that information. There are a lot of communities that don't have LECCs and we - we depend on the information from the LECCs and also local police to provide that information up the chain.

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So, it's a more coordinated and efficient approach to disaster management having an LECC on the ground in towns?-- Definitely.

Now, if I can direct your attention to the flooding that occurred in Dalby, the first flood that occurred in Dalby, on that occasion the Dalby Water Treatment Plant got inundated with water?-- Yes.

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Now, you were the DDC at the time?-- Yes.

And the Water Treatment Plant was out of operation for four days?-- Yes, it was.

Now, this is an important issue that has to be resolved quickly, doesn't it?-- Absolutely.

Water supply has to be maintained to the residents and it has to be maintained continually?-- Most definitely.

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What actions were taken to ensure that the water supply was maintained?-- Obviously during that period, once it became - once I became aware of the situation through our DDMG meetings, we spoke at length about this issue. This is obviously a pressing issue that we had to address quite quickly, and through our meetings we discussed a number of strategies that we could put in place to, A, prevent water being used at the rapid rate it was getting used, and also to replenish supplies. Obviously during our conversations at those meetings, we discussed a number of strategies, as I said. One of those we sent out some emergency alerts to the Dalby community advising them that there was emergency level 6 restrictions being put in place and advising them that water was - you know, to be used only for emergency situations, like flushing toilets, drinking, et cetera. Now, I believe there was two or three of those alerts sent out to the Dalby

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community. The feedback that I received from the members of the DDMG group was that this was an effective means to reduce the amount of water being utilised by the community. Another strategy was to reduce the pressure of the water. We also looked at how we could replenish supplies of the reservoir and to do this we came up with a strategy to cart water in from different areas, namely Jandowae and Bell. I received a request as the DDC from the LDMG to have tankers be supplied and to cart that water from those spots back to Dalby. That request was subsequently forwarded through to the SDCC and was actioned. I specifically requested six tankers to be utilised and I believe that the next morning a number of tankers did arrive and continued with replenishing the water supplies. I know that council worked very hard to fix the Water Treatment Plant, basically working around the clock 24 hours a day to come up with a solution to rectify it. The problem obviously was that the water levels were at a height where they couldn't access it immediately. As the water levels did drop, they did manage to get in there and to determine the actual problem and how they could rectify that problem. I know they did have a number of external bores in that area that could be tapped into and utilised, and also a reverse osmosis plant which they put back on line at some stage to help replenish the water as well.

When was the decision made to get tankers to bring water in?-- The day that I was advised, and that was on the 29th of December. I was advised of the problem, and that day a request was sent through to the SDCC for additional water sources, such as the tankers, to assist.

The Water Treatment Plant got inundated quite early on the morning on the 29th?-- I believe it was, yes.

So, what was the lag time between when the water treatment plant stopped working and you getting advised about-----?-- Okay. My advice was at the DDMG meeting. Every day that I was the DDC I had two DDMG meetings, one was at 9 o'clock and one was at 4 p.m., and I was advised at 9 o'clock at that meeting that the Water Treatment Plant had been inundated, and the advice to me was that there was water in the reservoir and that was enough water to last for two days.

And so was it hoping to be able to fix the Water Treatment Plant in two days and not have to get water shipped in?-- I think it was, by memory, too early to say what the actual date would be to rectify it. I know, as I said before, there was a problem initially with the water levels and they couldn't actually get into the water plant, but, as the water subsided, the crews did go in there and ascertain exactly what the problem was and provided us with, you know, a timeframe of when they thought they could have the plant back on line.

And was the request for water to be shipped in made simultaneously as they were going in and discovering what the problem was or did you have to wait until after they discovered what the problem was?-- No, I think it was about the same time, because, as I said, at that stage the water

levels were high enough to - I suppose not allow them to actually gain entrance into that area to determine exactly what the problem was. You know, as I say before too, there was a number of media alert, not emergency alerts, but also a number of media alerts issued by the council on their web page advising residents quite clearly that there was a shortage of water and that emergency 6 level water restrictions had been put in place.

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And how long does it take for water to be shipped in to Dalby?-- From the time that the request was sent through to the SDCC, it was the next - next morning that trucks arrived.

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You were the DDC at the time that Condamine was flooded and had to be evacuated on the 30th of December?-- Yes, I was.

Now, if I can take you to your statement and I can take you to page 16 of that statement?-- Yes.

You say there that you were chairing the DDMM meeting and at 11 o'clock you participated in the SDC teleconference. Was it at that time that you received information from the Bureau of Meteorology, at 11 o'clock?-- Yeah, I received information at that meeting from the Bureau that the Condamine was at 14.25 metres and rising.

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What information did you have beforehand, before you received this information from the Bureau?-- We received information quite regularly from the BOM through our DDMG meetings. At 11 o'clock every day I'd attend a teleconference with the SDCC. That meeting ran for generally two hours. At those meetings, I received information from BOM in relation to rainfall, river heights and forecasts. I also checked myself quite regularly throughout the day the Bureau site, also the Elders weather site and also information from, you know, police in different areas, advising me of different water levels, river heights, so there was quite a vast - different areas that I could obtain information in relation to different areas really.

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For you to obtain information from the Bureau of Meteorology, can you contact them directly or do you have to action that through the SDCC?-- No, we can contact them directly. As I said, I know for a fact that the LDMG had phone hook-ups with the BOM site in the morning, I know for a fact that we did at the SDCC, so during the time I was the DDC, I only contacted BOM probably on three or four occasions outside of our meetings, because I was obtaining sufficient information from them and through my own research on the BOM site and through talking to the LDMGs and members of the DDMGs throughout the days.

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At this meeting, you say that, "The Bureau of Meteorology advised that levels were reaching unprecedented territory and that expected peaks were not known."?-- That's exactly right. Throughout the whole process we were receiving - I suppose their best estimate on the Condamine River from the 21st until the 29th. During that time, they had probably nine separate

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peaks that they identified, ranging from nine metres all the way through to 14.25 metres. This weather event was unprecedented and it was difficult for BOM to provide us with modelling on what was going to occur, what the peak was going to be, and what time that peak would be and what day that peak would be.

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And was that difficult because of the lack of gauges that could provide that information?-- Well, I know for a fact that there's a number of gauges that were operating at the time. Some were - some of them were manual readers and some were automatic readers. I know for a fact the problem in Condamine was not so much the rainfall that had fallen in that area but the rain that had fallen in the other catchment areas, in particular Charleys Creek, Mile Creek and the Upper Condamine. All those river systems were - were full and the water was, you know, slowly moving down towards them.

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In relation to the manual readers, that is obviously dependent upon someone being able to get that information and get it back to you?-- Exactly, and that creates problems itself. Like if people can't actually get to the manual reader, it is hard to get readings. You have to have people that, as I said, can actually physically get to that site and provide that information to you opposed to an automatic reader that provides information automatically back to the BOM site.

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So in terms of the information that you were getting from the manual readers, did that become more and more limited as the flood event took hold?-- Most definitely.

Did that provide a lack of information that then you could make decisions upon about, for example, when to evacuate towns?-- Yes, and it would obviously have to depend on the automatic readers and speaking to people with local knowledge and vast other ways that we obtained our information.

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Do the automatic readers that you had, did they suffice? Did they give you enough information?-- They give us information. I suppose the difficult thing was although there was information there in telling us what the river heights were - were, because it was unprecedented levels across the whole district it was hard to determine what the peak was going to be and when and where. That's the problem that we - we were experiencing.

When did you appreciate that you may have to evacuate Condamine?-- I think on the 29th of December, after hearing that the level was going to be at a record peak at 14.25, the next - certainly the next morning, on the 30th, I was in the teleconference with the SDCC and received advice that if Condamine township - if the levels reached 14.5, like, half the town would be inundated and at 15 metres the entire town would be inundated. A decision was made then that we had to evacuate the township.

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So at that meeting that you had at 11 o'clock on the 30th, the decision was made that you had to evacuate the township?-- It wasn't during that meeting. That's - during that meeting, that's when I received that information.

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Yes?-- After that meeting I made a number of telephone calls, a number of inquiries to the LDMG and to the officer in charge of the Miles Police Station to try and ascertain what information he could gather from the SES controller at

Condamine, keeping in mind that through that LECC, that they were having regular meetings and part of that group was the officer in charge of the police station and the SES controller. Now, that SES controller, I believe, is extremely experienced and has lived in that area for many years. He was the one that actually spoke to the officer in charge for Miles and said that he believed that at a certain level this - the town would be inundated. We - as a result of that conversation and the other information that I had at hand, that's when the decision was made to evacuate the township.

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That's a mandatory evacuation?-- It wasn't a mandatory evacuation at first because the option was for the residents to evacuate. The officer in charge of the Miles Police Station had a meeting with the residents and advised them what he believed was going to occur with the amount of water that was travelling towards them. To my understanding, only 26 out of a possible 135 people were prepared to evacuate at that stage and it was only after a conversation with him that a decision was made that it was to be mandatory, but only because people were not prepared to evacuate the township voluntarily.

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Okay. So at the first meeting that Sergeant Wiltshire had with the residents, you were hoping to get more residents to leave the town on a voluntary basis?-- Almost definitely. Because of, you know, the - we just didn't know what the level was going to be there. Obviously preservation of life, the safety of the community was at risk, not only their lives but also health risks. If they remained in town with essential services being cut off, power being cut off, having no water, having no sewerage, obviously that creates a number of problems. So, as I said, a decision was made that the township needed to be evacuated.

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On the 2nd of January 2011 you finished being the DDC?-- Yes, I did.

And you were replaced by Terry Kajewski?-- Inspector Kajewski, yes.

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Inspector Terry Kajewski. There was a meeting in the evacuation centre at the Dalby Agricultural College where it was discussed about the formalisation of a recovery strategy for Condamine. Are you aware of that?-- No.

One of the issues that comes from the residents of Condamine is that they didn't get sufficient notice that evacuation was pending. Can you respond to that?-- In relation to the evacuation, I suppose - I guess - in relation to what was happening, I assume most of them had access to the Internet, could look up the BOM site-----

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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

MR TAYLOR: No, we don't live on bloody computers.

WITNESS: No, okay. I apologise. I know that the mayor, who

was the appointed media rep for the DDMG, did do a number - numerous interviews on the radio in relation to what was occurring. Obviously the SES controller and the officer in charge of the Miles Police Station were attending the daily LECC meetings.

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If I can stop you there, that's Sergeant Wiltshire you're talking about?-- Yes.

But he was in Miles until the 30th of December, wasn't he?-- Yes, but he was still having meetings with the local SES controller to get information on what was happening in Condamine, the water - the river heights and, basically, to get that local knowledge of what could be expected at certain heights. It didn't - sorry, back to your question about the mandatory evacuations. Once again, Sergeant Wiltshire did go there on the - about 1 o'clock on the 30th and did have a town meeting and spoke to all the residents outside the hotel and advised them that the town needed to be evacuated for the reasons that I have advised before. As I said, some of those residents decided that they did wish to leave and others, whether they didn't - they didn't believe of what was coming or the level was going to be at 15 metres and what impact would have on the community. I know for a fact that a lot of the residents had issues with pets and I can understand that. With the ADF arriving, I know they have normally a no pet policy. That was overturned to allow residents to take their pets with them which I - to my understanding, helped the situation greatly to get people to evacuate.

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If I can take you back to this, you said previously that on the 29th of December 2010, that was the first time that you were contemplating that evacuations may be necessary-----?-- Late on the 29th, yes.

-----for Condamine. Did you convey that information to the local SES on the ground in Condamine?-- Not personally, no.

Is there a process where that information can be conveyed to the local controllers of the SES on the ground?-- Well, I suppose the normal process is to relay that information back through the LDMG, back through the SES controller. As I said, there was no decision made on the 29th to evacuate if I can that - make myself clear.

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No, no, I'm just saying that's a benchmark because that's the first time you were contemplating that might have to be the consequences of this flood event?-- It was the first time that I considered that there may be some extraordinary levels going through that township. It wasn't till the next day when after speaking to various groups through the DDMG meeting and the SDCC that it became clearer to me that even though the level at that stage was only 14.25 and to my knowledge only a small number of residences had been inundated at that level, as I said, we weren't sure what the peak was going to be and BOM couldn't tell us that, what that peak was going to be, and when that peak was going to be. The best BOM could tell us was there was going to be a peak on the weekend at some stage,

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Saturday or Sunday. So, the 30th being a Thursday, we thought, "Okay. Well, we've got till the weekend at the worst to get people out of this township." Obviously, I was not aware how long it would take to evacuate 135 from a town. It's never been done before. I wasn't aware at that time that the ADF were going to be deployed. So, basically, as soon as the request was sent through to the SDCC to request assistance to evacuate the township, at about 3.30 that afternoon I received a phone call from the ADF, a captain from the ADF, advising me that two Black Hawkes had been deployed or were being deployed from Oakey and that they would be leaving Oakey, going to Dalby to pick up two police and then go to Condamine and start evacuating.

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If I can just take you back to the 29th of December, and I appreciate no decision was made?-- Yep.

