

Transcript of Proceedings

Issued subject to correction upon revision.

THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

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IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

BRISBANE

..DATE 10/05/2011

..DAY 18

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.00 A.M.

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ANTHONY JOHN JACOBS, CONTINUING:

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

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MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. Mr Jacobs, yesterday in my questioning we were talking about warnings and communication. Now, have you heard comments from Somerset community that they did not receive adequate warning in relation to the flood events of this year?-- Yes, I have heard that.

Now - and what can the Somerset Regional Council do to ensure that on the next occasion the residents get appropriate warning?-- I think we need to investigate ways where Somerset Regional Council can receive appropriate warnings that can then be distributed.

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Whose role do you see it to warn the community?-- I think general warning should come from State agencies, but specific localised warnings could come from Council.

When you say "general warnings", what do you refer to in relation to that? What do you regard as a general warning?-- Warnings similar to the ones about the rainfall expected during the wet season, about the anticipated rainfall across the South-east prior to the event.

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And in relation to more specific warnings you say that would be the role of the Council?-- If Council was aware of them, yes. Council doesn't have expertise in hydrology so we rely on other agencies to give us advice that we can then pass on to our residents or customers.

And what other agents are they?-- Bureau of Meteorology, EMQ, Emergency Management Queensland, Seqwater.

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And as of the 2011 flood events, did you have appropriate communication lines with these agencies that you could receive that information?-- We believed we did, yes, but they fell - fell down.

What does that mean, you believe you did? Did you or didn't you?-- Through the phone system we thought we did, but the phone system collapsed.

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And have - since the flood events of this year, have you met with these agencies to be able to improve the lines of communication?-- Since the event, no, we haven't.

Are you going to? Is Somerset Regional Council going to?-- Yes. Yes.

In relation to releases from the dam and warning the community, whose role do you say that is?-- Releases from the dam, I believe the responsibility in the first instance is the dam knows what it's releasing so it has to make the first notification. Now, whether that comes to us or another agency or through another method I think needs to be looked into.

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Well, do you say that the chain of command of passing on this information is from the dam to the Council, and then the Council to the residents?-- I don't think that's the most effective way, no.

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Well, what do you say is the most effective way?-- I think there needs to be a system in place where Seqwater can issue warnings directly.

To?-- Well, I mean, it could be to the media. If they can't [sic] get them to us, then we can give them out, but if we don't receive them we can't give them out.

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In terms of media releases, that is another tool that can be used by Councils to inform residents?-- Correct.

How many media releases did the Somerset Regional Council issue in January 2011 in relation to the flooding events?-- Prior to the floods?

No - well, during the flood events to be able to tell the residents, "This is happening. This is what to do. This is where to go"?-- Oh, look, I'm aware there was press releases made, but I don't - I'm not familiar with the number of them.

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Is it the case that there was one media release issued on the 13th of January 2011?-- I don't make media releases so I couldn't confirm the number.

Now, if I can take you to your statement, please, and if I can take you to your second statement, and if you can go to item 11. There the evacuation centres are discussed?-- Yes.

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And you state there that, "The LDMG members were aware that Council's SES controller was the contact to use should they have issues with evacuation centres access or location"?-- Yes, I believe that was the case.

Why was the Council's SES controller the person that should deal with any issues in relation to evacuation centres access or location?-- He was the keeper of that information. He works in my section at Council and prior to the wet season we sat down and went through the centres and picked those five as being the main.

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Okay. Whose decision was it to open evacuation centres?-- In the event some of them were opened by the people in need because we didn't know that there was a need in that specific location. There were a number of organic ones that we weren't in control of, but the one in Lowood, I believe, was opened by police; the one in Fernvale was opened by Council; the one in

Esk was opened by Council and SES; Toogoolawah was opened by the SES and police; and Kilcoy was opened by Council at the request of the police, I believe.

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If you were a resident of the Somerset Regional Council area during January 2011 and your area was flooded, how would you know where the evacuation centres were?-- We expected that they would contact one of the emergency management organisations and they would know where those centres were through the LDMG meeting.

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So the resident, you would - the onus is on the resident to contact one of the emergency services?-- I thought that if a resident needed to know where an evacuation centre was, they would contact either SES, EMQ, Rural Fires and those agencies being Disaster Management Agencies had that knowledge and Council also had that knowledge.

What about if there was one source of that information, what about if the Somerset Regional Council issued that information about the evacuation centres so that could go to a significant number of people?-- Yes, that's possible. And, I mean, we've taken that on board from the comments that - it can be added to our website too so that people could access it there.

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Is the Somerset Regional Council going to do that?-- Oh, yes, we will.

Put up the website - put up on their website the evacuation centres?-- Before - before - it can be done generically and then also looked at before an event like this where we were warned before Christmas that there was going to be the likelihood of localised flooding.

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Okay. So is this an accurate summary of what the Somerset Regional Council is going to do for the future: have all of the evacuation centres on the website; is that the case?-- That's what I plan to do as LDC.

And when - to be able to identify which evacuation centres are appropriate for a flooding event, a fire event, et cetera?-- That information will be available, but it may not be appropriate in every event because there will be needs - we found out this time that things that you plan to do need to be flexible enough to be changed when the situation differs from what's expected.

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Well, then how is the Somerset Regional Council going to take into account that flexibility that is required?-- Have to be through notification of the Disaster Management Agencies or possibly press release, but in this case we couldn't have done that.

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Okay. But as a starting point, the Somerset Regional Council are going to put up the evacuation centres on the website?-- Yes.

And also identify which ones are appropriate for flood?-- I

hadn't looked at that.

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Is that something that could be looked at?-- Oh, could be, yes.

Now, if I could take you to your first statement and still on the topic of evacuation centres and if we can go to item 13. This talks about centres being operated in the following locations, and 10 evacuation centres are nominated in 13(b)?-- Yes.

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It is also noted which ones - which evacuation centres were official and which were unofficial?-- That's correct.

Did that make any difference between - did that make any difference in terms of resources that were provided to either official or unofficial evacuation centres?-- Unofficial evacuation centres had no presupplied or supplied during resources. They were just public halls or buildings that were used as a safe place for people to go to until they could - other arrangements could be made.

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Were there requests for such supplies to these unofficial evacuation centres?-- Yes.

And how did the LDMG action that?-- When the LDMG receive requests for resupply or supply of anybody excluding - like private people doing that as well, they would be given tasked out - resources would be found and then the delivery or the supply of those requests would be tasked to either a Council or to one of the Disaster Management Agencies.

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You talked about before the need to be flexible in disaster management?-- Yes.

It was clear that there was a need for these unofficial evacuation centres to be established during the flood event?-- Yes, I believe so.

Is the Council going to recognise this need for unofficial evacuation centres in their Disaster Management Plan so they can be properly resourced quickly?-- I believe they are acknowledged. I think the issue is with the level of resourcing.

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And how is that level of resource going to be addressed?-- I think they need to be looked at whether they're only a safe haven for someone to go to, or whether they're actually an official evacuation centre.

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And would that information be provided on the ground at the time of the disaster back to the LDMG?-- We would hope so, yes.

Okay?-- We would expect that to be the case.

And if hypothetically one of these unofficial evacuation centres was being used for people to sleep there for a night

or two nights, does that change how the Somerset Regional Council deals with this evacuation centre?-- It hasn't in the past, no, and I don't think it would.

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You - why wouldn't it?-- I believe we have the resources to resource unlimited evacuation centres. We have got the largest local authority in South-east Queensland with the smallest population. I - I'm not sure I understand the question.

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Well, what happens if you go to an unofficial evacuation centre, the community that you reside in is isolated and you can't get to an official evacuation centre-----?-- Yes.

-----then how is the LDMG going to cater for those people in the unofficial evacuation centre?-- As we did with isolated communities who don't have an evacuation centre, if they need resources we flew them in.

You flew them?-- Yes.

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Okay. I'm just wanting to know whether that is going to be implemented into the Disaster Management Plan so that processes can be established?-- I think that's where I was meaning flexibility is you can't set up fixed resources that may not be in the correct place in the next event. We're to fly in what you need or through high-level vehicle or whatever, get the supplies in. We have made arrangements.

Before we leave evacuation centres, at 13(c) you talk about, "A request for assistance was passed to the District Disaster Coordinator following the Red Cross provided assistance in management of the centres"?-- Yes.

30

The Somerset Regional Council didn't have a memorandum of understanding with the Red Cross?-- Not to my knowledge, no.

Is there any reason why that was the case?-- We were informed to get Red Cross into our centres, we had to have the Department of Communities activated to support those centres.

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But as part of the planning and preparation for the flood events, did Somerset Regional Council consider to have a memorandum of understanding with the Red Cross?-- We have arrangements with our communities to run the evacuation centres and in the past in the length of need, they have been able to provide that resource. It was only in this event because of the size of the event and the duration of the event, our volunteer resources were stretched to breaking point, that's why we requested assistance.

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Is the Somerset Regional Council considering now having a memorandum of understanding with the Red Cross?-- That was one of the items that came up in our Local Disaster Management Group debrief was that we wanted to try to formalise arrangements of our evacuation centres where our community starts them up, but if they're operating for more than a certain length of time that we had an agreement with some

agencies, whether it be Red Cross or another agency, to come in and assist our volunteers and take over control.

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So it has come up at a meeting, but has it been actioned any further than that?-- No, it hasn't.

Do you know whether the Somerset Regional Council is going to action it further?-- I will take it further, yes.

And that is to get some arrangement with some agency to assist in operating evacuation centres?-- That would be our intention, yes.

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And finally in terms of evacuation planning at - in your first statement at item 19, you said that, "The Council has received funding approval under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program to undertake flood evacuation planning", can you tell me what that's about?-- Yes. Council contracted Brisbane City Works to do the flood model for Fernvale/Lowood for us. Once that was completed, that gave us information up to what they call the Q100 event, and through discussions with Brisbane City Works and what Brisbane City has been doing in way of evacuation, they advised us that they could perform further modelling to simulate events up to probable maximum flood which would give us information about areas to be evacuated, timing, evacuation routes, that sort of information. So we applied for National Disaster Mitigation Program funding to undertake that further modelling. Our first approach was - was knocked back, and last year we received a positive result from the application. We contracted Brisbane City Works to do the work for us and it was due to commence in March of this year.

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And has it commenced?-- No, because of the flood the Brisbane City Works has to delay the program because it has other issues, other work being done.

And when is it anticipated to commence?-- September I think they said it was their anticipated commencement.

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In your first statement you talked about flat-bottomed boats being used by three of the SES units were unsuitable?-- They were found to be not perfect for the task. In the past our SES units have been involved heavily in stillwater rescues and work, and the flat-bottom boats were very suitable for that because they can lift people or - into the boats much easier than the V-bottom boats. So the units in our region have the flat-bottom boat, but this time there were a number of activities in swift water. We couldn't perform them using our SES units, but we did call upon neighbouring SES units from, I think, Logan who came up with a swift-water boat to perform the activities for us.

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And you say that there will be a need for a mixture of hull-types to be considered when existing boats are replaced?-- Yes, we have three boats and I believe again that decision will have to be part of a larger process, but I believe we need to have a mixture.

And do you know when those existing boats are going to be replaced?-- No, I don't.

And have you had discussions with SES and Emergency Management Queensland about the replacement of those boats?-- Limited discussions, yes.

You have had?-- Yes.

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And can you tell me the outcome of those discussions?-- They're going to look at it at the time of the replacement of the boats.

If I can take you to your second statement and item 17 and refer you to the use of helicopters?-- Yes.

You state there that Council was able to secure the use of two private helicopters?-- Yes, that's correct.

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What - what were those helicopters used for?-- Resupplies, food resupply mainly.

Was the deployment of these helicopters undertaken within the process of the Disaster Management Plan of going up to the DDC?-- The two private ones weren't, no, they were done through the LDMG, but the others were sourced through the DDC.

So how did you get in contact with these helicopters to provide these food supplies?-- We were made aware that they were available. They contacted us to say, "Have you got a need?" We said, "Yes, we have." Under the new arrangement it's up - up to the LDMG first to try and resource locally, and if it can't resource locally then it has to pass that on to the DDC.

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And finally can I take you to your first statement and to item 21, and that is suggestions for the future. We have already addressed some of those in terms of communications and early warning systems. At (c), you talk about that, "The size of the Somerset region and the small population limits the resources available for deployment in disasters." Then go on talking about alliances with larger Local Governments. In the flood - in the - in January 2011, the Somerset Regional Council called upon resources from the Gold Coast City Council?-- That's correct.

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And that was to provide personnel to be able to assist in disaster management?-- That's correct.

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How did that work?-- Terrifically well, very well.

Now, has - did you have any previous alliance with the Gold Coast City Council?-- No, we did not. We put the request through the DDC because we were operating four coordination centres our staff were very thin on the ground and we requested the DDC, the DDC knew that there were resources on the Gold Coast and the next morning there were five people

arrive from the Gold Coast all trained.

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What about taking into account local conditions, how did that work with outsiders coming in?-- We still had our people working with them, but they were able to operate in the LDMG as the Main Incident Team. Now, most of their business is to take information in and to get information out. So our people worked with them and the local knowledge was still retained.

Is the Somerset Regional Council going to continue this alliance with the Gold Coast City Council?-- The comment I made was I would like to have a formal arrangement in place like a memorandum of understanding, but if we didn't the DDC can still source us that same assistance.

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It would be of assistance though, wouldn't if, you could work with one known larger regional Council so they understand your needs - know - understand some of your needs rather than coming in cold?-- That was my thoughts when I wrote that comment, yes.

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Have you had any discussions with any Government agency about this?-- Yes, we've continued contact with Gold Coast City, we've made arrangements for the Gold Coast City to train our staff when available, and they've given me already a copy of their 2011 training schedule and they have invited me down to actually inspect their facilities and have a look at how they do things.

And that follows on in (d) where you state that, "The timing of the event so soon after the amendments made to the Disaster Management Act did not provide an opportunity to undertake necessary training"?-- That's correct.

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Since January 2011 have your staff now undertaken the necessary training?-- No, we've received the training schedule, but training hasn't yet been arranged. EMQ's arranging some training for staff. My comment was more in the relation to the difference between the old arrangements and the new arrangements. I believe there was a lot of misunderstanding in the community and within the agencies about the changes in the arrangements. People - their expectations of what the LDMG was actually there to perform seems to be - missed the mark.

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But looking ahead-----

COMMISSIONER: What did they expect and how were they wrong?-- My perception is that they perceived the Local Disaster Management Group as an operational group where they are a coordination group. The Disaster Management agencies are primarily the on-ground response crews, people like the Rural Fires, the SES, Fire and Rescue, police, they are the, sort of, on-ground people. My reading of the Local Disaster Management Group is that they are the people to receive the request, the information, to resource it and then provide the back-up to those on-ground resources.

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And how do people mistake that? How is that shown?-- The old arrangements were slightly different. I don't think they had a full understanding of the difference. I mean, I have listened to the presentations yesterday and read some of submissions and I don't think they have an understanding of the new arrangements.

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When you say "they", do you mean the public at large?-- Oh, the public definitely, but also the agencies, I think, there needs to be - I have taken that on board from the LDMG, we need to work with our agency partners to make sure that the subagencies also understand the arrangements.

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Thank you.

MS WILSON: And then looking ahead for future training for your staff-----?-- Yes.

-----is there any - you said there's been - you have got a schedule of training that is coming up?-- Yes.

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When is this training going to be undertaken?-- I don't have a date on that yet, sorry.

You don't know a date or there is no date?-- Don't know - don't know - there is no planned date yet.

And then in (e) you talk about the loss of the local disaster centre was a problem?-- Yes.

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And that "Council's looking to incorporate features in the new hall being build at Esk to allow it to be used if the main centre is lost"?-- That's correct.

What new futures would you incorporate to assist in disaster management?-- The coordination centre we've got is dual purpose, but we fitted it out with numerous power points, computer connection points, whiteboards, overhead projectors, those sorts of things so it could operate as a coordination centre. The new civic centre that we're building, there was no plans to have a room fitted out like that in it, but we've thought that for the small amount of money, it would be worthwhile doing as a standby room in case we have the situation occur.

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And the Council is also looking at options for standby power as well?-- Yes.

Are you aware of the Guardian Software System?-- I have seen a short demonstration through the DDC, yes.

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Are there any plans for the Somerset Regional Council to take on the Guardian Software?-- We're investigating that because we're aware that other people use different systems and we'd like to look at it what our possible future partners are using rather than just jump in and buy Guardian now.

Now, previously you talked about debrief-----?-- Yes.

-----in relation to the flooding events?-- Yes.

Is - there has been lessons learnt from what occurred in January this year?-- Oh, yes.

Are they going to be incorporated in the Disaster Management Plan for the future?-- Yes, definitely. There's a review plan of the plan to take into account the changes. We've - under I think is the third round of those local mitigation plans we can get funding to get that reviewed and obviously this experience will be a major part of that.

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And when is all this going to be taking place?-- Supposed to be in the next few months.

Thank you. I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell, do you have any questions?

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MR O'DONNELL: Yes, I do. Thank you, Commissioner. Do you have both of your statements there?-- Yes.

Would you mind turning up the most recent statement. If you look at the - there's some e-mails sent on Christmas Eve?-- In my most recent statement?

Yes, at the back of it, it's Exhibit 325?-- Sorry, my second statement has no e-mail, so they might be in this stuff that I was given yesterday.

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All right. Have a look at that?-- Yeah, can I ask which e-mails we're referring to?

Sent on Christmas Eve?-- Yes.

One from Adcock to Susan Pitkin?-- Yes.

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Another from Robert Bain to - to Adcock?-- Yes.

The question was put to you they were communications between Somerset Council and Seqwater. In fact, if you read them closely they're between the Council and the Water Group Manager?-- Yes, yes, that's a mistake, yes, sorry, that's correct, yes.

And you understood at the time the Water Group Manager was a different statutory authority from Seqwater?-- That's correct.

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And could the witness see Exhibit 21, please? If that could be brought up on the screen. What's come out is the manual that governs the operation of Wivenhoe and Somerset dams?-- Yes.

Have you seen that before?-- I have read it, yes.

XN: MR O'DONNELL

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WIT: JACOBS A J

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And the Council had a copy of it prior to the 2011 flood event?-- That's correct.

Okay. And you had understood it? You understood the difference - there were different procedures as to how the dams would be operated?-- To the level that I needed to know it, I understood it, yes.

If we can look at page 50, please. That shows the agencies holding control copies of the manual, and it included the Somerset Council?-- Correct.

If we go back to page 29, please. Sorry, go back even further, page 27. That strategy W2, then on the following pages are other strategies, is W3, W4. Did you have an understanding prior to the January 2011 flood event that strategy 2 involved releases from the dam which would produce a flow at Lowood not to exceed a rate of 3,500 cumecs?-- Correct.

And that was thought to be the highest rate you could have at Lowood without causing significant damage, without causing flood?-- I actually thought it was for downstream reasons, I didn't realise it was to do with Lowood, no, that wasn't my understanding.

Can we look at page 28? That was a strategy of releases from the dam designed not to produce a flow at Moggill greater than 4,000 CUMECS?-- Correct.

You understood that-----?-- I understood that one, yes.

-----was a higher rate of releases from the dam?-- Yes.

But below a level which would cause downstream flooding, that's right?-- Correct.

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And then page 29, strategy W4, you understood that was a dam safety strategy?-- Yes.

When the water was at or about to cross the '74 level, it would authorise much higher releases from the dam?-- Yes.

Which would necessarily cause downstream flooding?-- Yes.

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And you understood all of this prior to the January '11 flood event?-- Yes.

In your second statement, if you turn, please, to paragraph 10B? "I did not receive any telephone calls on Tuesday 11 January advising of the need to allow outflows to match inflows." The reference to outflows matching inflows is an abbreviated way of saying the strategy W4?-- That's correct.

Where you understood under that strategy, the releases from the dam were governed by what was necessary in order to match the inflows to the dam?-- Yes.

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Right, thank you. Close up Exhibit 21, please. Can I deal with some formal arrangements that were in place between the Council and Seqwater prior to the January '11 flood event? There was a Wivenhoe Dam Emergency Action Plan?-- Yes.

Can I show you copies of that, please? You're familiar with the document?-- I'm aware of the document. I'm not familiar - term "familiar"?

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Haven't read it lately?-- No.

No, I understand. Council had it prior to January-----?-- Council has a copy of it, yes.

If you look on the second page, heading "Distribution Authorisation Revision Status", item number 8 lists the Council-----?-- Yes.

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-----as on the distribution list. So, the Council would have had a copy?-- Yes, we have a copy.

You see the date in the bottom right-hand footer, September 2010?-- Yes.

Is it likely that the Council had a copy from that time on?--

We had previous copies. That was the latest revision we were given.

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Sure. We see on the following page, the dates of the previous versions of the plan?-- Yes.

And the Council had always been copied in on each revision?-- Correct.

We see on page 14, a list of agencies and responsibilities?-----

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COMMISSIONER: Is that the right page?

MR O'DONNELL: Page 4 of 14. You see the responsibilities of Seqwater, and then the Flood Operation Centre, and further down the page, "Responsibility of the Regional or City Council"?-- Yes.

Were they your understanding of the arrangement regarding responsibility should there be an emergency concerning the Wivenhoe Dam?-- Yes.

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As at the January flood event?-- Yes.

Then there's a listing of a variety of emergencies ranging from floods to earthquakes, to impacts with other objects, and then in Appendix A, there's a contact register, which on the first page, at the foot of the page, against the agency Flood Operation Centre, gives you the name, work phone numbers, mobile, after-hour phone numbers of the flood engineers?-- Yes.

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And you knew you could contact them during the flood event?-- Yes.

And, correspondingly, on the next page, it gives contact details for the Somerset Council. So the flood operations engineers could contact representatives of Council during an event?-- Correct.