But that was the first time that you contemplated that a significant amount of water would be going through Condamine?-- Yes, yes.

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Now, you would agree with me, wouldn't you, that that type of information on the ground would be of assistance, wouldn't it, in terms of the SES, the local SES, knowing that type of information?-- Yes.

And that type of information, with the SES knowing that, they could then work with the community and say, "Listen, evacuations may be in contemplation within the next day or so"?-- Yes.

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To get the town thinking in that mindset that, "We have to leave"?-- Most definitely, yes.

Did you pass that information on to the LDMG, which you said was the process, for the LDMG to pass it on the SES?-- Well, no, well, because - the information from the LDMG to the DDMG. So they were well aware of that as well. Because one of the members on the LDMG is always - takes part in our DDMG meetings. So the information that I'm getting from them filters from the LDMG up to the DDMG and the reason we have a person from that group on our group is for that reason, to get the information from - that they may receive from different sources from their SES controller on the ground so the DDMG members can be fully aware of information at hand.

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You said before that that was the first time it came into your contemplation that evacuations may be necessary?-- Yep.

Was that issue discussed on the 29th, "Look, evacuations might be necessary on the 30th"?-- Not evacuations, no, because even though the BOM had said there's going to be record peaks, potentially 14.25 metres, at that level my understanding is that only a small number of houses would be inundated at that level.

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But it was at that point in time that you were contemplating that Condamine, some evacuations at least of Condamine would

have to occur, may be necessary in the next day or so?-- No, not evacuations, no. No, what I'm saying is that I became aware that there was water going that way and that the level would be at 14.25 metres, which means a record peak and, to my understanding, that a number of houses would be inundated. If it got to 14.25 and six or seven houses were inundated, there would not be a need to evacuate the township, but depending on what was happening with essential services - power, water and sewerage.

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But I thought your evidence was, Sergeant Chase, that that was on the 29th, that was the first time that you were in contemplation that evacuations may occur?-- Well, not evacuations. It wasn't-----

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COMMISSIONER: You did say that before, I think, Sergeant Chase, that late on the 29th you contemplated evacuations?-- Okay. All right. Okay. Well, if I can go back. The 29th, there was no - there was no talk or conversation with any person about evacuating any township at that stage. Now, I'll try to make myself clear. On the 30th of December, when I was in that SDCC teleconference and it was - come to my attention that the levels may get to 14.5 to 15 metres, obviously at that stage we needed to look at evacuating because those levels were unprecedented and we did not know what would occur at that level.

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Okay.

MS WILSON: Let's take it from that point. At that point did you contact Sergeant Ben Wiltshire to say, "Listen, we're thinking of evacuating the town"?-- Yes, I did.

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So you directly contacted Sergeant Ben Wiltshire?-- Yes, I did.

That didn't pass through the LDMG?-- No, I rang him direct around 12.30, 1 o'clock that afternoon.

Is the process that it should have gone through the LDMG and you just bypassed that to make sure that Sergeant Wiltshire knew exactly where you were at?-- I wanted to get his information firsthand from him rather than putting it down back through the LDMG, waiting for them to contact someone, then for them to come back to me. The delay in that, I don't know what that would have been, so I made a decision to ring him myself.

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You talked before that the first decision you made was, "We're going to evacuate the town", and it was a voluntary evacuation but one of the reasons that you then turned that into a mandatory evacuation was that there was only a small uptake of the voluntary evacuation?-- During this day I spoke to Sergeant Wiltshire a number of times when I could raise him via mobile phone to see how the evacuation was going. On the first occasion he told me there was - and it is a rough figure, I think it was 28 people that were prepared to leave. During the course of the day - well, not the day but, you

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know, within half an hour I would speak to him again and he said, "There's more people now deciding to leave but there's still a number of people in the township that are refusing to evacuate."

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So were your decisions to go to a mandatory evacuation simply just based on the numbers?-- Yes. The number of people that were refusing to self-evacuate.

In terms of the flood events that occurred in this region, that was near the end of your involvement in that because you were relieved on the 2nd of January?-- I was relieved on the 2nd by Inspector Terry Kajewski from Toowoomba. He came out on the 30th and 31st of December to, I suppose, get some situational awareness considering he was taking over for a - you know, a fairly major event. We had a number of briefings. He sat in at the SDCC teleconference with me as well as the DDMG meetings with me prior to taking over that role to ensure that he was well aware of the issues across the whole disaster district.

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Thank you, Sergeant Chase. That's all the evidence I have for the moment.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod.

MS McLEOD: Thank you, Commissioner. I am not in a position to address the issues to do with gauges and monitoring with the Bureau at this stage.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MS McLEOD: And the same probably applies to Inspector Kajewski. And so what I suggest, and this has been discussed, is we put in a supplementary submission about those things.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure.

MR URE: I have nothing.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner, may the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, sergeant, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, the next witness that I intend to call is Inspector Terry Kajewski. I don't think I'll finish in him 10 minutes perhaps if we could adjourn now and

we resume at 2.15 p.m.

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 12.49 P.M. TILL 2.15 P.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.18 P.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes?

MS WILSON: Thank you, Commissioner. I call
Inspector Terry Kajewski.

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TERRY JOHN KAJEWSKI, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Thank you. Is your full name
Terry John Kajewski?-- It is.

And are you an inspector of police?-- I am.

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And you are presently based at the Toowoomba district
office?-- That's correct.

And from the 2nd of January 2011 to the 14th of January 2011,
were you the acting district officer for the Dalby district?--
I was.

And also you assumed the role of Dalby District Disaster
Coordinator?-- That's correct.

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Have you prepared a statement in relation to these
proceedings?-- I have.

Can you have a look at this document? That is your
statement?-- It is.

And you have signed this statement on the 11th of
March 2011?-- I did.

And in this statement, you refer to three documents, an
hydrology report for Dalby?-- Yes.

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Also a hydrology report for Meandarra?-- Yes.

And there is also a reference to a Recovery Strategy,
Condamine Flood Meeting held on the 2nd of January 2011?--
That's correct.

Commissioner, I tender the statement and the exhibits attached
to that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 118.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 118"

MS WILSON: Inspector, if I could take you to a couple of matters in your statement? At page 6 of your statement, you talk about that you were particularly concerned about events as they unfolded on the evening of 9 January 2011?-- That's correct.

And that was in relation to the uncertainty regarding the Clydesdale gauging?-- That's correct.

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Now, you were mindful of the isolated townships of Meandarra, Tara, Flinton?-- Yes.

And the residents who were on the properties throughout the district in that area?-- That's right.

So, on the 19th of January 2011 you requested a hydrology report for Meandarra?-- That's correct.

And you requested this from the Bureau of Meteorology?-- That's right.

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You were later advised by Jeff Perkins from the Bureau of Meteorology that they couldn't provide much advice on Meandarra as they did not have any river height data on Brigalow Creek?-- That's correct.

And it was not included in the Bureau's models as the local area for Cotswolds because they did not have the ability to forecast for Meandarra itself?-- That's right.

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Now, had you been able to access a hydrology report for Meandarra, would that have assisted in the response to those townships?-- I really don't know the answer to that question, even now. I have reflected a lot about the different smaller towns that were isolated, and not just townships, homesteads themselves, because we'd had reports right through from that Meandarra area. The officer in charge out there, Johnny Evans, I think he has done a magnificent job - he was isolated himself - getting daily reports and feeding them in to me about where the problems were. I got a sense through all of it that those people were very resilient and self-managed a lot, and it wasn't until a debrief a couple of months later that I found out of another property that people were actually on top of their roofs and had run out - didn't have telephone contact and they'd been isolated for 48 hours. So, that was just one of those things that reinforced to me that it's difficult in some of those isolated areas.

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If you had a hydrology report that would be able to give you a better estimate of the flooding, then you could have communicated warnings to the people in these areas?-- That's right, yep.

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How would you have communicated those warnings?-- I really haven't - because it didn't happen, I didn't - I haven't turned my attention to how we would do that, but it would - I

think similar to the alert system that we used in Dalby and Chinchilla.

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Okay. So, we're talking about that if these areas had the same relationship with the alert system that Dalby does have, that would assist?-- It would be a ready-made process. We've - I know from that debrief I have spoken to Michael Bianchi, who is now district officer in the DDC for Dalby, and I believe moves are afoot to - actually with those smaller communities, is whether we get an SES person or a rural fire person have a list of who these people are and make sure that we make contact with those people, and that seems like a worthwhile strategy going forward, but that's all in hindsight, of course.

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That's why we're here today, is to see what worked well, what didn't, and what could be done better?-- I think, well, that would be one of the things I think we could certainly do better, and obviously some weather stations in those particular areas.

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When you are saying that's one of the things that could be done better, what actually are you referring to?-- Well, one is the - having some sort of communication process set up where you have a local - I think you need it to be localised in those pockets, those community pockets, that makes contacts, have a designated person, an inn keeper, for want of a better term.

An inn keeper?-- Yes.

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So, that inn keeper would have within that region various properties, that they would keep in contact with those properties to see how they're going?-- That's right, and I've - in essence, it needs to be somebody that's attuned to that community, their needs, and then obviously report further up or across, whatever it needs to be, to make sure we have got the right processes in place to deal with whatever the problem is.

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Okay. Now, you spoke before about a property that was isolated for 48 hours?-- Yes.

And the family had to get themselves on the roof?-- That's my understanding of it.

Okay. But let's just work on that understanding. That type of situation, you didn't even know about it?-- Didn't know about it, no.

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So, how can we ensure that type of situation doesn't happen again, that you don't know about those things?-- I think an education program, using the inn keeper model, something like that, particularly for those small communities. I think within the bigger townships, Dalby, Chinchilla, where we'd managed that very well, like, for instance, I make reference in my statement to Jandowae. The water coming off the Bunya Mountains there went through 11 houses and I have got no

idea still how you best prepare for that. It was through and gone before anybody knew anything about it.

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Well, what about extra river gauges up there?-- That's one possibility.

That would have an ALERT system that could feed that information back to you directly?-- Yes. That would be helpful.

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We have heard about the LECC?-- Yes.

Now, that occurs in towns like Chinchilla and Tara?-- Yes.

And Miles?-- Miles.

That's another structure that has been implemented into the disaster management system in this region?-- That's right, probably at your very base level, at those levels, and that's where you rely on your information to start from, is from that level at that stage.

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Other regions don't have that level?-- I've not undertaken a-----

Okay?-- I know it's in place here and it worked - it did work very well, and the other thing that I found worked very well and when I've talked to other people in other areas is the fact that we met twice daily with members of those LECCs.

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When you say "we met", who's that?-- That's the disaster group.

So, you were having direct contact back down to those LECCs?-- Not all of them. They would bring reps to our meetings.

Telephone meetings?-- Telephone in, as - some telephoned, some in person, yep, but that was a wide cross-section, not only LECC, we had people with the teleconference from - Department of Main Roads would ring in from Toowoomba, hospital staff from Dalby would generally attend in person, if they couldn't get there in person, they always had a rep phone in. We had our LECC reps from Miles and Chinchilla ring in as required. Obviously when there was flooding imminent, it was important that they be contacting us and that occurred.

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Okay. So, the LECC was providing information to the LDMG and the DDC?-- Yes.

And that information had particular local knowledge that could be acted upon, if necessary?-- That's right.

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But for the LECCs, you wouldn't be privy to such local knowledge?-- No. You would be trying to source it, whether you would be privy - whether you would get that same sort of response, I doubt it. I think it was particularly - worked particularly well.

So, that's information going up to the DDCs and the LDMG. 1
 What about if you wanted to get information to the residents
 in those towns? Did you use the LECC as an avenue for getting
 information back down to those towns?-- Can I say that our
 mayor and his staff did that particularly well. I have never
 seen a better media campaign, as far as utilising their local
 resources, the daily paper and countless TV, radio interviews,
 it was incredible, the response, and I know that - I make
 reference to it in my statement - the mayor attended to some
 1700 interviews and I did two, I think, in the whole time I 10
 was out there, and it - it allowed me to think more broadly
 about reporting up and reporting across. So, I was grateful
 for that.

One of the problems, though, with putting an emphasis on
 information being spread by media is access to that media. If
 electricity is cut or the internet goes down, how then is it
 best to respond to be able to get information out there?-- I
 really do think the alert system worked particularly well for
 Dalby and it was only a simple message, and in times of crisis 20
 it only needs to be a simple message.

Okay. We will stop there and talk about the alert system in
 Dalby. Can you tell us about the alert system in Dalby and
 how it works?-- I could reference a particular - some of the
 ones we did.

Okay. If we can get an example so we can get an understanding
 of how it worked?-- Yep. I did have this squirrelled away 30
 this morning.

Inspector, what document are you referring to?-- This is one
 I have managed to obtain this summary of the Emergency Alert
 Details, which hasn't been made available up until - up until
 today, unless somebody - unless it's been something that I
 have missed.

And is that document headed up on the left-hand side with the
 number, "10018001"-----?-- Yes, it does. 40

-----"27th of December 2010"?-- That's right.

And, "1906 Dalby.", and then SMS message about Myall Creek?--
 That's right.

So it appears we're looking at the same document. What does
 this document set out?-- Just relays the date, the message
 was sent, time it was sent, the area that it particularly
 related to, and what the actual message was by SMS or by
 voice. For a good example, if I take you down to the first 50
 Chinchilla example, on the, "Emergency Location.", the
 campaign message ID 11001721 and the voice message simply
 there was, "Flood warning from SES. Significant rainfall
 above Chinchilla. People in lower lying areas advised to move
 to higher ground."

Now, this records all of the messages that went out either by
 SMS or voice messages?-- That's right.

And who sent these messages out?-- They come - some were instigated by myself. Generally they come from the LDMG, up through me and then through - to our State centre for approval.

So, if the LDMG want to send out a message, it has to come through to you?-- Yes.

You obviously have to approve it, and then you take it up the ladder to the SDCG?-- Yep. 10

And do they contact a telecommunications provider?-- That's right, sometimes they - the State Disaster Centre may ask particular questions. I can't remember being asked anything specifically about any of them. Generally by the time that that information's filtered through, it's generally met the true test of why we want to send it out and it gets released.

So, was there any costs incurred for any government agency to send out SMS messages?-- I don't know. I honestly don't know. 20

And this SMS messaging, was it used throughout the whole district or just in certain areas?-- It was used throughout the whole district, yes, generally.

So, when we're talking about issues like Meandarra, you said if we had the Dalby alert system that would have worked better. Were we at cross-purposes?-- I think it's problematical in that Meandarra area, and if I can particularly reference the hydrology report that we got back for Meandarra? 30

If we can just stop there? I will tender that document, that SMS document.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Is there a formal title for it that we can use?-- Emergency - I'd say Emergency Alert Details For Dalby District Disaster Centre. 40

Thank you. Exhibit 119.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 119"

MS WILSON: If we can refer now to Meandarra hydrology report?-- Sorry, I missed that question. 50

You wanted then to refer to the Meandarra hydrology report?-- Hydrology report. I reflected on my evidence that I would be giving today and realised that the - that particular report or - and in particular map was pretty useless. If you go to because - I don't know, I have got my glasses on and I can't make out any-----

Yes?-- Make out any township.

Yes?-- And in - accompanying that map, the page before, it gives the details of what the - Johnny Evans had sent to me by way of e-mail at 12.23 a.m. on the 11th of January. So, he was up in the early hours of the morning and sent through this information about all these different localities, and that's what I say, I sort of likened Meandarra to Holland at that stage and we didn't know whether we had the finger in the dyke or not, and that's why I specifically asked for a hydrology report. I have then this morning undertaken to actually plot those various locations on to a much larger map and I have got some copies available here for the Commission.

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Perhaps if I could have a look at one, please?-- You need to obviously cross-reference that map back to the information from Johnny Evans, who was the officer in charge at Meandarra.

The hydrology report that you received and the map as we see it, which is, as you said, very difficult to pick up, is that the quality you received?-- That was the quality I received, so - and that coupled with the advice from the hydrology gave me a degree of uneasiness, and I was quite happy the next morning for Johnny Evans to report in that the sand bagging efforts that they made that day had worked. So, that was an uneasy time.

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Okay. So, the map that you have just handed me should be read in conjunction with the hydrology report of Meandarra, because it can give you some better understanding of what was going on?-- It gives you - I have marked and I have used one of our admin assistants, who grew up in the area, to mark in a couple of properties, Kerriette and Herschwin, that weren't evident on the actual map, and then I have just highlighted the different properties and the creeks that were referenced in that e-mail.

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Now, you talked before about the quality of the map that you received was not very good. Did you reference it on the day to a map like this so that you could understand the information?-- Not specifically referenced - I had - what's - the best I could say is-----

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A general idea?-- -----a general feel for what was going on. I was comfortable because I was - I had a fair degree of trust in Johnny Evans and what he told me thus far and in that - up until that period of time he was spot on with the information he provided, and there weren't alarm bells going off, but a certain uneasiness.

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Commissioner, I will tender this map, but it should be made note that it's in reference to the statement of Inspector Kajewski.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Exhibit 120.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 120"

MS WILSON: You talked before a lot of the information you were getting is through residents or the LECCs providing that information to you. In respect to the flooding of Condamine, there was very little information that was available about the flood levels and the flooding that occurred on the 30th, or you weren't on board by then?-- I'd come out and I was briefed by the chief superintendent at that stage and requested to come out a couple of days prior, and I was actually here on the 30th and 31st of January, so I got - and attended different meetings and things, and it took me those probably two days to get my head around different things that were going on, but I don't know about in that early process, but there was certainly hydrology reports in existence for the Condamine River and I would have thought - and I had no problems with those hydrology reports, and the Condamine was always on our radar, so to speak, and I know from talking to the mayor as well that there was a degree of uncertainty about just how much water would feed in from other tributaries into the Condamine, particularly from Cecil Plains as well, which is further to the east, and we treated that whole Condamine issue with a fair degree of caution right from the outset, but I did think there was hydrology right from the outset as well. So, I was more confident with some of the information there than I was, say, compared with the information when we had all that water coming off the Bunya Mountains, I wasn't so confident about that information.

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The information that was received in relation to the Condamine, such as it was, was even better than the information you were receiving in other areas?-- That's right.

You talked about that you had hydrology reports. I am referring to the evacuation of the 30th of December. You had access to hydrology reports. You are aware, aren't you, that the decision to evacuate was made within a very short timeframe, on the 30th of December?-- Yes.

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Could that have been done better in the sense of that information getting to the residents quicker?-- I don't - no, I don't believe so. I think part of the problem with Condamine and some of the residents is that not all - some were nonbelieving, and here I'm relying on the first example when they had the record flood on the 30th, 31st, compared to the second time around when it - it was quite easy to get the townsfolk to self-evacuate. Now, I think that was lessons learnt in probably the worst possible way to learn a lesson through personal experience.

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But to put it into perspective, there was a meeting at around about 2 o'clock on that day which for many was the first time that the word "evacuation" had been heard. An hour later, they were then told that there was to be a mandatory

evacuation. So, the time for the residents to consume such information was quite limited?-- I can't make comment about those particular timings that first time around. I - I'd only be guessing because I was - yeah.

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And it would be stating the obvious, wouldn't it, that the more information that residents have about possibilities of evacuation the better prepared they are?-- Oh, certainly, I - yeah, I've no problem with that.

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And it would be stating the obvious, wouldn't it, to say that the quicker you get that information out to the residents, then they can make their decisions about how they're going to respond in such a situation?-- That's right.

Now, it appears that in this area, in this district, a lot of the information that you get and that you are making decisions on is based on residents being Good Samaritans and ringing through to you providing, "Look, this is the conditions of the day in this town."?-- Oh, that's - that's quite obvious, and - yeah, and the - I keep citing Ray Brown and Phil Berting, they are a wealth of knowledge and they have the contacts, like - and I - I'd come out here to relieve so there was a lot of trust and - and I don't think that that's any different than any normal experience whether it be a flood event or any other event, could be bushfires, you are very much relying on what that local knowledge is on the ground to make your decisions.

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And, for example, we have heard in Condamine that the way that information they received about what the river height would be would be a property owner upstream would ring in and say, "Well, where's the water on to a mark - in relation to a mark on a tree? Ring us.", and they would communicate the level of the water height that way?-- I - yeah, that would be one of them, but I still say that - I wasn't right on board for that first flood - record flood event at Condamine, but certainly the second time around there were regular hydrology reports that we were relying on. I wouldn't have - I was relying on those hydrology reports more so than anything else. Local knowledge is great, but the hydrology reports for the Condamine River and, in particular, the township of Condamine was good. Local knowledge, if you want to test that then with the Condamine River, pretty much Ray Brown said to me with the water that had come through Jandowae, we had to watch out for the people at Warra, because that water comes down from the mountains - I forget which creek it was, and hits the Condamine River, and that's why you have - and all of a sudden we had a metre of water across the road at Warra, and those people self-evacuated, about the 10 residents that were - to Chinchilla, so - and different areas were, I found, a lot easier to manage than other areas. So, hydrology's good in a sense if you couple it with local knowledge, it ups the ante again.

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Where were you getting the hydrology reports in relation to the second evacuation of Condamine?-- From the Bureau of Meteorology.

And what was the timeframes when you decided that you should evacuate Condamine on the second time it flooded from when the residents knew of that decision?-- I - that ALERT system would indicate, I think - one of the warnings we sent out was very early advice that it's going to be at a certain level.

You are looking at the 10th of January?-- Yes.

And that SMS alert was sent out then?-- That's right.

I have to look at my records. When was Condamine evacuated on the second occasion?-- Most people had then self-evacuated by the 12th of January, and that - see, what was - I think that's a very good example of the alerts - early alert system, the alert system utilised at an early stage working well.

And that gave a two-day lead-in?-- That's right. And I think it's very much a case of once bitten twice shy. Those people had been through the experience and I think they and I do know that having met some of the Condamine residents, that they then become believing of what the authorities were saying.

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But a two-day lead-in time is a bit different than, say, a two-hour lead-in time?-- Oh, that's - that's right.

It all depends on getting that information out to residents early. That's one of the factors of disaster management?-- Oh, yes, there's no issues from here.

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Now, if I can take you to another part of your statement, at page 14, and this is in reference to a meeting that was held in the Dalby Agricultural College in relation to the evacuation of Condamine?-- Yes.

It states there: "Why didn't the residents get sufficient notice" - these are the issues that the Condamine residents were talking about at that meeting?-- That's right.

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"Why didn't the residents get sufficient notice to allow them to get animals and essential items protected before they had to evacuate, given that there was up to a 6 hour wait for some people at the air strip? And why did the media know of the evacuation before the community did?" Do you see that there?-- Yes.

How was that resolved? How was that issue resolved or responded to?-- Phil Berting and myself went initially to the Dalby Showgrounds, met with them, spoke to the residents and then we again - during the process I identified - well, these people that had been displaced and the Dalby Agricultural College was a better proposition for them in the long term and those premises had been made available. So when they'd been relocated there, we went out and met with them. Answered the queries as best we could. Had some heated conversations and - and generally through a process of talking, meeting, discussing, got to a situation where people, I don't know whether they fully understand the decision for the initial evacuation but certainly more appreciative, I would have thought, of the advice we were giving them and I think that helped us no end the second time round. And they did experience another record flood the second time round.

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Can I take you to page 20 of your statement and there you provide some recommendations which go over to page 21. The recommendation that - the primary recommendation that you provide is lining up the different districts that occur in this region?-- Yes.

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That is, the police districts in some instances are different than the Local Disaster Management Group districts?-- Yes.

Can you explain that to us, please?-- The local disaster areas are very much aligned to regional council boundaries, and there will be pros and cons for this. I should preface it

with that. The specific example that I refer to is the Bunya Mountains and the water that came from there and all of a sudden we had a farmer reporting two vehicles in the Myall Creek above one of the weather stations. Now, that took everybody by surprise. It occurred in the Darling Downs Regional Council area but that actual district falls within the Dalby police district and would have been a lot easier to manage from this end given the close proximity. As it turned out, we had police from Toowoomba district, the Goombungee division and the Peranga division, which is in the Dalby district, both respond to the incident in any event.

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It would be cleaner if they were all within the same district?-- It would be, yes.

So, you talked about the pros. What about the cons?-- Oh, the - if I'm part of the regional council for the particular area, you want - and remember that you're working from the base up, you need it to fall within the particular area. Now, I - I probably have got a leg either side of the fence here because I work in the Toowoomba district and I - when I came out here I saw things that I thought, "Gee, I wonder whether we've got our eye on the ball with Cecil Plains with just how much water goes through that area." One man policeman, he did exceptionally well, rescued people and stuff. But when the things that occurred in the Oakey, Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley such as they did - what's the right word - I don't know that the eye was taken completely off the ball but I think the eye was firmly on the pass that was coming into them at the time and that was those issues there, and there were some other issues occurring further westward. Jondaryan, for example, the road was cut there four times. One policeman there and he - he did an exceptional job too.

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So how would the realignment of boundaries assist in the example that you gave of Jondaryan?-- For Jondaryan. Well, Jondaryan is truly in the - that's in the Darling - well, in the-----

COMMISSIONER: Can I just stop you. Whose boundaries are getting realigned? Is it the regional council or the police districts?-- At the moment the disaster areas fall firmly-----

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With the regional council, I understand that?-- Within the regional council.

You're saying there needs to be realignment but do you do that by altering the regional council boundaries or by changing the police districts?-- That's why I say there's some pros and cons there.

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Which are you suggesting for?-- I - for certain areas, for - for an incident that occurred 20 or 30 kilometres from here, which occurred within the Peranga police division, I would have thought that it sits comfortably within the Dalby disaster area but that's not the way the alignments are at the moment. And I - I don't know that there's a right or wrong

answer there at all, but I do know that it's been something that's talked about in other areas as well as just this boundary - and I know through the police, we've had a whole different alignment, realignment of boundaries, three or four, probably five years ago when we started a different process within our own management systems. So, it is a difficult one.