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And you're listed as the first one?-- Yes.

Thank you. You can close that up, thank you. I'll tender that document, please, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 327.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 327"

MR O'DONNELL: As well as the emergency action plan, I want to suggest there was another document in place recording or setting out formal arrangements between the Council and Seqwater called a, "Protocol for Communication of Flood

Information"?-- No.

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You don't recall that?-- I recall the document, but I don't believe it was in place. I don't think Council accepted what was in that document.

Let me show you that first, please. It's in Mr Morris' witness statement, Exhibit 2.

ASSOCIATE: Sorry, what exhibit number was it?

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MR O'DONNELL: Exhibit KJM2.

COMMISSIONER: The witness statement is an exhibit, is it? Mr Morris' witness statement is an exhibit, is it, or not? Which Mr Morris are we talking about?

MR O'DONNELL: I think it is Ken Morris from the Brisbane City Council. He hasn't yet been called to give evidence.

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COMMISSIONER: All right.

MR O'DONNELL: Commissioner, do I have it wrong?

COMMISSIONER: My associate is looking hard, so give her a moment.

MR DUNNING: Commissioner, if I could assist, I have some recollection of other cross-examination on this statement and I had thought it was actually tendered in the course of it. I've asked my solicitors to try and track down the exhibits to see if that recollection is right.

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COMMISSIONER: Mmm.

MR DUNNING: If it was, it will have been in those sittings in the - about the middle of April. Sorry, Commissioner, I may have been mistaken about that. We've done a search of the exhibit list via Morris and we haven't found anything.

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COMMISSIONER: And I've looked at my own handwriting and I don't think I can see it either, but I wouldn't guarantee it. Well, my associate has magically conjured it up.

MR O'DONNELL: We have an alternative source for the document. It's in a witness statement that hasn't yet been tendered of Robert Drury.

COMMISSIONER: Mmm.

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MR CALLAGHAN: It might also be in Mr Robertson's witness statement, or exhibited to that. That's certainly been tendered. It will have it if it's there.

MR O'DONNELL: We have it in Mr Drury's. We have copies of Drury's statement here.

COMMISSIONER: Well, that can be got up electronically,

because that's already been scanned, so - so what exhibit do we think it is to Mr Drury's statement, do we know? 1

MR O'DONNELL: Yes, it's in RD2, commencing at page 7. Letter from the Premier. Mr Jacobs, read the letter from the Premier, and then behind it is the protocol?-- Yes, I'm aware of the draft protocol, I'm just not aware of the protocol being in place.

The protocol was designed to regulate communications in the event of flooding between Seqwater and the various councils - Brisbane, Ipswich and Somerset. That was the intent of it?-- It was a communications agreement as to who would say what, but I don't believe it was ever signed off by the parties. 10

No, that's right, it wasn't signed off, but it was - the document was drafted and circulated and the various councils and Seqwater commented and made revisions of it; that's right, isn't it?-- We have had meetings related to it and drafts that we changed, yes. 20

And we see the letter from the Premier of 22 November at page 7, after noting the "collaborative spirit in which the attached draft protocol has been developed", in the third paragraph, last sentence, the Premier suggests that, "The protocol should be implemented on an interim basis pending its finalisation and formal sign-off by the four parties to the protocol."?-- I'm not privy that that ever happened, no. It's not part of my knowledge. 30

So, you're not aware of any acceptance by the Somerset Council to follow the Premier's suggestion of adopting this protocol on an interim basis?-- That's correct.

Did you read the protocol?-- Yes, I have.

And did you see that if you look on page 2, under the heading "Monitoring and Assessment", it sets out a process to be followed with responsibilities of different agencies. If you look at the second last dot point on page 2, "Seqwater shares predicted flood water releases with the Bureau of Meteorology and with the Councils." On the next page, "The Bureau undertakes modelling of the Brisbane River catchment and its river systems using the Seqwater advice of releases. The Bureau participates in technical discussions with Seqwater, the Council, Ipswich Council and Somerset Council and share modelling results, then the Council undertakes modelling assessing impacts for their communities." And then halfway down that page there's a dot point commencing, "In the case of flood water release, Seqwater coordinates the completion of technical situation reports" - TSRs - "which go to the relevant local governments."?-- That's correct. 40 50

That, in fact, happened during the January flood event?-- That's correct.

Seqwater did prepare technical situation reports and they were circulated to the Somerset Council?-- They prepared them and

they were sent via E-mail to Somerset Regional Council, yes.

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And that was by Mr Drury?-- And the Flood Operations Centre, yes.

And on the next page, page 4, halfway down the page, under "Public Communication Issues", the second paragraph, "The Bureau of Meteorology, local governments and the relevant State Government are to maintain continuing discussions to ensure conflicting information is not released to the public.", and then sets out the process for harmonising public communications, and emphasises in the second dot point for local governments, the second sentence, "Local governments have primacy of public communications within their community.", and that was how it operated in the January '11 flood event. Seqwater would notify releases from the dam to, amongst others, Somerset Council. The Council had primary responsibility for notifying its own community?-- Are you saying from this draft it has or we-----

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I'm saying that's how it operated?-- That's how it operated.

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In the January flood event?-- Yes.

And the procedure of issuing the technical situation reports from Seqwater discussed in this draft protocol was, in fact, followed-----?-- Yes.

-----during the January flood event?-- In fact, they did more. Seqwater provided me with better information because we'd had discussions that Council doesn't have - hydrological expertise. Brisbane City does and Ipswich does, but we don't, and Seqwater was actually providing me with some information on how different water courses would impact on the total flow in the Brisbane River. So, they were providing more than this protocol.

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Is it right then that there were three forms of communication from Seqwater to the Council during the January '11 flood event. One was the technical situation reports sent by E-mail?-- Mmm.

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And I'm suggesting they were sent by Mr Drury?-- I thought they came from the Flood Operations Centre.

I was going to suggest there were separate E-mail communications from the Flood Operations Centre?-- The Flood Operations Centre arrived every time. There was the odd time I got something from the Flood Operations Centre that wasn't backed up with something from Mr Drury. It only occurred once or twice, but there was the odd notice that came from the Flood Operations Centre by itself.

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Yes. Sometimes the Flood Operations Centre would send out a report. Shortly after that, Mr Drury would send out-----?-- That's right.

-----the technical situation report which seems to

embody-----?-- Yeah, they're the same. They have the same information in them.

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They embody E-mail from the Flood Operations Centre?-- That's correct.

And also there was telephone contact?-- Yes. To me, yes.

They would ring you?-- They would ring me.

10

And sometimes you would ring the Flood Operations Centre?-- That's correct.

You knew you could ring them 24 hours a day during the flood event?-- Yes.

And you found them helpful to deal with?-- Very much so.

You comment in your witness statements on the extent to which you did and did not receive information about water releases from Wivenhoe, so I want to walk you through some of the communications you had with Seqwater during the January '11 flood event. To do that, I need to take you to some of the E-mails which are all in Mr Drury's witness statement. So, you've got volume 1. I need to give you volume 2 as well. Sorry, I'm mistaken. I want to take the witness through some of the E-mails which are in Mr Drury's statement, volumes 1 and 2.

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COMMISSIONER: Can you give me attachment numbers, or-----

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MR O'DONNELL: We've got the page numbers, but we've also got hard copies.

COMMISSIONER: Well, if you can readily take out a set of hard copies, that might be a good idea for this witness, and we'll try and get it up on the screen as well.

MR O'DONNELL: It might be quicker with hard copies, I think.

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COMMISSIONER: Do that then.

MR O'DONNELL: In the witness statement, there's an Exhibit RD5-----?-- Sorry, not in these documents you're talking about? It's in these documents, is it?

Yes?-- In volume 1?

Volume 1.

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COMMISSIONER: You are looking at the bottom right-hand corner of the page; is that right?

MR O'DONNELL: Yes, your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: And if you keep looking and you go far enough, you will find RD5-1, and so on?-- Yes, thank you.

MR O'DONNELL: Now, we are going to pages within RD5. They are all paginated. If you look first at 164?-----

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MR URE: Madam Commissioner, I wonder if I could be provided with a copy of this, please?

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Take this one, Mr Ure, and I'll combine with Mr Cummins.

MR URE: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

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MR O'DONNELL: 164 should be an E-mail sent on Sunday the 9th at 6.15 a.m., and that's sent from the Duty Engineer, and you understood that was from the Flood Operations Centre?-- Correct.

Now, your name doesn't appear in the list of addressees. Is it correct the copy that goes to you is via the names Deb Chandler and Mailbox?-- Mailbox, yes. That's through Council's official mail server. We receive all inward correspondence through the Mailbox.

20

Okay. And who's Deb Chandler?-- My PA, who is also a customer service officer.

So, you would receive this?-- Yes. On the 9th?

And then at 173, there's an E-mail about an hour and a quarter later from Rob Drury, and your name is mentioned as an addressee?-- Yes.

30

And this E-mail at 173 effectively embodies the E-mail at 164?-- That's correct.

Now, would it go to the same E-mail address?-- It goes through the Council's main server at the office, yes.

Right. And if you pass over, please, to 224?-- I would note with that last one you made the comments on the Sunday, so that would have gone to our system, but I receive a phone call from Rob before he sends those E-mails, because it's on the weekend and-----

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And in the phone call, would he just outline for you what's in the E-mail?-- Summarises what he's doing - what the changes are.

And I'm looking at 224. That's an E-mail from the Duty Engineer at the Flood Operations Centre, Sunday the 9th at 5.51, which you received?-- I didn't receive this one until much later, but I got a phone call in relation to it.

50

When you say you didn't receive it, does that mean it wasn't electronically received?-- That's correct, sorry, yes. It was sent to the system, but I didn't have access, because of the isolation, until much later, but I've just read the content and I got a phone call on this one.

Okay. So it tells you under "Rainfall" what rain has been falling recently in the catchment. And after a prediction for the next few days, tells you a severe weather warning is current for heavy rainfall in the dam catchment areas, and under the "Wivenhoe Dam" heading, fourth line, it tells you, "The current strategy is to maintain flows around 1,600 CUMECS in the Brisbane River for the next 24 hours." Missing out the next sentence, "Releases may have to be increased significantly during Monday, depending on the rain in the next 12 to 24 hours."?-- Yes.

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And this is the E-mail you refer to in your more recent statement at paragraph 8A; is that right?-- I believe that's correct.

On the last page of the E-mail, under the impacts downstream of Wivenhoe, in the second paragraph, he told you at that stage Fernvale and the Mt Crosby Weir Bridge would not be affected for the next 24 hours, but there was a strong possibility that if the predicted rainfall fell, higher releases from Wivenhoe might be necessary which could impact on the bridges?-- That's correct.

20

In fact, there were some telephone calls later that evening telling you that the bridges had to be closed?-- I received a telephone call telling me that they were likely to be closed Monday afternoon. That was the last communication I had, because I was surprised to find it closed Monday morning when I woke up.

30

Could we bring up the flood event log, please, Exhibit 23? If we look on the 9th of January at 7.10 p.m., please?