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All right. Thank you?-- And I - yeah.

MS WILSON: You were going to say something?-- No. I'll chop it short there.

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Can I just get you to comment on this and perhaps provide some assistance. We heard this morning of a resident in Chinchilla who was worried about rising water. So the first point of contact was to ring SES. Then you get put on to the Western Downs Regional Council and then you get on to the Chinchilla part of that council. The police officer rings back. They can't respond; get in touch with the SES. Is there a possibility of one phone call being made by a resident to be able to access information and emergency help when it is not at a triple-0 level but it is, "What do I do? Where do I go"?-- I - personally, I - I don't believe you'll ever get to the ideal situation where you can have a stock standard response or go to one source. And things can vary so quickly as well and that's why I would - like, I seen - I saw here at Dalby itself just with the road conditions and however changing they were on a day-to-day basis. So I'd hate to ever get to a situation that we'd put everything in the one - one shop answers it all. I don't know that that will ever work.

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So what would you advise a resident say of Chinchilla when the waters are rising? Where would you ring?-- If I - I think it is same as anything we do on a day-to-day basis: "If I don't know the answer, I'll get back to as soon as I can. If I don't ring you back in five minutes, ring me again."

I think the question I'm asking is: who is the responsible agency. Waters are rising, it is at the moment not life-threatening but I need to know where to go and what to do?-- Who's the right agency there. The people I think are best equipped with - yeah, that's - that's getting into hydrology.

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See, Inspector, that's the problem, isn't it? You're having difficulty answering the question. What about the resident in Chinchilla? Who do they know who to ring?-- Generally, in most cases - most cases - we can generally predict and give a pretty solid answer and you would trust that our emergency services personnel, and that's police at the forefront, can provide that right - right response. There will be times where that won't occur and I witnessed that in my own experience out here where we had a tractor and my first call was, "There's a tractor off the road. It's sinking. We need some help." And the first thing our police were going to do was drive a police vehicle straight into this water not knowing depth or anything. I said, "Well, hang back. We can't do that", and sometimes you have to make a call. As it

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turned out, those neighbours come and rescued that particular tractor driver. So there are going to be isolated times where you can't have that one right response because sometimes we get it wrong and-----

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But perhaps it does need to be better defined about if you are in a situation?-- Oh, yeah, I don't-----

-----you should ring SES, and that comes to my next question. What is the distinction between what SES would do in response to what police would do?-- I - yes. SES are a volunteer organisation.

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Yes?-- Whether they're properly trained across all areas and particularly communication, I - like, my background right at the moment is handling complaints against police and communication is one of those things that I think we could probably all improve on.

When you're handling complaints, is that disciplinary complaints?-- No, no, it can - I handle the complaints against police but that's one of the - one theme that we do have is our communication processes. And I - personally, I have a view that we don't communicate one on one as well as we should. We don't have that one on one and we rely too much on social networking outlets. They're a great tool but used irresponsibly, can create pandemonium for you. I don't know where that happy medium is. If we could find it, I think it is a great tool.

20

But, inspector, with due respect, you haven't answered my question. I want to know what events SES would respond to and then what would police respond to. Would SES help you get out of the house and police would only come if it's a life-threatening situation? Where is the border?-- I think it is a dangerous call to suggest that SES - police don't ever respond to incidents. I think we always need to be the first response agency. There is a role for SES as well.

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COMMISSIONER: So is the answer that you ring the police when the water is-----?-- I think the answer is if you ring - police has always got to be - and people are attune to that, I honestly believe that. We have communication centres set up at Toowoomba, which is growing. And the further west you move, obviously it's not as well structured, but that's who you would go to first and foremost. If my mum, who - she would ring the police first and foremost. So that's where I come back and that's what I would hope that most of our elderly people would do.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Miss McLeod, do you have any questions?

MS McLEOD: No, no questions, thank you. Our position is as I've indicated.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks.

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MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing.

COMMISSIONER: Right. Mr Ure.

MR URE: Just one matter, Madam Commissioner. Inspector, during your period as the DCC for Dalby, we can see from your statement on page 16 that you had experience with the Local Emergency Coordination Centre and you met and communicated with - the disaster coordinator in Chinchilla, Ms Tania Thornton; correct?-- Yes.

10

Can you tell me, please, if at any time during your period as DCC for Dalby you heard anything suggested that the staff of the Chinchilla LECC panicked in any way in carrying out their role during the Chinchilla flood events?-- No. I - Tania is a quick speaking person but always concerned with trying to get the job at hand done. Very much fighting for the constituents of her town. Very protective of her town.

20

Did you at any time observe anything in the behaviour of the LECC that suggested to you that the staff had panicked in any way?-- No.

Yes, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Any re-examination?

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MS WILSON: No re-examination, Commissioner, may the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thanks, inspector, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Douglas Bougoure.

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DOUGLAS CLYDE BOUGOURE, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Douglas Clyde Bougoure?-- Yes.

And your current role is the Community Service Manager Tara, Western District Regional Council?-- Western Downs Regional Council.

10

Western Downs Regional Council?-- Yes.

And you've been employed by the council for 29 years?-- Yes.

And you've lived in Tara all your life?-- Yes.

Mr Bougoure, have you provided a statement to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry in relation to the flood events of 2010/2011?-- Yes.

20

Thank you. Is that the statement that you've provided?-- Yes.

And you've signed?-- Yes.

Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 121.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 121"

MS WILSON: You say that as part of your role within the Tara council is the district coordinator of the Tara district?-- Yes.

And you are the chairman of the Local Emergency Coordination Committee?-- Yes.

40

The LECC. And that manages disaster planning within the district?-- Yes.

Who comprises the LECC in the Tara district?-- It's a series of groups: the police service, the State Emergency Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service, Department of Health, Ergon Energy, Department of Communities, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and EMQ.

50

You say that during the recent floods in December 2010, January 2011 the LECC was meeting each day?-- Yes.

To discuss the issues?-- Formally and informally.

And the outcomes of the meetings were posted on a notice board at the SES and also provided to the ABC for relaying to the public?-- Yes.

Was it known to the residents of Tara that such information would be posted on the notice board at the SES?-- I would say that's common practice, yes.

So the information that was discussed was put on a notice board at the SES and all the residents could come and see what was going on?-- Yes.

Was that one of the tools that you were using to advise residents of the issues that were-----?-- As communication, yes.

10

Was there any other tools that you were using of communication to residents?-- Only through the DDMG or - with our reports back to the - to the LDMG.

And then they would issue-----?-- Yes.

-----media alerts?-- Yes.

20

Or such matters?-- Yes.

If I can take you to two other matters in your statement. You talked about in paragraph 6 that there are no major river systems around the Tara township?-- That's true.

But that Tara is quite close to the headwaters of Undulla Creek?-- Undulla Creek, yes.

30

There are no flood gauges at Undulla Creek, on Undulla Creek?-- Just depth marks - depth markers on the floodway crossing, yes.

And they have to be manually read, do they?-- Yes.

Were you getting information from these markers during the flood events?-- The SES and our works coordinator were monitoring those at all stages, yes.

40

So was someone going up there every day and coming back with the information?-- Yes.

Do you think that more flood gauges there would be of assistance?-- No.

You have got sufficient flood gauges but it requires someone to manually go and read them during a flood event?-- Yes, yes.

What happens if during a flood event someone can't get there to read those gauges?-- The gauge is right in town. That's - always been able to access it, yes.

50

So there is no problems with gauges in your area of Tara?-- Not - not that - no, no.

You talk about, in paragraph 11 and 12, some of the issues that you did have with the management of the flood during the

flood events and one of those is that LDMG Dalby should be given a great ability to approve expenditure within the district?-- That come about just with getting planes in for food supplies, resupply of foods.

1

That you were trying to get food into Tara and you were - before that could occur, you had to obtain three quotes?-- That's true, yes.

Could you obtain three quotes?-- No.

10

So did you get the food?-- Yes.

How was that resolved?-- It was resolved when we got - we got permission to - to use an aeroplane charter company and was-----

And how long did that process take from being asked to get three quotes to being able to get a food on a charter company?-- Yes, we lodged it with - so, about six hours. Just so - and that sort of goes into the - into the following day. So I guess it's just something there that if it could be just sped up a little bit, that would be - would be much appreciated, yeah.

20

Another example to give is organising the resupply of the milk to the town?-- The same - same issue, yes.

The issue that arose there was the milk sat on the tarmac for eight hours during to clearance issues with EMQ?-- Yes.

30

What were the clearance issues?-- Just waiting for approval to use the plane.

And you think that those decisions should be made at the LDMG level?-- Could be made there or just a quicker response from higher up, that's all, yes.

Thank you, Mr Bougoure, that's the only questions I have for you.

40

MS McLEOD: Thank you, no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: Commissioner, can we just reserve our rights in respect to the issues in 11 and 12. We only saw the statement today. It might not be an issue but we just need to seek some instructions.

50

COMMISSIONER: If you want to put in some sort of written response.

MR MacSPORRAN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure.

MR URE: I have nothing.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Bougoure.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, that is fine but I understand that statement was provided last week. Commissioner, I call Christopher Artiemiew.

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CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY ARTIEMIEW, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: If your full name Christopher Anthony Artiemiew?-- Yes, it is.

20

And are you the Area Director of Central, South West Region, Emergency Management Queensland?-- I am.

Employed by the Department of Community Safety?-- That's right.

Have you provided a statement for these proceedings?-- I have.

30

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

That is your statement that you've signed?-- Yes.

Attached to that statement is your CV?-- Yes.

Is that statement true and correct?-- Yes.

I tender that statement.

40

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 122.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 122"

MS WILSON: The area that you are involved in is the central area which includes the local government areas of Western Downs Regional Council and the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's correct.

50

Now, the role that you perform has been summarised in paragraphs 10 to 12 of your statement?-- Yes, it should have been, yes.

You say there that you do not have a command and control role

with the SES?-- That's correct.

1

But your role was to assist, advise and support the SES units and groups during emergency events which includes the deployment of extra personnel, equipment and materials to assist the local group if required?-- That's right, yes.

You also, during the flood event, assisted the WDRC with the initial setting up procedures to supply isolated properties with goods and evacuate persons?-- That's right.

10

So during these flood events you were working with various government agencies to assist them?-- Yes.

And provide advice?-- Yes.

Now, can I take you to your statement at paragraph 19 and 20. Paragraph 19 refers to the kit referrals. Can you tell me what a kit referral is?-- A kit - a kit referral basically is when a member of the public rings the 132 500 number and-----

20

What is that number?-- That's the SES emergency number, if you like, for assistance.

Yes?-- It goes to a duty officer, who answers the call, summarises that on a - on a - on a set pro forma and that is then sent to our duty officer, basically.

When I ring the number 132 500, where would the person be who answers that call?-- In - in Kedron.

30

In Kedron?-- Yes.

So if I'm at Tara, my phone call goes to Kedron?-- That's right, yep.

And then what does the person who answers the phone call at Kedron do?-- Take all your details according to their pro forma and they will - they will find out what the nature of the - of the assistance from SES is and, basically, pass that on to the local controller of that group.

40

What happens if it is something that the SES don't do?-- They - they would normally advise the caller to call triple-0 rather than 132 500.

Who makes the assessment about what the SES will do and where the police will come in and do? Where's the line?-- Well, mainly, if it's a life and death type situation, it should be referred to triple-0.

50

What do SES do then?-- Any assistance that is not life and death. So they could - it may be that part of the roof is missing and that the roof is leaking, or that they - they may require food or, you know, medical supplies. As long as it's not a life and death situation.

We had a witness this morning who stated that she rang the SES

number - she looked in the local phone book and rang the SES in Toowoomba and spoke to an operator, who then referred her to the Western Downs Regional Council?-- Then she - I doubt very much whether she called SES. Basically, the only SES number is 132 500. Some of the local groups have - obviously have their own phone lines but, you know, that's up to the local group.

1

And if you ring the local group, then that's not monitored-----?-- No.

10

-----on a statewide basis?-- No.

So all phone calls for SES go through to Kedron?-- On the 132 500, yes.

From Townsville to Tara?-- I believe so, yeah.

Now, if I can just take you to your statement again, the next paragraph talks about an incompatibility that you had with computers?-- Yes.

20

If you would just hold one moment. You say, "As the WDRC SES groups do not have a compatible computer system I referred these requests to the WDRC call centre supervisor so that they would be actioned by the appropriate response agency"?-- That's right, yeah.

Can you explain that to me?-- Well, with these kit referrals, it comes through and it also says whether the local controller has been advised or not, so that's part of the pro forma. So that, basically, when it comes through to the duty officer it will say whether the local controller has actually been advised of it. If in the case where they haven't been advised of it, it basically comes to our duty officer to then chase that up so that the local controller who is responsible is aware of the assistance required.

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40

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Okay. So, the duty officer would be you?-- No, no, it's - we have a 24 hour member - it could be me, it - depends on a roster system.

1

And where would the duty officer be situated?-- Wherever - normally within our region, so we have a regional duty officer.