ASSOCIATE: Sorry, could you please repeat the date and the time?

MR O'DONNELL: 9 January, 7.10 p.m..

COMMISSIONER: Did you say 7.10?

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MR O'DONNELL: Yes. You see an entry, "FOC called Tony Jacobs advising higher releases from the Wivenhoe. 3,000 CUMECS are expected and will be necessary in view of heavy rain in the last three hours."?-- I don't recall that at all.

You don't recall that at all? Then if we look on the same day at 10.15 p.m., a call to you, advising the Fernvale Bridge closure was likely?-----

COMMISSIONER: That's 12.15?

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MR O'DONNELL: No, 10.15

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COMMISSIONER: Oh, sorry, I was misreading.

MR O'DONNELL: Can you recall that?-- I have read that. I recall getting phone calls advising that the bridge was closing. I'm not sure what you're asking me.

Well, I'm suggesting that there was a conversation as recorded in that log. Someone from the Flood Operation Centre called you and advised you that the Fernvale bridge closure was likely?-- Yes, I remember calls telling me that the Fernvale bridge was going to be closed Monday, yes.

10

Well, I'm suggesting it's telling you that the closure is likely to be sooner rather than later?-- Not my recollection. I just remember I had phone calls telling me it was closing Monday, but I'm-----

All right. Look at the entries at 10.45. This isn't with you, but it's confirming closure of the Mt Crosby weir bridge. Then at 11.25 there's a conversation about the closure of the Fernvale bridge. Then at 11.30 it suggests that someone called you and left a message advising of the situation, that is the situation about the closure of both bridges?-- Yes, I don't remember getting them - I don't remember messages, I remember getting some phone calls on the Sunday about the imminent closure of the bridge.

20

All right. If we can go back to the e-mails, please. If you look at page 232. That's an e-mail you received about 9.04 p.m.?-- I didn't - I didn't personally receive this e-mail, no. It went to the system.

30

When did you see it?-- I think I got these e-mails on the Thursday when I returned to the Esk office.

Didn't see it before Thursday?-- Not this one I don't think. There were a few sent through to me on the Monday. This was a Sunday one, wasn't it? Yeah.

40

This is Sunday evening?-- Yes, Sunday. It was after Monday when I advised Rob that my home e-mail was the contact point for a short period because the work was out. One sent to the office, because I didn't get back to the office Monday, I didn't download until I got back on Thursday.

Well, in your witness statement, your most recent witness statement, paragraph 8(a), you refer to receiving e-mails from Seqwater advising of dam releases on the afternoon of Monday, the 10th?-- On the afternoon of Monday the 10th, would that be after I'd contacted Rob and told him to send them to home?

50

Well, you tell me. It's in your witness statement, paragraph (a) if you want to look at it.

COMMISSIONER: What is it that you're putting, Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: I'm suggesting that Mr Jacob did receive the e-mails on the 9th, and I'm going onto the 10th.

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COMMISSIONER: Well, 8(a) is clear enough for the 9th, not so much for the 10th though.

MR O'DONNELL: Well, 8(a) says he received dam release information on the afternoon on Monday the 10th.

COMMISSIONER: I'm not sure about that. It's whether that relates it back to an advice on the 9th telling him about the 10th as - but at any rate-----

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WITNESS: That's correct, that was relating to advice I received on the Sunday about closure on a Monday - an expected closure on Monday.

MR O'DONNELL: Let's just press on and look at some more of the e-mails. You tell me if you received them or not. 255?-- I believe this was sent to the main server at the Council system.

20

Did that indicate that you did or didn't receive it at the time?-- Not at the time, no.

Okay. Do you say that for all the subsequent e-mails sent to Council system?-- Until the Wednesday - the Thursday - yeah, Wednesday.

Okay. I'll just go through them quickly. 281, 291, the same for all of these?-- Yes, these were sent to the Council system, yes.

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All right. 404?-- Yes, I believe this was sent to my home e-mail.

Is that Tone and Lee at Internode-----?-- That's it.

-----dot "on" dot "net". So had you told Mr Drury to send the e-mails to your home e-mail address?-- Yes.

40

Around the time of that e-mail, Monday afternoon-----?-- Yes.

-----the 10th?-- Yes.

So you did receive this one?-- I believe I did. There was some problem receiving e-mails when we had the power out, but this was at a time where I got home Monday night and I downloaded a few e-mails. So, yes, I think I did but things were pretty hectic at the time, but this one was one I think I did receive, yes.

50

This one tells you significant rainfall had fallen in the dam catchment, and potentially significant rain is moving towards the catchment. Under the heading "Wivenhoe Dam", second paragraph tells you the current release is about 2,000 cumecs, and this will need to be increased to an outflow of 2,800 cumecs over the next nine hours?-- Yes.

So you knew that was very significant levels of releases from the dam?-- Yes.

Which would impact upon the community's downstream of the dam?-- It wouldn't cause any flooding downstream of the residential areas, no.

All right. Now, subsequent e-mails from the Flood Operation Centre at 408, and 420 continued to be sent to the Council e-mail address. I want to suggest you telephoned the Flood Operation Centre on the morning of the 11th at about 1.30 and advised them that the Council offices were flooded, e-mail addresses were no longer working, but you could be e-mailed on your home e-mail address?-- Are we talking - you said - which date, sorry, in time?

10

I'll show you the entry. If we could see it on Exhibit 23, please? The 11th of January, 1.30 a.m.?-- I believe there's some errors in that statement, the entry.

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It refers to Tony Trace SRC?-- No, Tony Trace is Ipswich City.

Exactly. So Tony Jacobs is yourself at SRC?-- Well, I'm just not sure whether at 1.30 a.m. I don't remember getting any calls on Tuesday. We're talking as in Monday night/Tuesday morning, aren't we?

Yes?-- I don't remember getting calls at 1.30 in the morning in relation to that.

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COMMISSIONER: And that's not your e-mail address, I take it, that it's-----?-- No, no, that's the point, that is my e-mail address-----

That is your e-mail address?-- -----but they're referring to Tony Trace who they spoke to and I don't remember getting phone calls at that time of night. But again, I have no - like, that could be just my memory. There's nothing in that - if they did speak to me, they've just - the fact that we've confirmed my e-mail address is-----

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MR O'DONNELL: Would Tony Trace at the Ipswich Council have had your home e-mail address?-- No, no, no, no.

So that could only have come from you?-- Yes, that's right. That's why I'm just reading it. There's an error in there, but if that came from me that's just confirming my e-mail address, isn't it?

50

Yes?-- Yes.

So that could have occurred?-- Oh, yes, it could have.

Can we go back to the e-mails then, please? If you look at 446. That's an e-mail from Rob Drury on the 11th of 6.38 a.m. The cc to Tony and Lee Jacobs, is that being sent to your home

e-mail address?-- That's correct.

1

So you would have received it?-- I'm just looking at 6.38. No, I don't believe I received that one until later because I'd left fairly early that morning and I don't believe I fired up my home computer before I went to work and the power went out about 6.30 on the Tuesday morning.

So you don't think you received this one?-- Well, I could read it if you'd like-----

10

Sure?-- -----and see whether it makes - yes, I think I did get this one because the last paragraph, "If further rainfall increased, dam releases may need to increase further and this may result in river flows in the lower Brisbane exceeding 5,000." I have recollection of that statement, but then unless it occurs in other e-mails.

All right.

20

COMMISSIONER: Do you have an BlackBerry on an iPhone?-- No.

MR O'DONNELL: Well, this told you that the situation was serious?-- Oh, yes, we knew it was serious.

And in terms of releases from the dam it was on the verge of very substantial releases if the rainfall continued?-- I didn't have an understanding of that, no. You're asking me hydrological questions. I was just responding to advice we were being given.

30

Well, the advice you were being given was that current rate of release was about 2,750 cumecs, there was flash flooding being experienced in the Lockyer. Reading here under "Wivenhoe Dam" section?-- Yes.

"And if the rainfall continues, the dam releases might have to be increase to the order of 5,000 cumecs"?-- That's correct, but that still wouldn't cause flooding in Fernvale.

40

But that would give you information which you might think was important to communicate to local residents?-- I don't understand your question. If it doesn't impact them, why would we communicate that with the local residents?

You didn't regard this as impacting upon local residents downstream from the dam?-- Not at 5,000 cumecs it wouldn't, no.

Then if you look at 483?-- Four eight three?

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Four eight three. This is one sent from the Flood Operation Centre on the 11th at 12.11 p.m. Your named in the addressees as "Tony Jacobs (private)"?-- Sorry, where's my-----

In the addressee, the second line-----?-- Yes.

-----it says "Tony Jacobs (private)"?-- Yes.

Did you receive this as best you can recall?-- Not at the time it was sent, no.

You sure of that?-- Not at 12.11 p.m. I wouldn't have because I wouldn't have - I don't have instant access to my e-mails.

All right. Have a look at 507. That's an e-mail you sent back to Rob Drury on the 11th at 2.17 p.m.?-- Yes.

10

And you've done some calculations based upon dam releases of 6,000 cumecs?-- Yes.

So you have made a calculation of the total volume of water that would be released in a day at that rate?-- Yes.

Isn't that a calculation you have made following the e-mail at 483? You see 483 mentions 6,000 cumecs in the sentence commencing with number 2?-- No, it's not a calculation I would have made from that, no. I must have received advise somewhere that there was a flow in the river of 5,000 - oh, 516,000 megalitres per day, but otherwise I wouldn't have asked the question because if I had this it would have told me - oh, sorry, it doesn't refer to that 516,000.

20

No, it doesn't, but it does refer to two possible flow rates. Says if there's no further rainfall, the release will be around 4,000 cumecs by 1 o'clock, but if there is another 50 mil of rainfall, the releases could be of the order of 6,000 cumecs. Haven't you then calculated that at the rate of 6,000 cumecs the total releases in a day would be 516,000 megalitres?-- No, that's not correct. I have worked the other way, and somewhere along the line I'm dealing with a number. We get - the Flood Operation Centre talks in cumecs, the Water Group Manager talks in megalitres a day. I was trying to convert a number to an amount. So it doesn't confirm-----

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You're trying to convert a rate to a quantity?-- Yes.

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But haven't you got that rate from the e-mail at 483?-- No.

Where else did you get that 6,000 cumecs from?-- By working out what 516,000 megalitres a day was, and that's not referred to in that 483.

All right. So your e-mail at 507, what do you say was the source for that?-- I'm unsure. I can't find an e-mail that relates to that. I've looked.

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All right. But regardless of the source of that, you then appreciated that the dam releases could be as high as 6,000 cumecs?-- I'm not sure whether I'm looking at dam releases or whether I'm looking at flows in the river, but, yes, I'm looking at something and I'm trying to figure out, or whether I'm looking at what I - I'm trying to work out to relate to what it is, I have no recollection of that.

So were you aware at this stage that the dam had moved to a strategy where outflows had to equal inflows?-- No, no, we weren't advised of that.

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Can you suggest any other reason you'd be referring to a rate of 6,000 cumecs?-- No, I don't have knowledge of that. I can't recall - I can't recall at the time what I was looking for at that stage.