And then do you then have to get in contact with the SES controller-----?-- That's right.

10

-----at that area?-- Yes, yes.

Is that a time-consuming process? There seems to be about three steps in that process?-- Well, not normally, because normally the actual - the kit referral duty officer, the duty officer sitting down in Kedron normally gets straight through to the local controller. It's only if they have difficulty or if they became too many in the case of - therefore it goes on to this list and we basically have to chase that up. Some groups, especially large groups, have the capacity to access those on the - on a computer, whereas the majority of the smaller groups don't have that capability, because, as you would - you need access to the internet to do that.

20

But if you were in the WRC SES, which is the Western Downs Regional Council SES, which that includes the whole region in the Western Downs Regional Council?-- No, no, they're broken into different units and groups.

30

Okay. So, when you say the WRDC SES groups do not have a compatible computer system, that is just some of the WRC SES groups?-- All of them basically rely on telephone rather than computer. They have - certainly Tara is one that is currently gaining that capability and some of the other groups are trying to - well, will have that capability.

What is the most efficient system, to be able to have that compatibility or to relay it through telephone?-- It depends on the size of the group, because obviously if you have a good sized group, which is - well, has people available to sit in there and to monitor a computer, it works well. If you don't, then certainly the phone call to the local controller works well, and probably on - where the volume of calls is not large then it certainly is - just the phone call works quite well.

40

You talk about in paragraph 27 to 29 the EMQ use of weather warnings and the access that you have to weather warnings?-- Yes.

50

Were you involved in the flood events that occurred in Condamine on the 30th of December 2010?-- Yes.

Did you have access to weather warnings then?-- Yes.

Did you have access to any information that suggested to you that Condamine would be evacuated?-- Only through the Local Disaster Management Group, which I - and the Local Disaster

Coordination Centre, which is where I was working at the time.

1

Okay. So, when did you appreciate that Condamine may have to be evacuated?-- It was just part - as part of the Local Disaster Management Group, so I was just receiving exactly the same information that the council and everyone was receiving.

Okay. So, when was that?-- Would have been - I would imagine - yeah, be the 30th. Yeah, I'd have to basically have a look, but-----

10

Okay?-- I was - I was - part of that group from the 27th.

So, when you received that information, did you convey that to your SES controller in Condamine?-- It was being conveyed - I didn't personally, no.

Is that your role?-- No.

20

How do you ensure that your SES people on the ground are adequately informed of relevant information?-- Normally through the - either directly or in this case they were - it was all - already - they were already being updated by the council.

How do you know that?-- Because I was part of the group and I knew that it was being passed on to the LECC, which is the Local Emergency Coordination Committee.

30

Bill Powers is the controller out there-----?-- That's right.

-----at Condamine?-- Yes.

So, were you confident this information was being passed on to Bill Powers-----?-- To my knowledge, yes.

-----that the Condamine was going to be evacuated?-- Yes.

Okay?-- Oh, had possibility to be evacuated, not - yes, it depended on the advice of the - from the Bureau of Meteorology, yes.

40

And what is the control system so that we know that that information is being passed on to the SES? Whose responsibility is it to do that? You talk about the LDMG passes it on, but who's the person?-- Under legislation, I suppose, it would be the Local Disaster Coordinator.

Mr Artiemiew, you were there in the LDMG. Who was passing on that information to the SES?-- The council was, the local government was passing that information on.

50

Okay. But you don't know who that was?-- No, no.

Did you think that you should actually, because of the impending disaster that was going to happen in Condamine, that evacuation, did you think you should get in touch with your

controller on the ground?-- I tried.

1

And what happened then?-- I couldn't get hold of him.

The phone was cut out or it was engaged?-- He was - he was fairly well tied up with - and I was advised by local government that he was in contact with the local emergency coordination centre, which was out of Miles.

So, you didn't get in contact with him but you were relying on information that you were getting from the LDMG?-- Yes.

10

When did you get in touch with him?-- I'm not sure whether - whether I directly got in touch with him. I don't think I did.

If I can take you to paragraph 46 of your statement, you talk about that, "In preseason preparations operational staff were trained in the use of emergency alert to assist LDMGs and DDMGs to provide emergent messages to members of the public." What is EMQ's role in that?-- Basically we facilitate or through the council, through - again, through the Local Disaster Management Group, the process of putting those emergency alerts out, it's not or role to respond to an incident, but we certainly assist the local government in that role.

20

How do you assist them?-- Well, in some cases, the first time I used this was probably the Charleville floods, where it was one of the first times it was used in this - in Queensland, and basically that was to advise the council how to go about the process, basically how to draw up the message and where that message should go from there, yeah, and it went through the - it then goes through the District Disaster Management Group.

30

So, you helped the regional council in terms of drafting the message?-- Basically, yes, yes.

Okay. And where the message should go?-- It goes through the District Disaster Management Group.

40

I apologise. What I'm referring to is whereabouts the message should be sent to, which areas. Do you assist in that?-- Yes, yes, yes.

Does EMQ have some specific knowledge they can contribute to in relation to drafting the message?-- It's only advice, basically on the fact that it must be a succinct message, because it is limited as in how many characters, particularly with the text messages, and that also it must have a contact number so that basically if one isn't sure about what the message means, that they can - they can either phone back or look at a website to get further information.

50

At paragraph 48 and 49 you talk about the EMQ's response to the flood events, and one of the problems is for SES to respond is the low numbers that you have got. That's what you

say in paragraph 48?-- Yes.

1

And the level of training undertaken by each volunteer?--
Yes.

Now, an example of this is having no qualified SES members available to pilot flood boats during flood operations?-- Can be, yes.

Was that the case in these flood events that occurred in this region?-- In Dalby it was, yes.

10

So, how was that resolved?-- Basically we brought in operators from other areas.

And how can that be remedied?-- Well, more volunteers. We have certainly tried to get more volunteers in Dalby, we have had promotional days at the mall, we have had all sorts of things, but it is a volunteer thing, so basically it's - there is no pay for being on the SES, and to turn out at all hours of the night and do jobs and - yeah, it's - it certainly can - we're finding it harder to get volunteers to do that.

20

And you talk about in paragraph 50 there got to be more training packages that the SES volunteers want to do, to undertake more training packages?-- Not more training packages, we need more volunteers to undertake that training, because it is - it is a - you know, it's time-consuming, we do find it harder in smaller area where there are - the populations are low to actually attract people, a lot of them are already tied up in things like the rodeo committee or the - all the other committees. So, it is hard to attract those volunteers.

30

The Western Downs Regional Council helps fund the SES in this region?-- It's a joint - yeah, joint - between the State Government and the local government, that's correct.

Now, if residents were wanting food drops, for example, the LECC was wanting a food drop out of Tara, do they go through EMQ for that to be organised?-- No, they go through the LDM - their local government, through the LDMG.

40

And the LDMG then would communicate with the EMQ?-- Only for assistance, that's all.

So, if they wanted food to be resupplied at Tara, would EMQ be involved in that?-- We were involved in helping them set up, but it is - basically it is the local government that funds it and the local government that runs it. If we can be of assistance, we certainly are.

50

There's an example that's been given in evidence here today about the LECC, for example, wanting some milk to be sent out to Tara but it was sitting on the tarmac for eight hours waiting for EMQ clearance. Could you assist us with what process involves?-- That's a miscommunication, because EMQ doesn't give any clearances.

Mr Artiemiew, you are in a unique position to assist the Commission about what worked well, what didn't, and what can be improved for the future because of your involvement in the flood events, as you have described in paragraph 10 to 12 about your involvement in the flood events, but it appears the case that you can't offer any suggestions for the future, suggested improvements. Why is that?-- That's what I've - basically I've been advised in regards to policy and strategy, that's not my role, so - yeah, it's certainly - not my role to do that.

10

But I am going to ask you: what are the suggested improvements?-- Can we get more volunteers, more people to volunteer? I mean, certainly we do need to do that, and probably as far as clearer, I suppose, for the SES that's-----

I didn't quite catch that, what was that?-- Just the - our role with the SES or someone's role with the SES as far as command and control.

20

Other. Can you perhaps expand on that?-- Well, we are not in command of the SES, command and control of the SES.

Who is in command and control of the CMC?-- Well, basically it stops at the local controller, according to legislation.

So, you can't provide any assistance to the-----?-- I can provide assistance, which we do.

30

But you can't control the SES?-- No, and I - yeah, it's probably a little bit - needs to be a little bit clearer as to that role, yes.

Okay. Who has that role now, on your understanding?-- Nobody really. It's under legislation, it stops at the local controller.

And for your suggested improvement, you would like to have more management over these local?-- No it necessarily me, but it certainly needs to be pointed - some sort of clearer role for the volunteers in the volunteers - I think for their - for their benefit.

40

To understand the structure are you talking about?-- Yes, yes.

When they come in and say, for example, at Condamine, if they join the Condamine SES, they need to know what the structure is and how that works?-- Clearer understanding, I think, yes.

50

So, your role in term of SES was on providing advice?-- Advice and support, yes.

Who was directing them where to go?-- In what context?

Well, who was directing the SES where they were required to be?-- Again, basically if I would - I would talk - if it was

me involved at the time, I would talk to the local controller and see if they require assistance. If they require assistance, we can then go through either - under the Western Downs Regional Council, basically they - it's up to the local government, they basically have their SES groups which are in the Western Downs Regional Council, so they can certainly bring people in from Tara or Chinchilla or wherever. However, those - that wasn't able to be done at this time. So, if they require further resources, basically we go through other - through the DDMG basically, I suppose it is more or less, and we access assistance from other SES groups outside the local government area.

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10

Are there any other suggested improvements that you can offer us?-- No, that's about it.

Just in relation to the SES?-- That's certainly, yeah, where I'm - where my professional opinion would be, yeah.

What about training, further training for the SES?-- We have quite - we have the packages available, it's getting people - it's up to the volunteers to have the time to do it. It's a lot harder from years ago when my father was a member of the civil defence, it meant getting a pair of overalls and a tin hat and turning up when he was needed, but these days, certainly with duty of care, we need to - when we put a person on a roof, we want to be sure that they're not going to fall off and that they're wearing the correct PPE and all the rest of it, so it's a lot harder now.

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Thank you, Mr Artiemiew. I have go it no further questions.

MS McLEOD: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks. Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Nothing.

MR URE: No.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You are excused?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Commissioner, I call Phil Berting.

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PHILIP ADRIAN BERTING, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Philip Adrian Berting?-- Yes, that's correct.

And you are the chief executive officer of the Western Downs Regional Council?-- That's correct.

10

You provided some material to the Commission of Inquiry-----?-- That's correct.

-----in relation to the flood events? And perhaps if I can take you through that material. You have provided a statement that you have prepared and signed?-- That's correct, yes.

Is that your statement?-- That's correct.

And is that a statement attached to your submission that you previously supplied to the Commission?-- No, this is - we supplied an information to the Commission earlier and this was a follow up submission.

20

Okay. Well, I will treat them as separate tenders. Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 123.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 123"

MS WILSON: You also provided a joint submission with the mayor, Councillor Ray Brown, to the Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- That's correct.

That was dated 25th of March 2011?-- That's correct.

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Now, in that statement, you made reference to various documents?-- That's correct.

And they have also been provided to the Commission?-- That's correct.

Okay. I will tender that submission and I will tender the accompanying documents that go with that.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 124.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 124"

MS WILSON: There are two folders, Madam Commissioner. Now, there are also some notes from the Miles District Local Emergency Coordination Committee?-- That's correct.

1

Can you provide the date that's on that document?-- It is Monday, the 3rd of January 2011.

Okay. Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 125.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 125"

MS WILSON: And you also have provided us with a Miles Customer Service Centre debrief notes?-- That is correct.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 126.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 126"

MS WILSON: Various situation reports were done in relation to the flood events?-- That's correct.

30

Have you got those situation reports?-- Yes.

Commissioner, I tender those situation reports.

COMMISSIONER: What sort of quantity are we talking about? Were they done over a particular period?-- Regular updates on what was happening day by day with the flood events.

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Do you know when they start or finish?

MRS JUHASZ: 20th of December 2010, up until the 19th of January 2011.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 127.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 127"

MS WILSON: Also provided was the Local Disaster Management Group minutes?-- That's correct.

And if you can have a look at the first date on that

document?-- 7th of October 2010.

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And can you have a look at the last date on the last document?-- 22nd of February 2011.

Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 128.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 128"

MS WILSON: And, finally, there was an Engineering Services special report regarding the flood damage repairs on January 2011?-- That's correct. That was a council report, that's right.

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That is dated the 1st of February 2011?-- That's right.

Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 129.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 129"

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MS WILSON: If I can take you to your statement that you provided to the Commission just recently? Perhaps I can take you to paragraph 2? Before I go on to that, Madam Commissioner, I remind you that there are two Local Emergency Coordination Committee meetings, one on the Friday, the 14th of January and one of the 17th of January. I tender those documents.