It seems likely that's referring to releases from the dam?-- I don't agree with that, no.

10

You don't agree?-- Oh, it would be referring to releases from the dam, but I don't know that I wasn't doing calculations for myself and asking Rob for advice on something.

No, but if the 6,000 cumecs is referring to releases from the dam it suggests that you had received information at that stage that releases of the dam were or might become-----?-- Might become.

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-----6,000 cumecs?-- Or flows in the river might become 6,000 cumecs.

If it's flows in the river, you wouldn't be calculating the quantity per day, would you?-- That's where I was trying to find where the five thousand sixteen [sic] came from and I can't figure that one out. Whether I was just trying to relate that back to a figure that the - someone might give me.

30

The calculation of the quantity could only be referable to releases from the dam?-- Or flows in the lower Brisbane - mid-Brisbane.

COMMISSIONER: It seems a bit unlikely anybody would be able to tell that any point in the river there would be 516,000 millilitres coming through?-- Megalitres.

Megalitres coming through?-- I suppose what I'm saying is I don't have a clear recollection of why I asked Rob that question. The trigger for me was 7,400 which was the '74 flows was what would trigger me as the alarm bell.

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MR O'DONNELL: Then at 508, Mr Drury e-mailed back saying, "Correct"?-- Yes. That's correct.

But you - you don't e-mail to Mr Drury saying you don't know what the current releases from Wivenhoe are, or you need any further information from them about current releases or projected releases?-- I assume there must be an e-mail earlier on that references 516 megalitres.

50

None that I can take you to, Mr Jacobs. None from Seqwater?-- Neither could I.

But my point is at least by midday on the 11th, you're in contact with Mr Drury. You don't e-mail to him saying, "I haven't received any e-mails from Seqwater about what are the

current releases from the dam or what are the projected releases from the dam"-- On the Tuesday when I fired up the laptop to try and download, it was left on for a period but we had no power and I didn't want to leave it on too long. So I'd leave - turn it on, download what e-mails I could, and then read them and respond to what I could, and turn it back on again and send. I received this some time Tuesday and sent that one back - or requested that from him and received that back, but I'm - in respect to it wasn't a reliable source because I couldn't get - the e-mails weren't coming through reliably because of the phone connection.

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Well, do you think the previous e-mails we have seen that were sent to you on the morning of the 11th to "Tony Jacobs (private)" you did receive them?-- Yes.

Around that time you sent the e-mail to Drury at 2.17 asking him to check your calculation?-- That was sent from my laptop.

20

That's right?-- Yes.

And what I'm suggesting - or I'm asking you around that time did you receive or read the e-mails we've looked at from Seqwater about dam releases leading up to midday on the 11th?-- The ones that had been sent to my work e-mail would have come through, yes.

Yes. For example, the one at 403?-- No, not that one. It wasn't sent to my work e-mail.

30

It was sent to your home e-mail?-- That's correct. 12 p.m. January the 11th, which was Tuesday.

So do you say midday on the 11th, your only access was to e-mails that had been sent to your work e-mail?-- And that was very patchy and we had only intermittent phone reception.

Could you help me there? Something that's puzzling me is if that's right, at 2.17 we see at page 507, at 2.17 on that day you send an e-mail to Drury asking him to check your calculations, but you don't say to him, "I haven't been receiving information on dam releases. I don't know what's happening about the dam releases." No suggestion here in your e-mail you're unaware of the state of play with - with regard to dam releases?-- Correct.

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Is that because you were aware of current information about the releases from Wivenhoe?-- No, I wasn't aware. I just agreed there was no statement in my e-mail regarding that.

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Can you explain why you didn't ask Mr Drury to update you on releases from the dam?-- No, I can't.

Just give me a few moments. That's all I have.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Kent, are you appearing for United Firefighters?

MR KENT: I am, and I haven't sought leave yet, Madam Commissioner, because that hasn't been engaged yet.

COMMISSIONER: All right. So will you just sit quietly until you're needed?

MR KENT: That's my intention.

COMMISSIONER: Fine. Mr Dunning?

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MR DUNNING: I have No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. Mr Jacobs, if you can go, please, to your second statement. Is there an error that needs to be corrected in paragraph 8(d) of Exhibit 322, and that's a date?-- That's correct.

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Where it reads, "Wednesday, the 12th of January 2011", what should it read?-- Tuesday, the 11th.

COMMISSIONER: That appears on the copy I'm looking at, Mr Ure, that correction I mean. If you look on the screen. I just think it may have been made.

MR URE: Thank you. Just a couple of matters. You said that the Somerset Regional Council area was the largest area of the Council in South-east Queensland with the smallest population?-- That's correct.

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What is the population of the Somerset Regional Council area?-- Approximately 20,000.

And what percentage of the area under the control of the Council was impacted by the January 2011 floods?-- The Council was impacted over its entire area.

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What's the - well, what is the number of staff that are employed by the Somerset Regional Council at the time?-- Approximately 180. About 140 operational staff, and about 40 administration staff.

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And how did that resource compare with what was needed from a manpower perspective for the disaster response that was taking place?-- It wasn't sufficient.

We've heard that you had assistance from Gold Coast. Ultimately, what was the maximum number of people that were assisting Somerset from any other local authorities?-- Five, I think we had, at any one time.

10

All right. Just a couple of brief matters. In some of the statements before the Commission and submissions, it was expressed concern about the drainage regime in Fernvale; that's the ordinary stormwater drainage regime. How relevant is the design standard of the ordinary stormwater drainage in Fernvale to the effects of the Brisbane River flooding on the 11th and 12th of January?-- The drainage within town would have no effect on the flooding from the Brisbane River, because that was back-up water, it wasn't outflow from upstream and flowing parallel to the river. It actually came back up the gully, so town drainage would have had no effect.

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All right. Also, in some of the statements, there was a suggestion that the Council didn't appear to be as visible as people might have expected, but people went on to discuss other agencies such as Centrelink, Community Services, Lifeline, the Red Cross, the Australian Defence Forces. Who organised their presence in Somerset?-- The LDMG organised the presence of those agencies.

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Now, you were asked some questions with respect to the E-mails just recently with respect to discharges. With respect to the E-mail where you asked for confirmation of your calculation, just to make it clear, did you start with the figure of 516,000 megalitres and calculate the 6,000 CUMECS, or did you start with 6,000 CUMECS and calculate the 516,000 megalitres?-- No, I started with 516,000 megalitres and had converted that to CUMEC and was seeking confirmation that that was a correct calculation.

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And do I take it from an answer that you gave to the Commission, where I think you said the trigger point, as far as you were concerned, was 7,400 CUMECS, that 6,000 CUMECS would, in your opinion, not have resulted in inundation of the residential areas?-- That's correct.

Yes, thank you, Mr Jacobs.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

MS WILSON: I have one question, Madam Commissioner. If I can take you to your first statement and if I can take you to 19B. You were just asked some questions in relation to drainage. You state that Council is also undertaking an assessment of the existing drainage system in the worst-affected town of Fernvale?-- That's correct.

Have you had a report back in relation to that assessment?-- No, I received a draft report on Friday of last week.

10

And does that influence your answer that you just provided in relation to the effect of flooding in that area?-- No, not at all. What we're looking at is the overland flow flooding from the catchment upstream of the gully. The question that I just answered was in relation to riverine flooding from the Brisbane River.

And this report that you did receive, can you provide that to the Commission?-- Yes. It is just having some errors corrected and whatever. I would imagine the Commission would want the final report.

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Yes?-- Yes.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I have no further questions. Can the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks, Mr Jacobs. You're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

COMMISSIONER: We'll take the morning break and come back at 10 to.

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.33 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 11.50 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: Before we start with the next witness, I put two volumes of Mr Drury's statement to the last witness. The intention is that - my learned friend informs me that the intention is that his statement will be tendered in due course.

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COMMISSIONER: All right. We'll regard it as notionally marked for identification, if you like.

MR O'DONNELL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: So, that's fine.

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MR O'DONNELL: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. And Mr Kent, at this stage, I think that the Union had had an intimation that when witnesses were called who are members of the Union requiring representation, the Union would have leave to appear, so is that now the situation?

MR KENT: That's the leave that I seek, your Honour.

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COMMISSIONER: And who's instructing you? Is it a direct brief of the Union?

MR KENT: For the record, my name is Kent, initial D. I'm instructed by Hall Payne Lawyers. I appear on behalf of - or retained by the United Firefighters Union to appear to protect the interests of the various members who are Union members. It might assist if I named them.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

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MR KENT: That is Mr Dundas, who is the next witness; Mr Dixon, D-I-X-O-N; Mr Bland, Mr Stephenson, and Mr Burrows, who I understand it is intended to call Thursday. Can I just say, your Honour, that the witnesses who are Union members wish it known that in giving evidence in the Commission, they're aware of the protections for witnesses in the Commissions of Inquiry Act, in particular, section 23, and they're also aware of the Commission's relevant comments on the 27th of April during the hearing of evidence in the Commission of Inquiry, underlining the importance of section 23. So, they wished that to be known.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call William Dundas.

MR KENT: Stewart Dundas.

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr William Stewart Dundas.

WILLIAM STEWART DUNDAS, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- William Stewart Dundas, station officer, Queensland Fire and Rescue, based in Toowoomba.

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You are the author of a 16 page statement provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry; is that right?-- That's correct.

And you've been shown a copy of that just there?-- Yes, I have.

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Yes, I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 328.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 328"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Dundas, as a station officer, can you just give us a broad outline of the sorts of duties you undertake?-- As a station officer within Queensland Fire and Rescue, my day-to-day duties are to be part of a functional operation response team, comprising of myself, another station officer and four other firefighters based at Kitchener Street fire station, where we attend numerous - or any emergency incidents as we're directed to, from motor vehicle accidents, rescue incidents, structure fire fighting, and so on.

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And so you're in charge of the station, crews, appliances on any given shift?-- At the present time, I'm part of a two-man station officer team that responds out of Kitchener Street Fire Station.

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Going up the line from you, who do you report to or who do you take - if there's an issue which isn't within your power, who do you refer to?-- I follow my direct chain of command. That would be to the Inspector of my command.

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Now, at paragraphs 9 and following in your statement, you speak to the response to events in Toowoomba on 10 January this year; is that correct?-- That's correct.

And just by way of broad overview for you, I think you started at 7 a.m. that day; is that right?-- That's correct, that was my start of shift time.

And there was first of all a house fire that you had to deal with?-- Yes, not long after 7 o'clock we responded to a structure fire in a unit in Toowoomba. We responded to that with myself on the Alpha appliance, a rescue appliance and the Alpha appliance from Anzac Avenue Station.

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And then later in that day, you made an attempt to get to Murphy's Creek at about 1 p.m. or so, is that right - or shortly after?-- Yes, that's correct. We responded at a time I can't actually quote to a report of a live rescue in the Murphy's Creek area.