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COMMISSIONER: They will be 130 and 131 in order of date.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 130 AND 131"

MS WILSON: And at this stage, it might be convenient to tender a bundle of media releases issued by the Western Downs Regional Council, beginning on the 20th of December 2010 and finishing on the 20th of January 2011.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 132.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 132"

MS WILSON: And, finally, I believe, can I also refer you to the Western Downs Local Disaster Management Plan?

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 133.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 133"

MS WILSON: So, if I now can take you to paragraph 2 of your statement - sorry, paragraph 2 of your submission that you provided to the Commission, page 2 of the submission you provided to the Commission, you talk there at paragraph 3, "Prior to the 2010/2011 flood events council established the Local Disaster Management Group, LDMG, and Local Emergency Coordination Committee, LECC, Chinchilla, Miles and Tara." Can you see that?-- That's correct.

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Okay. I am going to direct your attention to the Local Emergency Coordination Committees?-- Yes.

Did they exist before - well, first of all the question is when you say prior to 2010/2011, when was that?-- Well, we would have established that at amalgamation of the councils. So, what happened there was obviously being such a large region, we recognised the need to have local representation, so we turned to our local customer service centres, as we refer to them, and we established what we call Local Emergency Coordination Committees. Now, what we did there is obviously we had in place three key staff members who had been with our organisation for many, many years, and they actually headed up those groups.

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Okay. And was that an initiative of the Western Downs Regional Council?-- It was.

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And that is in recognition of the vast distances that you have got to deal with?-- That's correct.

And that provides a communication between various towns and smaller districts within the larger district of the Western Downs Regional Council?-- That's correct.

How did that work, in your opinion, during these recent flood events?-- I felt it worked very well, in particular for two of our smaller communities, Warra, and also for Condamine. Condamine, the LECC coordinator is Helen Thomas, she's had many years experience with the former council, and in her role in the former council the SES group from Condamine actually came under her at the Miles office. So, to me, it felt like it was just a local - local people looking after the local area.

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And is the responsibility for informing the residents in that community about the local disaster management plan, does that fall on the LECC or remains with the Western Downs Regional Council?-- It remains with Western Downs Regional Council.

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Okay. Now, how do you get that information out about the operation of the local disaster management plan to the residents?-- We actually have a website, Western Downs Regional Council website, and on that website there is actually a disaster management icon. If residents were to go to that, they can actually peel right through all of the - the relevant details.

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Was the disaster management plan up on that website before the flood event?-- No, it wasn't, it was in draft form.

Sorry?-- It was in draft form, so, no, it wasn't.

Is it still draft form?-- It is.

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Is it on the website now?-- It - no.

And when does the Western Downs Regional Council propose to put it on the website?-- We had a series of debriefs that we wanted to talk to the community about, so we're looking at improving the plan, see where we had some shortcomings or where we can improve things, so we will be trying to get that up within the next six weeks.

Now, in terms of evacuation centres, does the Western Downs Regional Council have possible evacuation centres throughout the region which you've earmarked as evacuation centres?-- Yes.

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Do the community know about those evacuation centres?-- I would say no.

Should the community know about those evacuation centres?-- I would say yes. They were informed about the evacuation centres when they were door-knocked and told they had to move, so people were made aware of the evacuation centres.

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Leading up to, though, the 2010/2011 floods, the residents would not know where their evacuation centres are?-- No, I don't believe so.

And is that something the Western Downs Regional Council is proposing to address?-- It is.

And is it the case that you are going to get that information to the residents?-- That's right, we are trying to look at what is the best - that's one of our areas for improvement moving forward, how do we actually better inform our residents.

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What are the options that are on the table presently?-- Basically we are looking at - it could be a case of preparing a disaster kit where people are actually are informed of

evacuation centres, about the Disaster Management Plan, what to do in - when a disaster does hit, where they should do, what numbers they should be ringing, that sort of thing. So, we are trying to put together a kit or some sort of correspondance that we can actually send to all our residents. One of the other ares we have identified is that because we are in a resource sector, we have got a lot of transient people in our shire, that we should - we actually are targeting real estate agents, so that people do know what to do in case of emergency.

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Real estate agents?-- That's right, because a lot of people are renting.

So they may come in for, say, two or three months?-- That's correct.

And they don't know what to do in an emergency. So is it my understanding that if you rent a house, then the real estate agent will also give you this package as well?-- That's correct.

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Do you have designated evacuation centres or just possible evacuation centres?-- We have actually designated evacuation centres in our principal towns.

What does the term "principal towns" mean?-- Okay, Dalby, Chinchilla and Miles.

What about for other towns?-- That's an area that we were caught out in this - this event.

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Okay?-- We've identified that we didn't have that adequately covered and that first come to light with the evacuation of Warra when we had actually struggled with trying to find where we would actually put the people, we actually were able to actually move them back to Chinchilla.

What is the council going to do to ensure that that is rectified?-- Well, that's one of the first things we need to identify because we need to identify whether we have suitable evacuation centres as well. In this particular event our designated evacuation centre was the South School on this side of the creek and on the other side of the creek, we have - because the town gets cut in half. The other side of the creek we have the showgrounds. Now, being school holidays, it worked very, very well but now, having lived through the event, I believe that in the future in the middle of a school year it would be very difficult to utilise school facilities, having to have people co-exist with schools. So it is something that we need to identify as a council to see if we can find better facilities for our evacuation centres in this town. In Chinchilla and Miles we have - actually have the community centres which are set up quite well for - for that purpose.

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And the smaller towns, you said that that was something that didn't work well?-- Yep.

Are you going out there and trying to - or are you going out there and determining what facilities could be used as evacuation centres?-- We are.

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Has that been done?-- It hasn't been done.

Now, in terms of looking at evacuation centres, some evacuation centres may be suitable for fire but not for flood and some may be suitable for flood and not for fire. Are

those differences being taken into account?-- Not at this point, no.

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Will those differences-----?-- But it is important because it - I can understand your point because in some areas in this town, and I can give you an example, our own works depot got cut off by the flood, so it was very difficult sometimes to get around even in this town with the flood waters. So it is something we need to identify.

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Is it the case that the Western Downs Regional Council are going to establish evacuation centres in all of the towns in the region or is there a cutoff point where you can't do it?-- That would be very difficult for us. We have 23 small towns in our community so it would be very difficult to have one in every single town. That's why we would be looking for the principal towns or the bigger centres.

What happens to the smaller towns?-- I believe that we would have to be looking at evacuations like we did for Condamine.

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So it's the case that the Western Downs Regional Council is not considering doing evacuation centres in Condamine, rather just evacuate the town again?-- Well, we haven't decided that. As I said, we have 23 towns. Some of those towns have only got four or five houses in them. We would have to make a judgment call on the size of the town and whether there is actually a facility that would be suitable.

Mr Berting, when are these decisions going to be made?-- We're just in the process now of having our debriefs and trying to gather all our information. So, again, in that six-week time period that I've identified, that's when we'll be trying to identify it.

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At the end of that process you should be able to identify the evacuation centres that are going to be placed in each and every town?-- That's right.

And also a strategy for informing residents-----?-- That's correct.

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-----of flood events?-- Because we want to have that in place ready to be able to inform the residents before next storm season.

Now, in relation to Dalby, the Dalby water supply was cut off and that was due to the Dalby Water Treatment Plant being completely flooded by the Condamine River on the 29th of December?-- I could clarify that. It wasn't completely flooded. There was a large portion of it was flooded. Most of the electrical system was flooded. The entire bore field, which is where we draw our water from, was actually flooded.

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It was out of operation for four days?-- That's correct.

What warning did Dalby have that they would be flooded to the extent that the water treatment plant would be inoperable?--

We were monitoring the BOM website, constantly. We have a trigger point where we know it's going to actually inundate our plant. That trigger point is around 10.3 metres. What happened was that it was rising very quickly. It actually happened overnight and it wasn't till 6.30, I think, in the morning of about the 28th or 29th is when it actually inundated what we call the clear water storage, which is an area underneath the water treatment plant, and then went through - as it kept rising, actually went through some of the electrical equipment that we have in place there.

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Even if you have warning, is there anything that can be done to ensure the water supply is continued and maintained?-- When the water gets to that height there is absolutely nothing we can do at this point.

So at that point in time, Dalby doesn't have water?-- I would suggest that it's - it doesn't - it is not able to produce water. We have over 13 megalitres of storage in the town and one of the things I make sure with my officers, that during this event, as it was building up, to make sure the storage areas were actually full, the reservoirs. At 13 megs we have got about three days' supply on normal usage. What we did in the middle of this crisis is we used the SMS alerts to get the message out to people to say, "We have got a crisis situation. We need you to cut back your water." We were able to get back to around two megs a day. So effectively, in my mind, we had roughly about six days' water supply if we could keep that level at two mega litres. This was also during a period when the cleanup was starting. So we sourced alternative water so that we weren't using treated water for that purpose.

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Now, when was a decision made to bring in water?-- That was made around about the 28th or 29th. I spoke to the acting - Acting District Director Simon Chase and we analysed it together. I said, "Look, if we keep going out" - the scenario I was getting from my staff was it could take four days even to get into the water treatment plant and then another two days to fix it. We said at six days we will definitely be running out of water. A decision was made then to cart water in and, to his credit, Simon was able to get that water organised overnight and at 6 a.m. the next morning it was actually arriving in town.

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Were you aware whether there was any involvement from the SDC in that decision making process?-- I believe Simon did escalate it to the SDC.

What about directly with the SDC down to the LDMG?-- Not to us, no.

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Now, if I can take you to the Chinchilla water supply. Dirty water did cause issues with the plant there?-- In Chinchilla, yes, it - it was more - it was more a case of the actual pipes breaking more so than dirty water. What was happening there, obviously, because the pipes are under water in the middle of the flood, it was very difficult to actually identify where the breaks were occurring so that caused us some difficulties.

And there was a boil water alert put on the water of Chinchilla?-- That's correct.

Now, that was because routine tests in treated water during the flood was found to have low chlorine and was positive with e. coli?-- Yes.

And once that occurs, immediately there is a boil water alert put on the water?-- That's correct.

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I noted in the engineering report on the 1st of February 2011 it said that the removal of the boil water alert was clearly premature?-- That's correct.

Why was that?-- I understand that what had happened is that you have to get three clear tests to say that your chlorine residuals have increased. What had happened is that the actual three tests were taken by our - our local staff. Our senior staff who control the water supply and look after that were not confident that they were not taken from the right measuring points. There was pressure to put out the boil water alert to - to remove it, and we believe it was premature even though it proved to be correct, because we did get those three clear days, and the actual Queensland Health is the body that actually removes the boil water - or gives us authority to remove the boil water alert. Our engineering director was highlighting to council that in his opinion it was removed prematurely.

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And that was only because one test was done and not three?-- That's correct.

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How can the process be done better in the future that we can assure the residents that the boil water alert has been taken off properly?-- Yes, we will have - make sure that we - we reinforce with our staff the importance of the three tests before they actually remove the boil water alert and that will be documented through our standard work practices.

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If I can take your attention to the Condamine and the flooding that occurred on the Condamine, especially the flooding that occurred on the 30th of December 2010. You're aware that electricity supply was cut for the town?-- I wasn't aware - I was aware that they were talking about cutting the power supply. Ergon actually sat in the Local Disaster Management Groups with us and also the district group meetings. There was some talk that when it got to a certain level, and I think that level was 13.5 metres, that power would have to be cut to the town. So at that point we were getting around there on about the night of the 29th, it was getting up into that - into that range where power would have to be cut. Now, I understand that decision was made by Ergon to cut the power not by the council.

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Indeed, the information was only provided to the LDMG after the power was cut?-- That's correct.

Now, if the LDMG had that information, then they could provide that information to the residents and they could make appropriate responses to be able to safeguard food and things like that?-- That's correct. 1

But you couldn't make that decision because the electricity was cut without the LDMG's knowledge?-- That's correct.

And is there a process that is engaged when a supply of essential services is cut to a town where the LDMG is involved?-- Normally, we're only notified. We're not - we're not actually in charge of that particular - that essential service. We don't look after the Ergon, but we do look after the water and we knew that - and the reasons why we were having a lot of these discussions was because we knew our water supply would actually be compromised when the power went off. 10

When you're talking about the electricity being cut, you're only notified after the event. Is that the usual process?-- Look, sometimes we'll get prior warning and again, as I've been saying, "If it gets to a certain height, we'll have to cut the power off", is the message that we were getting. But measuring - that was the message that we got on the night of the 29th and early morning of the 30th, that the power would have to go off. 20

If you had got better warning about the power being cut off, would that have assisted in the water supply not being compromised?-- No, it wouldn't have. The water supply actually went under water by about a metre. So having the power, it wouldn't - wouldn't have helped us to keep the plant operating. 30

But it would have assisted in being able to inform the residents?-- Yes.

Now, in terms of the information being supplied to residents about a variety of issues, whether it is warning that a flood is coming or warning that essential services are being cut, what are the tools that Western Downs Regional Council use?-- Are we talking about Condamine specific or we talking about----- 40

No, I'm talking about this region?-- Okay.