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But you couldn't get there?-- No, at the initial time of turnout, we responded out of the station, proceeded in a north direction to that area where we encountered torrential rain, torrential flooding of roadways to a point where I deemed it unsafe for us to continue to that incident. At that time, I notified our fire communications that we were - we could no longer commit ourselves to that incident, and I asked for a - different resources to be deployed to effect that rescue.

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You returned to Toowoomba, and we have some sense of what happened in Toowoomba later that day?-- Yes.

I take it that you were - or you had your hands full for the rest of that day?-- Yes, I notified our fire communications that I wouldn't be - due to the nature of the incident and also for the safety of my crews, we wouldn't be able to proceed. I made the decision then to return back to the city area, which - because of our radio communications, we were aware that there were other rescues being performed. We were then advised to respond to another incident within the Toowoomba area, Holberton Street, and because of the route that we'd taken to get to our present location, we knew it wouldn't be viable for us to return that way, so we took our alternative routes to get down, back to the - to an area we thought would allow us to get across to that rescue location, and that's when we come across our further incidents.

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All right. Now, if I take you to paragraph 31 of your statement?-- Yes.

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As you say there, for the remainder of your shift, you were involved in a number of rescues; is that correct?-- Yes. Our particular crew - our Alpha crew was involved in a rescue at around the - in the vicinity of Dent Street and Margaret Street in Toowoomba. Once we completed that rescue, we then - because we had not been assigned any other rescues, we returned to our Kitchener Street station.

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All right. Now, can I just, perhaps through you, define some terms that we're going to be hearing used with yourself and the next few witnesses. We know from materials that there are two types of swift water technicians; is that right - a Level 1 and a Level 2?-- Yes. Yes, there is.

Can you just tell us about that?-- Level 1 technicians, to the best of my knowledge, we're all key FRS personnel.

Operational urban staff full-time are trained into a Level 1 standard, and then we have further training for personnel who wish to progress on to Level 2 technical rescue. 1

Is it the case that at Level 1 standard, you can perform a support role, but you don't actually enter the water?-- That's correct.

Level 2, on the other hand, can enter the water and perform rescues as required?-- Yes, that's correct, because they've received the additional training in swift water rescue techniques. 10

And is there a requirement, as you understand it, as to the number of technicians of either or both kinds that have to be present in order for a swift water rescue to be performed?-- After an incident, on or around about the 22nd of December, I was informed by a - my South-West Regional Technical Coordinator that I shouldn't be trying to undertake a swift water rescue unless I have a minimum of Level 2 personnel and with additional Level 2 technicians on their way. 20

COMMISSIONER: So, who was the person who told you that and what was their authority?-- They are our South-West Regions Technical Rescue Coordinator, who is in charge of - my belief - is in charge of co-ordinating, training and equipment for our technical rescue crews.

And are they in a position to tell you what you should and shouldn't be doing, or is that sort of information-----?-- When we had this informal chat, there was - at that time, it was probably an informal conversation, which I took on board, but because of the nature of my crewing at that particular time and also on the 10th, whilst conducting those risk assessments - sorry, that rescue, I was conducting ongoing dynamic risk assessments of the incident, and because of the nature of the rescues involved, I made my decisions on how to conduct that rescue. 30

MR CALLAGHAN: Can I show you a document which purports to be a Directive from the Commissioner, entitled "Fire Communications Centre Directive. Rescue Water: All types". I'm not sure - are you familiar with that document at all? Have you-----?-- If this has come from the Fire Communications Centre - directive - no, not really, because it doesn't come through to me as an operational station officer. 40

Fair enough. But if I can ask you to turn over to the second page, and you see the bullet point "Dispatch"?-- Yes. 50

"Initial Assignment: One pumper on turnout, one specialty rescue/rescue appliance on turnout"?-- Yes.

Can you just translate those terms for us. A "pumper"?-- Yes, that would be - in my particular station, that would be an Alpha appliance, and one specialty rescue would be - at that time would have been our Kilo or our Lima appliance.

And, in turn, you can translate those for us. An Alpha appliance?-- Is a crew of one officer and three firefighters and our rescue - which is our Kilo Lima appliance - is one firefighter and one station officer.

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All right. I'll tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 329.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 329"

MR CALLAGHAN: You have raised in your statement, Mr Dundas, a number of issues. Perhaps we can just start with the whole question of preparation and planning and you addressed those in paragraph 44 of your statement. Is it the case that you were not aware of any preparation, planning or training done in anticipation of weather events such as the kind that was experienced?-- That's correct. I have not been asked to provide information on, or provide any evidence or input into that at all as my role as station officer at that particular time.

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And the effect of your statement is that you're not necessarily asserting that no such thing has ever happened, you're just saying that if it's been done, you haven't been informed of that?-- That's correct. I have not been part of that. That's not to say our South-West Regional Technical Coordinator and also our immediate command haven't been - or implemented any procedure.

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No. If we move to staffing issues generally, and we've already touched on this, but I believe in paragraph 13 you record your understanding as to what's required for a swift water rescue, and at paragraph 15 you refer to the advice that you say you've received; is that right?-- Yes, that's correct. It was - as I mentioned, it was an informal chat. As I said there, it wasn't part of any criticism from my swift water technician coordinator, but more of information on future considerations. This is referring back to a rescue that we conducted in the Murphy's Creek area on or around about the 22nd of December where, due to the nature of incident, where I was the officer in charge, where we had two people in fast-flowing water with nightfall encroaching, that I - on the advice and an incident action plan developed by myself and my swift water Level 2 technician - we implemented a rescue or started implementing a rescue so we could rescue these people with further Level 2 technicians still proceeding from Ipswich.

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And if I could just pick up on the last sentence in paragraph 16, where I think you make the point that it is not always possible to roster staff to accommodate that possibility; is that right?-- Well, yes, because we only have a certain number of Level 2 technicians in the Toowoomba area and

depending on annual leave, other requirements, and who's available on shift that day, rosterers do have a bit of a problem trying to at least give us one, if not two Level 2 technicians across the whole Toowoomba span.

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And on this whole issue of staffing generally, you pick up again in paragraphs 28, 29 and 31. You demonstrate the issues that staffing limitations raised for you on the 10th of January; is that right?-- Yes. Because of our local knowledge, myself and my other station officer, we made the decision of not really knowing the exact location of the rescue, and because of what had happened previously the night before and also possible conditions we'd encounter, we decided to split our crews and attack it from both sides, so we can ensure at least one of our appliances would get to the rescue and hopefully be able to initiate the rescue while the others were still coming.

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But by splitting the crews, what consequence did that have for the numbers of Level 2 swift water technicians that were available?-- Fortunately on that day we had available to myself and my other station officer two Level 2 technicians, so we decided to put one on each appliance, and, as I just previously stated, that's our reasoning why we initiated the turnout that way.

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But with one on each appliance, technically, that wasn't sufficient for either appliance to-----?-- Well, technically we were hoping that both of us were going to be able to get there to that incident.

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Right, yes?-- If we didn't, we had no-one going there at all to initiate a rescue at all. So, that's why we went behind that reasoning-----

Yep?-- -----of going that way, to ensure at least one of us could get there, one of us could start, if we possibly could, initiating rescue - setting up, you know, what we needed to do to complete that rescue, and hopefully have further resources not too far away to help us complete the rescue.

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Mmm. On the question of staffing also, you made the point about I think in paragraph 49 that auxiliary fire officers are not trained even as level one swift water technicians; is that right?-- To the best of my knowledge they are not trained. They've received a Swift Water Awareness package, but they're not trained to a leave 1 swift-water rescue technician.

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And you just better define that term too. An auxiliary fire officer is?-- As - is a fire officer that isn't permanently employed or is their primary role of employment.

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And the Swift Water Awareness program is, I might be wrong about this, it amounts to watching a DVD; is that right?-- I couldn't really comment on the form of the material because we're not - hard to say on that. Yes, I do - I'm aware there is a DVD available for them to watch. Any further - any other further requirements I couldn't really comment on.

Fair enough. All right. Well, can I turn to the issue of communication problems that you had, and if we go back in your statement to perhaps the beginning at paragraph - well, you start talking about the shift at paragraph 19 as we have noticed, but then at paragraph 23 you make the point that you tried to contact a superior officer by telephone and you were unsuccessful?-- Yes, that's correct. After the - the house fire that we responded to and we're making up, our inspector actually came on - onto the scene as being the fire investigation as I requested where we determined the cause of - of that fire, and he left the scene. It was after that there was a conversation among the crew members because of what had happened the previous night and the weather that was encroaching at that time, being foggy, misty rain, that we made a call that it would be handy to have further personnel on station to possibly set up a primary swift-water rescue team that would allow the rest of the station to function as it usually would, and that would be as a response being a Alpha appliance and also a rescue appliance. Further on later on the day - sorry, at that stage I tried to make contact to my inspector by a phone which we had no success in. And then later on the day once the weather started to increase, I made a further phone call which we had no luck in conducting - contacting the inspector.

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That's the one talk about in paragraph 26; is that right?-- Yes, that's correct.

Okay. Still on this issue of communications with management. Paragraph 45 you say that you were aware that Firecom received information of a severe weather pattern. How did you become aware of that?-- Unofficially it was the - we were informed on that day of the 10th or a few days after that that the fire communications staff had been increased on that day. Formally it only came out of the operational debrief conducted a number of weeks later attended by operational crews, fire communications crews and senior officers, that it was then formally discussed that at around about or on about mid-morning, 9 o'clock, mid-morning, fire communications staff had contacted extra personnel and asked them to attend because

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of the possibility of inclement weather, and another further call was made at about 11 o'clock - or the personnel - Firecom personnel turned up on or around about that time. So effectively they had a three-person staffing model at fire communications for the possibility of severe or inclement weather heading into the Toowoomba area.

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But your point is that no-one communicated?-- That - that information was never passed down to us, being operational station level, hence surprised when we responded to a swift-water rescue at Murphy's Creek and we - you know, it was to us, well, we didn't know anything about the severe - the weather that was coming in or was - that was happening that was causing such a series of rescues.

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And, finally, I think on this topic of communication from the top going down, you, in paragraph 55 through to 57, talk about another incident where a temporary directive issued by the Assistant Commissioner hadn't been brought to your attention; is that right?-- That's correct. It was on our night shift, we were - the turnout was for a three level Lima to respond to a life rescue in the Grantham area, and because of what previous information considerations I had been informed of, myself and my fellow station officer decided to send our Lima as well as our Alpha appliance to that area to effect the rescue primarily because it ensures the safety of my crews - our crews at all times with at least six personnel with a minimum of level 1 swift water training to effect the rescue.

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All right?-- Upon being called off that incident, we were informed that an inspector would be meeting us at the station, and when we returned to the station our inspector asked us why we responded with the appliances and I informed - we both informed him at that time that because of what had happened previously, we said for our duty of care and to ensure the safety of our crews at all times, we're responding with those - the minimum of that number of personnel to ensure the safe rescue. At that point he said, "Well, weren't you aware of the incident directive that had been brought out? And upon turnout why did you respond further vehicles when there was only a Lima that was requested?", and hence again we went into the same information back to him, which he agreed on. He then contacted the Assistant Commissioner and asked for clarification. To my understanding, that clarification was that information was provided to Firecom and Firecom only.

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COURT REPORTER: Sorry, "to my understanding, that clarification"?

WITNESS: To my understanding, that clarification was only going to fire communications. It wasn't then sent down to station. The reason - that's why the reasoning of why I responded with two appliances instead of-----

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MR CALLAGHAN: If you'd been aware of the directive, you would have complied?-- Just responded what was supposed to have been responded, yes.

Can I take you to the issue of equipment?-- Mmm-hmm.

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And firstly to the question of radios which you do refer to in paragraph 38. For a start you say, "Radio equipment can physically hinder the rescue." What - just explain that to us?-- In my experience as a fire officer in conducting swift water rescues, we're instructed only to be wearing our level 1 uniform which is virtually our station wear. We're not to wear any level 2 structural firefighting gear because of the weight that could be affected - which would affect you in water. So we have virtually our - our uniform which is our shirt, our trousers and our boots. With a radio in wet weather, with water, they can be ineffective, they don't work. They're a hindrance because of where - at the particular time when I was conducting those rescues I'm part of the operational team, it wasn't - it wasn't practical for me to wear it - for me to have a radio on me at that particular time because of the necessity to be part of the operational team, I just couldn't physically carry that radio on me.

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What sort of size are the radios that we're talking about?-- Their dimensions would be approximately 250 millimetres in length, 75 millimetres in - or 50 to 75 millimetres in width and approximately 40 millimetres thick. They have a clip on them which can attach to your belt which is very hard to keep security when you're moving around, and also to hear depending on where you place it.

And as you say, the ones that you have don't - or they're not water prove; is that right?-- Not a hundred per cent waterproof, no. And where there's a possible chance you drop them into the water and because of the torrential rain we were experiencing, it just wasn't good practice to have them.

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No, but if you had one that could work well and wasn't - wasn't a hindrance it would be an advantage, wouldn't it?-- Well, it would depend on how it was secured to my body and how it was going to be kept from - kept being dry and how I could use it.

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If you could get a water one that was tailored to your uniform requirements?-- Well, yes, it could be, yes.

A better one?-- Yeah, a better one would - well, as I say, yeah, better constructed, better attachments, yes, could be more effective.

Because the-----

COMMISSIONER: Sorry, if you're in an Alpha team, isn't there someone monitoring the radio while you're in the water?-- At that particular rescue that we were effecting, there were myself and three other firefighters and we're all involved in the actual rescue.

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So you're all out there?-- Yep.

Okay. Thanks.

MR CALLAGHAN: And what are you - you speak in paragraph 38 of not being aware of a code red call?-- That's correct.

Just elaborate on that?-- Because at that particular time or around that time, we were effecting the rescue of a young gentleman in swift water. Because the nature of the rescue, I was actually forming part of the rescue team, and because of the - we had to enter water, I had no radio communications on me at that time.

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You speak in paragraph 39 about this concept of a waterproof sock. Have you seen the sort of sock that they're talking about or do you know what is involved?-- On or around the day of the 22nd, we - we lead the rescue at Murphy's Creek along with the swift water team deployed from Ipswich who had the waterproof socks, I was made aware then there was something available. This information was passed on to our inspector and also to our swift-water rescue Coordinator or Tech and Rescue Coordinator who was looking into purchasing some of those.

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I'm just wondering whether you actually got to hold one or see how easy it was to work or-----?-- All - limited time, saw how they fitted in, how you can - well, supposedly press the - press the talk button. A little bit still hard to use, but I suppose it's better than what we have at this present time.

Better than what you have, but perhaps not as good as a fully waterproof radio?-- Yep.

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That leads me to the topic of personal flotation devices which you talk about in paragraphs 42 and 43. Can you just elaborate on what you're talking about there?-- Currently all Alpha appliances we carry four PFDs for each member of the crew. So if we're involved in at least level 1 - as level 1 rescue technicians, we can put on our personal PFDs, and then depend on how we're used we can be deployed and they'll have some sort of flotation device on them. And also being on the basis that level 1 technicians should not be entering the water, so it's more of a safety in case something does happen, they lose a footing and they are - enter water or fast-flowing water, they have some sort of flotation.

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And there's none left over?-- No, there's no other spare ones we carry on the appliances. However, that may have been remedied in South-west because it's one of the points that was brought up in the debrief, operation debrief. To the best of my mind at this point, I haven't - I'm not aware of any others being put on the appliances.

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And the PFDs that we're talking about, are they all the same size?-- To the best of my knowledge I'm not too sure whether there are different sizes because of the different make-ups of the crew members we have. So they tried at least to have four PFDs on each appliance, I definitely know that.

All right. Thank you. They're the questions I have.

MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

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COMMISSIONER: I might come to you last, Mr Kent. Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you. Mr Dundas, you have been operating in Toowoomba as a firefighter since 2002?-- That's correct.

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And as part of your training in Toowoomba or in that region, do you have to or are you instructed to identify risks that might arise and train to deal with those risks?-- In my role as a station officer we are asked to - what we could provide is what we call a local area plan for individual areas, yes, we have been - we have been asked to do those plans up.

And as part of that process, you identify known or likely risks?-- Yeah, that in those actual locations, yes.

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Now, in Toowoomba, the events that occurred on the 10th of January this year were totally without precedent, weren't they?-- That's - that's to the best of my knowledge, yes.

I mean, it was never believed by anyone, including firefighters at Toowoomba, that the events involving such flooding could occur?-- To the best of my knowledge after discussion with other firefighters and senior firefighters and people who have been around that area, no, there hadn't been an event like that previously.

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We have had evidence here in the Inquiry concerning a particular intersection of Kitchener and James Streets-----?-- Yes.

-----which is an area of East and West Creeks?-- That's correct.

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That area-----?-- Or East Creek, yes.

East Creek, I'm sorry. That roadway routinely has water across it in heavy rainfall but nothing of the kind that occurred on the 10th of January?-- To the best of my knowledge that is correct. Probably more being more relevant at this particular time because of the amount of water - sorry, rainfall we received the last nine months, that quite easily can flood with a simple two or three inches of rain.

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But it's never flooded the way it did on the 10th?-- No, to the best of my knowledge, no.

And, indeed, nowhere else in Toowoomba, and for particular relevance here is the CBD area, that's never flooded in that way before, has it?-- In - since my time in Toowoomba, no, I have not known it to do that.

All right. So the training you have received as a firefighter in Toowoomba in that region, it's not unusual, is it, that you haven't been trained for the event that actually occurred on the 10th it being so unusual?-- As far as my training is concerned, I'm trained to a level 1 rescue technician which allows me to support my level 2 technicians in swift-water rescue. However, I have been part of teams that have conducted rescues in the Toowoomba area command of swift-water rescue where we've had to, because of the necessity of the rescue, the make-up of the crews, we have had to enter the water ourselves.

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Okay. Can I take you to para 15 of your statement? You refer there to, as you have told us, it's been brought to your attention you shouldn't attempt a swift-water rescue in the absence of two swift-water rescue technicians?-- That's correct.

Was that put to you as a desirable situation rather than a mandatory requirement?-- At that time that information was passed to me that was just a general, informal conversation.

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And I suggest to you that the effect of that is and the way you're - you should be operating is to, where possible, have two swift-water rescue technicians with you, but it's up to you whether you can manage a particular event with only one. If you think you can safely, you're entitled to go ahead and rescue someone in that situation?-- My role as a station officer, when I'm deployed to an incident, particularly being swift-water rescue or that, it is - it is desirable to have at least two rescue technicians, and we may call for further rescue technicians to be assembled and possibly deployed upon receiving more information about the rescue. My role as a station officer is I make a dynamic ongoing risk assessment of what we - we need to do at that particular time to, one, ensure the safety of my crew, the persons involved in rescuing and anyone else on the scene. That is where I believe because of my role there that sometimes we do work outside the boundaries-----

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Yes?-- -----simply because we are being perceived of being, through the public, as the people who are trained to do this.

Yes?-- If we aren't seen to as actually trying to do something, and members of the public put themselves in - in jeopardy to try to complete these rescue themselves, this could be far more catastrophic consequences.

Yes, just to make it plain, I'm not disagreeing with you at all. I'm suggesting to you that's how it works, you're allowed a degree of flexibility as the person in charge to make that assessment and to react accordingly?-- We work within what we call Operations Doctrine and Incident Directives.

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Yes?-- They are the directives we're supposed to work under, and as I have said previously, depending on how we need to complete those things, sometimes we do have to work

out - outside of those operations doctrine and also directives.

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Yes. Now, on the 10th of January-----

COMMISSIONER: Can I just interrupt there? Is there a directive that says you must have two?-- Officially now I couldn't comment to say there definitely is because I'd need to have a look through because there is so many directives, so many operation doctrines, procedures that we have to follow. I couldn't recall that without actually physically going through it.

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All right. Thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: All right. Can I just formally suggest this position to you, if I haven't already clearly, that there's no directive making it mandatory for you to have two swift-water rescue technicians on board to conduct a rescue, that's a desirable position, but if you consider as the person in charge of the incident that you can safely proceed with one swift-water rescue technician, you're entitled to do so, that you have that flexibility of decision-making?-- So that what you are saying is actually in my directive or that's just saying that I can making that decision?

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I'm saying that would be contemplated by the operational protocols in place for you to operate. That's sanctioned by the service is what I'm suggesting to you?-- So that's - yeah. If that's what they're saying, I can agree with that, yes, because I have used that and implemented that.

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Okay. Now, on the 10th of January, you, in fact, had two technicians?-- Yes.

But you thought because of the situation you perceived developing, you should ask for more?-- That's correct.

And you made some calls, you've set out in your statement, to the Inspector?-- Yes.

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Now, wouldn't the procedure have been to make that request via Firecoms?-- Yes, I can, and I think we did when we were actually going to that-----

Murphy's Creek?-- Murphy's Creek rescue, but prior to that, as following my chain of command, I was trying to contact my inspector to put this across to him to have this extra staff brought on. In my position as a station officer, I can only make judgments and decisions based on the incident I'm proceeding to. Any further decisions or situation awareness or anything that arises is to be handled by a senior above me, or a person in command above me.

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In any event, if, for whatever reason, you couldn't make contact with your next in command, the Inspector, you had the option, which you used later on the way to Murphy's Creek, to contact Firecoms directly?-- That's correct.

In that situation - and you don't say in your statement at paragraph 29 - but did they respond by providing extra staffing, or were they at least sympathetic to your request - it's 29, I think?-- Yeah, I'm just reading it, going through it now. At that particular time, I'm not - cannot remember, to the best of my knowledge, what communications come back without actually having a look at the transcript from Firecoms.

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All right. If you used the radio in the vehicle, it would be logged - recorded by Firecoms?-- Yes.

If you used a phone, it wouldn't be recorded, is that the-----?-- No. And that's what I mention it in my statement for - the more receptive way of doing - of any communication for an incident is to be by radio, because it is recorded. Failing that, it is by mobile phone as well.