Then we can break it down into towns?-- Okay. If I can turn to Dalby, we - we had door-knocking, we had bullhorn, which is a loud hailer going around, telling people that water was rising. In Warra we were able to contact a local resident down there to help us and assist us to go round and talk to the residents. In Chinchilla there is very detailed flood mapping and they have a history there of knowing at what height - at a certain height they go and tell certain residents that they need to either evacuate or move to higher ground. The particular area that's flooding in Chinchilla has a lot of businesses involved so it was very important to get messages to them. So, as I said, at six metres I go and tell 50

certain people. At seven metres, the map gets wider and the people who are actually spoken to gets wider. So that was what was done there. Jandowae caught us by surprise. We had a flash flood there that lasted about six hours. So it was so quick and it was up and down that we didn't know. Great deal of difficulty talking to the residents there. And of course down in Condamine, it was very difficult with Condamine because of the - I guess the BOM - we were getting into unchartered territory. The BOM website was starting to show to us that we were going to have a record flood and we weren't aware what that peak was going to be though. That was the issue.

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When do you determine to issue an SMS alert?-- The SMS alerts, if I can turn to Dalby, we normally - if we need to get an urgent message out, something that's caught us by surprise, we will get an urgent message out. The boil water was one. The water treatment plant going down was another. Again, they can only be used for emergencies. Because our people did so well the first night we wanted to send a message to say thank you very much. They said, "That's not what it's for." So it was more about that, telling people they need to move their cars the higher ground. So if we knew something that was happening that was catching us by surprise we could get the SMS alert out. And the SMS alerts, the way they were work, we were actually able to confine it to just a certain area so not everybody in the regional council would be getting the alert.

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So MSM alert was sent to Condamine - is that the case - on the 30th of December?-- That would be correct.

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Was that because things were just happening too quickly?-- That's right.

Now, when were you aware that the Condamine - there's a possibility the Condamine is going to be evacuated?-- On the 30th, the morning of the 30th, I was in regular contact with my LECC staff. So around about 11 a.m. every morning I would be dialling in to meetings that they were holding out there in Miles. I expressed my concerns to the local officer there. Looking at the BOM website, the history of some of the readings, we knew that the reading at - the last known reading that we knew before Condamine, which was the last electronic reader, was at the Chinchilla Weir and the reading there is normally - when it gets to Condamine the water is normally a metre higher. It was indicating it was around 14 metres. It was at that point that I rang my officer in Miles and said, "I'm very concerned. I think Condamine is in trouble. I really think we should be talking about evacuation." I was informed then that, "Actually, they're already down there having a meeting now talking about voluntary evacuation." I said, "Look, I think it is going to go past that. This is - this is getting into record territory."

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So was sending a SMS alert contemplated?-- Not at that stage.

Why is that?-- I guess at the time everything, as we said, was

just happening so quickly because we already knew people were down there talking to the residents and we already knew that we had - we already had Bill Power, a very experienced guy, and Glen Taylor, very experienced people, very cool-headed people who we knew we could rely on and we thought the message would probably get out very quickly.

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In terms of the flood events that occurred in Condamine, would it have assisted the Western Downs Regional Council to have more river gauges so you could have better access to information?-- I believe for Condamine, yes. And, actually, that's one of our recommendations moving forward, not just in Condamine. We believe this needs to be addressed throughout our whole region.

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Okay. And those-----?-- Especially for Charleys Creek - if I could address the Charleys Creek area, is another one. We had some real problems there. That's the Charleys Creek that flooded Chinchilla. We had some real concerns about automated readers in those catchments as well.

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If can take you to those recommendations now at page 23, there are numerous recommendations issued as you stated there?-- Yes.

One of them looking is at the State Emergency Services Volunteer Concept Review?-- Yes.

Why do you say that?-- I believe that these people work as volunteers. I believe they need to - we need to review that process. We're finding that, in particular, if I could, Dalby, our numbers were very low. We've had recruitment drives but I believe we had inexperienced people in our SES in Dalby. I know that in areas like Condamine where you have got very experienced people, I've heard the same story from Bill Power about the amount of work that they have to do to keep up the volunteer status and whether it is actually worth it any longer, and it would be a real pity to lose those very experienced people. We believe the SES should be a paid service just like fire and rescue.

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Would there be any overlap between these services that could be offered - that is, SES, fire and rescue and police?-- And I believe that's where we need to have a review about where they both fit into emergency services. Fire and rescue, the rescue part to us is where does it actually fit into when we're trying to get people out, who is supposed to be doing this? Fire and rescue or SES? SES are volunteers; you have got paid people here. Something has to be done about addressing that.

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You also raised issue with the flood boats and the suitability of flood boats in various areas?-- That's correct.

And so that really needs to be evaluated about what resources are needed for which town?-- They have got to be fit for purpose and that's the issue we have. There is no point buying just a standard flood boat if it is not fit for purpose.

For example, in Charleys Creek the flood boat was way too large?-- Way too big, and we had to utilise private citizens' boats.

So an evaluation needs to occur, do you say, in relation to SES resources across the region, the resources that they have and are they suitable?-- That's correct.

You say that it should go one step further and there should be a re-evaluation of how the SES fits into emergency disaster management?-- I do. 10

And to take it to the level that it should be a full-time, paid facility?-- That's correct. After the last event I'm convinced of that, actually. We've had seven floods here in Dalby since before Christmas. The little bridge down the road here has been inundated seven times. Throughout the whole course of that we've had our - we've had a newly appointed local controller. It has just become too much; he's resigned. 20

You also then, on that same topic, refer to, "Also consideration should be given to the joint role of council and EMQ have in managing SES"?-- Yes.

"Practical and legislative amendments could streamline the funding, resourcing, ownership and insurance issues that bounce between local government and Emergency Management Queensland"?-- Yes, I think we need to refine what we do so we're not duplicating our services. And in particular, in events like this, I think we really need to have, and I think it has been highlighted before by Doug, Doug Bougoure, who works for me, just some of the issues that we have had with resupply and things like that, we really need to finetune what we're doing in the middle of an emergency. 30

Have you given thought to particularising that?-- Not at this stage.

Can you give that some thought-----?-- I will be. 40

-----and send us a submission in relation to that?-- Yep.

About how you see - where the problems and how you see that that could lie?-- Yep.

"Communication methods for the response teams in the event of disasters should be reviewed"?-- Yes.

What are you talking about communication?-- What we're talking about there is that it's - and in Condamine was the classic example. We lost communication with Condamine at one stage when the power went off, the high tower went off. We were very fortunate to have satellite phones to be used. We believed that this needs to be addressed because communication has become a real key issue for us throughout the whole event, throughout the whole region. So we believe that that needs to be addressed. 50

And how can that be addressed?-- I believe through funding, is one of the issues. Mobile phone coverage needs to be - needs to be improved. One of the issues - one of the issues we've already put up is that we believe the powerline that crosses the Condamine River at Condamine should be raised and we have always asked Powerlink and Ergon to consider that, because we felt if the powerline had have been raised, maybe the power could have been left on and it would have helped an awful lot in the town.

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Then you're talking about, "The Local Authority has commissioned a report of the flood event and from this future mitigation strategies will be recommended and considered." Has that report been completed or nearly completed?-- No, that's only just - we've just let out a tender for that. People from Water Technologies are commencing that process for us.

A preliminary view you have, though, that more flood and rainfall monitoring devices needs to be installed?-- That's correct.

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Have you particularised the waterways where they should be installed?-- We haven't identified - obviously we have identified the Condamine and Charleys Creek area but we were hoping that this report and this study would actually identify what would be the more suitable areas. We found in Dalby, but this done back in the '90s, work with BOM, that we have very, very reliable information. We know exactly when peaks are going to come and what they're going to be and I must say the BOM was pretty well spot on with all their predictions.

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And that is through the cooperation that occurred with BOM back in the 1990s with the Dalby ALERT system?-- That's right.

That is that there's gauges that are automatically read that can come to the Western Downs Regional Council very quickly?-- That's correct. Yes.

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Having that information provided you information that assisted the response to the Dalby floods quicker than other regions where you didn't have that information?-- That's correct.

And if we can just continue with those recommendations, I just want to take you to the last one: "The gathering of information and recording inundations of properties could be coordinated better by one lead agency"?-- That's right.

Tell me about that?-- Look, what we found is that there are a lot of different groups involved here. Obviously council is one, gathering information. Department of Communities are heavily involved in funding for people who have been affected by inundations. I believe that there's a lot of doubling-up. There's a lot of two, three, four surveys being carried out by different groups. We believe that there should be only one lead agency coordinating all of that and in our opinion, we believe it should be the local government.

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Is this in the recovery or the response phase?-- It's in actually both, we say, but mainly recover and-----

In terms of response, can you give me an example where you say that the Local Disaster Management Group should be the lead agency in coordinating information?-- In gathering inundations, we believe that the council should be the - because we have access to GIS and mapping and I believe we actually have probably the better tools to use in that area than probably someone like, say, the Department of Communities, who would just come in and be here to help and assist. And don't get me wrong, they did a fantastic job, but I just believe in collecting the data that we need for properties and properties inundation it should be done by council because we have mapping systems that can be put in place. And we know then from BOM that this part of the town is going to be in trouble at this level, the next level, the next level. We would be able to coordinate and then better coordinate what's happening on the ground in our towns.

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How many agencies are working in relation to that type of information at this moment?-- I'm actually not sure. I think there's only two that I'm aware of. I know the council - I know we are doing it.

Yes?-- And I believe that the Department of Communities, I think it's one of the critical factors for funding through the Premier's Appeal. You have to have this information, so that's why we're actually out there now trying to help ourselves by getting this information but being able to help our residents as well.

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Thank you, Mr Berting. They're all the questions I have for you.

MS McLEOD: I have no questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: Nothing, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure.

MR URE: Just a couple of very brief matters, Madam Commissioner. Look, please, at this document. Is that a Western Downs Local Disaster Coordination Centre message report?-- That is correct.

I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: I'm sorry, Mr Ure, what was it?

MR URE: It is the message report. Madam Commissioner, you will recall that there was a suggestion made that there was a response between phone calls made by a resident of in excess of two hours.

COMMISSIONER: It relates specifically to that.

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MR URE: Yes, it does.

COMMISSIONER: And the document is called?

MR URE: Local Disaster Coordination Centre message form of 27/12/2010.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 134.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 134"

MR URE: Would you look, please, at this document, Mr Berting. Is that a council spreadsheet showing the location of advisory door-knocking and the commencement of the flood event?-- That's correct. That's the Chinchilla door-knocks, that's right.

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I tender that Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 135.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 135"

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MR URE: Thank you.

MS WILSON: No re-examination, Madam Commissioner. Can the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Berting, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call the Mayor of the Western Downs Regional, Councillor Raymond Brown.

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RAYMOND CLAUDE BROWN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Raymond Claude Brown?-- Yes.

And you are the Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council?-- Yes.

Now, you have provided a statement to the Commission of Inquiry in relation to the flood events of 2010/2011?-- Yes.

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Attached to your statement is the submission that you also provided to the Commission of Inquiry that you made with your chief executive officer?-- Correct.

If you can have a look at this document, please. Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 136.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 136"

MS WILSON: Now, mayor, I have asked a lot of the questions to your chief executive officer in relation to the submission that you both provided to the Floods Commission of Inquiry so if I could just address your attention to a couple of matters that arise in your statement?-- Mmm-hmm.

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If I could take you to paragraph 4 of your statement and that talks about - it follows on from the discussion about SMS alerts and how they were used in this region. Now, it talks about that if the billing address of the intended recipient was not within the affected area, then that person would not have received the message. Then it says, "It is understood that EMQ and Telstra are continuing to investigate the ability to distribute these messages to all intended recipients in an affected area - that is, using the relevant tower signals. Council strongly supports this initiative"?-- Yes.

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What involvement have you had with EMQ and Telstra in relation to this initiative of directing the SMSs to the area not by the billing address?-- Yes. In relation to setting out a mapping with the SMS - with the EMQ in relation to where the SMS should go, it is certainly a defined area but only relates to those residents who have actually registered their phone in that area. We certainly received phone calls from England and Germany, because it was a holiday period, as the town was flooding. So it certainly did affect it. Those people who have come in and moved from another area, which was mentioned before, have come into a region, their billing address is actually not there. So it is a tool but it is not the answer. Council at present are investing what we call an eNews where - it is a tool where we will use as a council to distribute

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information electronically, through texting SMSs, in relation
to not only events in our council, rates and whatever, but for
emergency services because we are restricted with
160 categories - characters, sorry.

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Yes?-- That's required. So, this way we can pass on information quicker, without having to go through the process of using, so it is one tool we will use in many tools for the media.

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Why is EMQ involved in this process?-- Well, I suppose we thought they were part of the process in relation to the release of this information, but it's obviously through our district disaster one, it's our police that actually are the ones that sign off on it.

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So, do EMQ need to be a part of this process?-- Possibly not, but they can assist. It's like all stakeholders, SES are crucial to a lot of our businesses, as to lot of organisations. I think they should also be a party to it also.

And how do they assist in sending out the SMS messages?-- Obviously they're not a telco to do that.

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No?-- But they can assist in what sort of information we need to put out in the public.

And did they assist in these flood events?-- I am unaware. I suppose that came through from the superintendent or inspector of police that issued a lot of these SMS alerts. They have the final say.

You say in paragraph 6 that, "Further advice and information on locations where automatic readings stations should be placed are currently being gathered from the Bureau of Meteorology." Are you working with the Bureau in relation to this?-- As mentioned by my CEO, we have employed a consultant to go in - Water Technology, I think it's called - in relation to where they should be across the region. We have an enormous wealth of knowledge from our public. I certainly - I can rattle through all the creeks if you want to know, I think that would probably not suit today's things, but we do have recollection of what tributaries flow into system. It is just electronic reader stations of water height, I actually want to move forward, I want electronic automatic rain gauges up in the headwaters of the tributaries of these creeks to give us a few more hours, because once the water's hit the gauge, you're in a flood. Let's get it early. If we know X millimetres have fallen in a catchment and we can see it trigger across the region, we know these creek systems are going to have a flow.

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What is required to get that type of infrastructure?-- Well, I have already had discussions and, as Glen Taylor this morning mentioned - I happened to be with him when we were discussing with an energy company where they have telemetry systems that they're using with the coal seam gas industry. I wish to actually tap in on this. If they have got some wonderful, cheap - because all this comes down to resources - we'd love to have a metring station every 100 metres down the river but it doesn't work that way. It's got to be practical. Early warning is the key tool in this whole flood event and in

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our future flood events. If we can get some early warning systems in place and as many as possible, we have many tributaries flowing into the Condamine river network.

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But early warning is one part of the equation in dealing with flood events, it's communicating those early warnings. What is the Western Downs Regional Council proposing to do to better communicate the warnings that are required in these flood events?-- And as I mentioned about the e-news, that's one step. You have got to remember that probably half my population here don't receive mobile phones either.

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That's a real issue. How is Western Downs Regional Council going to deal with that?-- Working with government and particular mobile towers to see how we can actually get better utilisation across the region, if we need more of them and where they should be placed. Obviously the main mediums of the media, which is, you know, newspapers, TV, radio, they were fully utilised, websites. Not everyone uses a computer. Certainly telecommunications, as in phone, are crucial. When you do lose a tower, like Condamine, then your communications do suffer. We also had land holder across our rural sector that had their houses inundated and they're sitting on top of a roof where they don't have a mobile phone service and they're phone's sitting in water-----

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So-----?-- -----you know.

What can be done for those people to give them warning?-- We're extremely lucky in our rural and regional - in Queensland, but particularly our area, everyone knows their neighbours very well. It was unfortunate this event occurred between a Christmas and a New Year period where there's a lot of people in transit. Now, some of these neighbours, they're neighbours were not home and, as mentioned earlier this morning, is we do rely on a lot of local knowledge upstream to let us know if there's been an event, a major rainfall. We can't rely on that forever. It's important we use technology and try and assist, still use our local knowledge, but actually add to it and see whether we can get some better systems in place.

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On a people level, can the LECC assist in this?-- Certainly. They're at the coalface, they are right there where it's happening, but still, as you mentioned before, it's important to get information running both ways. It's okay from the top down, but we need it from the bottom also coming up. We also have got to make sure that information is dispersed through your community, where information heading back to the LECC areas are dispersed, if you have got coordinators going down there, making sure that information goes out. Throughout this event, I mean, we had eight towns that were having some form of inundation, so we had to rely on a lot of our local support and, I mean, you know, the CEO just mentioned about our SES. They're volunteers, they were driven off their feet for all these events, not one, two, and three flood events, you know. Our community rallied so well to deliver the outcomes that we had in our community.

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So, from your observations did you see that the SES were struggling to cope?-- Look, I suppose it comes down to numbers. You have got - when you have small numbers, particularly like in relation to Condamine - I know what Bill Power and Glen Taylor and them fellows did, enormous amount of effort and no sleep. It was a tremendous effort. Right across all our SES my concern now is how do we recruit and retain SES staff? It was mentioned this morning the huge regulations that are put on these members as volunteers to meet certain standards. We know they have to be trained, but, you know, they can't afford two or three days a week to be away training. So, I'm in favour with the CEO in relation - we need as a whole to look at how do we actually engage our SES - now, whether it's through the fireys and whatever and rescue, I don't know, but it's got to the stage that we need to - full employment, it's as simple as that.

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Are you suggesting then that the SES become an arm of another emergency service?-- I think we have got to find a way of getting people involved. You have got to remember if we had a quick snapshot of the SES, you will find that the age is getting pretty high. We have got to stimulate the Y generation and get them moving, volunteering. How we are going to do that, everyone knows you have got to find some dollars to do that, and I think we have got to be smarter of how we actually involve it. We need it - as a community, we need this type of service. There will be another flood. We have got to be prepared for it.

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Now, the Western Downs Regional Council provides funding to the SES?-- Yes.

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Why do they do that?-- What a crucial part of infrastructure for our region. We are extremely proud. You know, as mentioned, we have got 23 towns across the region, a huge area, 38,000 square kilometres we look after. We have these events, whether it's fire, flood, whatever, if there's an accident the SES are there. They are part of our communities. It's extremely important. We're proud of it, quite happy to fund it. I know it's resources, but we're quite happy to assist in funding.

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Do you have any direction how these funding is directed? Do you have any input in how this funding is directed?-- We don't have any input. We ask and, look, it's only in a matter in the last two weeks where we have asked them, I have been given - donated quite a large sum of money to go towards the SES, what do they need, things like which you have mentioned already. In relation to boats, Chinchilla's is a classic where they have got a very large boat, they actually want a smaller one. I have already got the prices right now for that boat. Now, it's working with the EMQ to say, "All right. What are - what do you need, what type of boat?" It's no good me saying it. I will find you the funds.

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You work with EMQ in relation to that, you don't work with the local controllers?-- We have asked the SES - each local

control centre to give us what do they need, and then we will work - because there's certain regulations you must have in equipment, so we will work with EMQ to deliver it, but our main outcome is deliver the resource to our local SES areas.

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When the Dalby Water Treatment Plant got inundated and Dalby was not operational for four days, can you tell me was it actioned immediately to bring water into Dalby or was that decision postponed until the damage was determined, the damage of the Water Treatment Plant was determined?-- I don't think anything was postponed. I mean, we need to get a valuation of actually what had occurred. You know, when we had one of our own staff members living in a house that had a rope hooked up between his house and the centre and had to use it to get across - water was getting in to his house - to make sure we could keep our water treatment plant on line, I mean, that's dedication for you from our own staff, tremendous dedication. We did everything we could to keep that on line. Now, once this occurred, obviously, as the CEO mentioned, we had a certain supply of water that would last so many days. We had to notify our town as quick can as we could, cut the consumption back, level 6 water restrictions went into place. The police officer Simon Chase went through the process of how we are going to deliver this. Look, at 6 o'clock the next morning we had a supply of water coming in. Certainly what hindered that was the resupply of being able to get those tankers in. It's easy to say, "Let's cart the water in." We had a road network that was in shatters. We were bringing water from Jandowae, Bell, Oakey. Once those roads were cut, it limited - and it was only Oakey where we were coming from at that stage. There was road restrictions in - sorry, load limits in place, so - and it was a very big task, and, I mean, it was absolute credit to be able to continue to supply a potable supply to a town of this size.

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Did you have any direct involvement with the SDC?-- Yes.

And can you tell me about that?-- I was called in through the inspector of police, particularly in relation to January 10.

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Yes?-- Because obviously across the State it was a significant day. The concerns with the State one is particularly resupply of water to the town, getting the water supply back on, and the concerns in relation to Condamine and with the involvement of the defence force.

What about in relation to the water supply?-- Yes, we were continual updating to the State Disaster one, including the Premier was involved in that too, informing of what processes were in place, what timeframes that we had, because we had to get our staff in there which were flooded in with the SES by boat to get there.

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Okay. Just excuse me for one moment. Thank you, Mr Brown. They are the only questions.

MS McLEOD: No questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: No questions.

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MR URE: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. Just a couple of matters. Would you look, please, at this document? Is that what is colloquially called a screen dump of the council website?-- Yes.

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And is the first page the homepage and the following pages are, in fact, example of what screens you will get when you toggle through the options which are available in the bottom right-hand corner?-- Yes.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Is this current or was it later?

MR URE: This is a current screen dump; is that the case?-- Yes, this is an updated one.

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But it shows the available options that were available options as at the date of the flood events with which the Commission is concerned?-- Yes.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 137.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 137"

MR URE: It's obvious from the evidence that's before the Commission, particularly of some of the police officers, that it is common knowledge that the media is an important tool for the Western Downs Regional Council to get warnings, alerts, and advices distributed to the public; is that the case?-- Yes.

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You don't need to go to it, but on page 13 of 21 of Exhibit 118, which is Mr Kajewski's statement, there's a list of a number of media outlets and he says that it was indicated to him that you participated in over 1700 interviews and maintained written notes of these, including there's a number of outlets, both local, national and international which are listed. Are those statements true and correct?-- Yes.

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What's the importance, in your view, of access to the media to the extent that you have had in promulgating the warnings that you wish to?-- Well, look, obviously the local media are a key tool in dispersing information across the region. It is not the only tool, but certainly in relation to local radio, I - every local radio that was present in our region, we stimulated - particularly from media releases or media alerts,

they would make contact and we would follow up any additional information. Of particular note, for instance, is the ABC. All I had to do was give them five minutes' warning and I could go straight to air, and it was a tremendous service. Our local TV, same thing, tremendous. When it came to newspaper that was probably a bit different, because Chinchilla News itself was inundated, it was very hard to get those papers out, so - but certainly across our State, the State papers, I made particular point of also doing all interviews across the State, all interviews interstate, because it was a Christmas period where a lot of residents were transiting across the region, both - our people, south, north, wherever, and I even did the 2 a.m. interviews with New Zealand to assure the SES crews that were across from New Zealand I was trying to keep the snakes away from them. You know, we did everything we could to inform the public what was available. We were well aware not everybody listens to the ABC, doesn't listen to radio, doesn't watch TV, doesn't read papers, doesn't use the internet. We used every medium we could, including some people, some staff members of ours were utilising Facebook to get it across there. We were concerned because there was some significant wrong information going across Facebook and that does concern us. We are investigating now to find a secure site. We are well aware of Queensland Police Service's secure site, and I know it was utilised well. Also using the e-news, which I mentioned previously to Ms Wilson, it was in relation to how we can actually get a database of our own for our own residents, so we can keep them informed on a regular basis.

Exhibit 132 before the Commission is a bundle of media releases dating from the 20th of December 2010 to the 20th of January 2011. To which media were they distributed?-- These went across all mediums, both local, State, radio, newspapers, TV, 20th to the - what did you say, the 19th, did you? 20th of January. 20th of December to 20 January. Yes, they were - they were media releases. These releases actually triggered interviews and obviously stimulated media reports that went with it.

And was it the format of the media releases that in the main - they contained as well as the information you were seeking to put into the public domain - emergency numbers and contact numbers?-- Certainly coordination centres' numbers were put into place, evacuation centres, where they were located to go to, contacts, whether it was the SES, the 13 number, whatever information, a lot was even included with road closures also.

Finally, Exhibit 136 is your statement. Annexure 1 to that is the joint statement that you produced with Mr Berting. Can I ask you, please, to go to a couple of pages to correct some mistakes? At page 12 of that annexure 1, the joint statement, in the second last line, is the Condamine evacuation event nominated as having taken place on the 1st of January 2011?-- 30th of December.

That should be corrected to the 30th of December?-- Yes.

And, rather more optimistically, on page 4 is the budget of the Western Downs Regional Council expressed to be \$100,000,000?-- I would love to say it would be lovely, but it is, in fact 185, million and also the next line below is public assets of 1.3 billion.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure, do you want to get the original corrected?

MR URE: Yes, thank you. Would you take this document, please, which is Exhibit 136, and would you correct and initial the two errors, please? Page 4, towards the top right, second line?-- Yep, yep.

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Thank you, Counsellor Brown.

MS WILSON: I have no re-examination, Commission. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Brown. You are excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I wish to tender a witness statement of John Thomas Fry. He's employed by Ergon Energy Corporation Limited. I understand that he's not required for cross-examination.

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COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 138.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 138"

MS WILSON: Also, Madam Commissioner, I have been supplied today with a copy of a report by BMTWBM, written by Neil Collins, and it's a technical report on the December 2010/January flooding within Western Downs Regional Council. I do not require Mr Collins for cross-examination. However, I understand the parties have only just received it. I wish to tender the document and perhaps if it can be dealt with in the same way, if there are any issues then it can be addressed by written submission.

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COMMISSIONER: Any difficulty about that?

MR URE: No, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Exhibit 139.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 139"

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MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I have no further witnesses to call today

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. The Commission will adjourn to Toowoomba at 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

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THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 4.38 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M., WEDNESDAY
27 APRIL IN TOOWOOMBA

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