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Now, in terms of the adequacy of the radios that you carry or have available to you, the portable radios, and the personal flotation devices - I think you've said this in part at least - you are aware that since these events, the entire question of the capability of the swift water rescue teams and their equipment is under review by the service?-- To the best of my knowledge, not being part of the Level 2 rescue group, I'm not party to what actually has been changed or being investigated. I, however, believe that there's some water socks been purchased. I'm not sure what's been done with the personal flotation devices.

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All right. And you say at paragraph 45 you're aware that Firecoms received information of a severe weather pattern?-- Mmm.

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Forming to a point where they had organised for other Firecoms staff, et cetera?-- Mmm.

Part of your role as a team involving swift water rescue is to, yourselves, monitor the BOM site; would you accept that - the Weather Bureau site?-- That might be part of Level 2 technicians, but as far as myself being a station officer on duty in charge of a station with no information to say there is a weather pattern evident, I've got no reason to look at the BOM all the time. If I have other duties I need to be completing-----

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But in Toowoomba on the 10th of January, you were aware that there was a severe weather event happening, weren't you?-- No.

You didn't know that at all?-- That was the point of the information before. The first thing we were aware of -

information - was when we turned out to a swift water rescue in Murphy's Creek. The night before, the A-shift crew had been down at Grantham conducting rescues. We, at no time, had - my operational crew at Kitchener Street station - been made officially aware that there was a severe weather warning or weather event coming to Toowoomba. We've had rain, but we've had rain since the beginning - on or about the 22nd of December.

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But this was unprecedented heavy rain in Toowoomba that day, wasn't it?-- Well, there must have been some information, because they called extra Firecom staff in.

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Could I ask you to look at Exhibit 329, please, the directive? I will bring it up on the screen for you, Mr Dundas.

COMMISSIONER: There's also a little screen in front of you, so you can look at either one of them, whichever is easier.

MR MacSPORRAN: Can you read that one?-- That's fine.

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If you go to point number 3, it's headed "Directive"?-- Yes.

If you go to the last paragraph of that directive and the last sentence, it says this, doesn't it: "Firecom personnel should anticipate potential swift water rescues by monitoring weather situations, such as prolonged heavy rain, impending storm activities or flooding."?-- That's correct.

So, you have a personal responsibility to-----?-- Yeah, but that's fire communications staff-----

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MR KENT: Your Honour, I think I really should object to this being pursued. In the evidentiary context, I don't think this witness has ever accepted that he saw that Directive.

COMMISSIONER: I'm not sure that he's Firecom either. Are you?-- I'm not fire communications staff. I'm operational staff.

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So, I think that might be the problem with that, Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: Very well. But you accept, don't you, that you have a role to play in personally monitoring weather events to be prepared for call out?-- If we were aware that there was a significant weather event going to happen, I could foresee that that could be a consideration.

Do other officers that you're aware of monitor the BOM site - the Weather Bureau site?-- I can't comment on that, because I'm not aware if anyone else does. They maybe do or they maybe don't. I don't see them. I had one other station officer with me at the station at that time.

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Were you aware of the service's website - webpage?-- Yes.

Are you aware that it contains links to the Bureau of

Meteorology site?-- Yes.

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Have you ever looked at it?-- Yeah, occasionally we do.

But not on the 10th?-- Well, maybe I did, maybe I didn't. I had other operational responsibility, and, as I said before, if I'm not made aware that there is - we had heavy rain. We have had heavy rain in Toowoomba a lot of times. It doesn't mean to me to say that we're going to have a - there's a very different type of weather event going to happen, or I'm going to be sitting in front of the computer for the 10 hour shift watching it all the time to see what's going to happen. If that's come from fire communications, that's a fire communication directive. That's not to operational staff.

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If I take you to paragraph 49 of your statement, please? You make the point there that auxiliary fire officer are not trained as Level 1 swift water technicians, and you do go on to say what training they do receive?-- Mmm, to the best of my knowledge.

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You understand that's an issue that's taken into account when the rostering is done for staffing vehicles and then deploying personnel to incidents?-- Auxiliary staff? Can you just repeat the question again?

Yeah. When you're deploying personnel to various incidents, you would take into account the level of training and who's available to do what?-- Mmm.

30

So, you wouldn't be deploying or organising for auxiliary members to go to a situation where they have to perform duties beyond their training and capabilities?-- That's not in my - that's not in my response. That's decided from fire communications regarding-----

Yes, that's what I'm saying to you. That is taken into account, you would expect, by fire communications when they're deploying personnel to various incidents; who can go, who's got the level of training necessary and how many people should go to a particular incident. That's all organised through Firecoms?-- That's all done through the ASCAD program, I believe.

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And it's that program that has an overview of what's going on in all these areas to appropriately deploy staff to various incidents that are occurring?-- Without actually knowing the full way that the fire communication turnout procedure works and also how ASCAD works it, I can't really make real clear comment on that. All I can say is with my experiences, when we've had swift water rescues in other areas involving auxiliary staff, the closest auxiliary response is deployed, and then we deploy our Lima appliance, and then it will depend on what information is then received from the incident ground, whether further resources are then deployed.

50

And you, as an individual, don't know all of the considerations that are taken into account by Firecoms in

relation to deploying staff to a particular incident?-- No, well, at that particular time, it's only when the - we call it the bells drop at the station - that we're aware that an incident is happening and that we need to respond to it.

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And then you go where you're sent by Firecoms?-- That's correct.

And then you keep in touch with them, giving them updates as to what you've achieved and what more equipment you need, perhaps, and so on?-- That's correct.

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On this day, the 10th, you were aware that it wasn't just the Toowoomba event that was occurring. You were, in fact, directed to Murphy's Creek. There were things happening down there?-- At that stage, that was our initial - if you call wake-up to a series of events that was going to happen afterwards. Further to that, it was only when we started responding that it was then our Anzac Avenue appliance responded to a - after responding to an alarm, they were then redirected to a swift water rescue within the Toowoomba City area.

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Yes, all right?-- And then I believe that's when all the other multiple triple 0s come in.

I was just going to ask you this: you're a member of the Union - the United Firefighters Union?-- That's correct.

And were you aware that the Union made a submission to the inquiry?-- Ah, yes, yeah. We were asked to - if we wanted to provide statements, yes.

30

That was my next question. You - is this statement that we're now looking at a result of you volunteering to provide a response at the invitation of your Union?-- Yes.

Yes. Thank you. I have nothing else, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr MacSporran. Ms McLeod?

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MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

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MR KENT: Thank you, your Honour. Mr Dundas, I think you mentioned in relation to staffing that there are only a certain number of staff who have Level 2 swift water qualifications?-- That's correct.

And you told us about the different kinds of appliances and the staff they have on the appliances?-- That's correct.

In a normal roster, how often would it happen that an appliance would just happen to have two Level 2s on it?-- In my past experience, I believe it would be very, very rare that we would have at - located at either Kitchener Street or Anzac Avenue station two Level 2s. It does occur, but that's all to do with our rostering process.

10

And when it does occur occasionally, it is accidental, really?-- To a certain degree, yes.

In relation to the PFDs, and particularly the ones that are used by the Level 1 trained swift water rescuers, are they a necessary part of equipment for a Level 1 to take part in the rescue?-- Yes, they are, for the safety of the person.

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And just so we understand, this Level 1 person playing a support role but not in the water can be maintaining, for example, a static line that's attached to a Level 2 operator who's in the water?-- That could be correct, yes.

And it is essential that that person be safe when they're deploying the static line that the person is attached to?-- Yes.

30

And when the Level 2 technician reaches a person to be rescued, it can be that the static line is the thing keeping both of them safe?-- Yes, it can be, yes.

Do you know now, in relation to the supply of PFDs for appliances, whether there are spare ones to use for persons to be rescued as well?-- Up to the time I left on annual leave, I wasn't aware that they had been.

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All right. Yes, nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Anything, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Can I just clarify the issue of how your statement came into existence? Was it the case that in the first place, the Union put together a submission after speaking to a number of people such as yourself, do you know?-- I can't honestly clearly remember.

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Do you remember-----?-- It was just - we were asked one day if we would like to provide a statement for the Union, and I had no reason why I shouldn't provide information that happened to myself and my crew on that day.

Thank you, I have nothing further. May Mr Dundas be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Dundas.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Geoffrey Dixon.

COMMISSIONER: Just while he is coming in, I don't know whether it is worth putting on the record that the Commission did encourage the Union very strongly to provide any information to its members that it could.

GEOFFREY MERVYN JAMES DIXON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Yeah, my name is Geoffrey Mervyn James Dixon, and I'm employed by Queensland Fire and Rescue as a senior firefighter.

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Mr Dixon, you've actually given two statements that are relevant; is that right? You gave one in the first place to a police officer, I believe. That's a six page statement dated 11 February 2011?-- That's correct.

And that's now, I think, an exhibit to the statement which you provided to the Inquiry, which is a five page statement dated the 3rd of May 2011?-- That's correct.

Yes, I tender that?

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 330.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 330"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Dixon, you're the captain of the Gatton Fire Station; correct?-- That's true.

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But a permanent fire fighter at Ipswich Fire Station; is that right?-- That's my normal employment, yes.

How does that work? Is Gatton not a full-time proposition?-- Well, Gatton has never had a full-time fire service. Like most country terms, we have an auxiliary service where the members of that auxiliary brigade hold jobs in the town and, when there's an event, they're notified by pager or siren or some other communication method to respond to the station, and a role which I've been doing for about 25 years.

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In the first statement you provided, the one back in February, you speak about what you actually did back in January and, in particular, on the 10th of January this year; is that right?-- On the 10th of January?

Yes, that first statement records what you actually did-----?-- That's correct, yes.

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-----on that date. Which involved a lot of activity in the Murphy's Creek area?-- That's correct, that's-----

And then in your second statement, you've spoken more generally about some of the issues which have - or which you think should be drawn to our attention; is that correct?-- That's correct.

All right. On the 10th and, I think, extending into the 11th, you were involved in activities at Murphy's Creek, Helidon Sandy Creek, Brightview and Grantham; is that right?-- That's true.

And you were - we should clarify, you are a trained Level 2 standard swift water technician?-- That's correct.

You were working in a swift water task force until about - perhaps you could tell us. It's in paragraphs 21 and 22 of that first statement. I think you speak about the length of time for which you were working until about 3 a.m. on the 11th of January; is that right?-- That's correct. That's when we ceased work.

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Okay. And in paragraph 23, you talk about working in the Operations Control Centre, which is part of an incident control centre; is that right?-- That was the Incident Control Centre at Gatton.

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Yes?-- Yes.

Just because you're the first person that we've heard from that's going to speak about these things, can you tell us what's involved in an incident control centre and where the Operations Control Centre fits into that sort of thing?-- Well, the Incident Control Centre is set up at any major event where it's deemed that overall control is required of that incident, where we bring in people with certain expertise to manage that incident. So, we'd have defined jobs for people, whether it be operations, logistics, or in management, and certain people get defined roles, and they direct their resources from there.

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All right. I might just show you a document at this point, a document which illustrates the structure of the way in which these things might work. Have you seen that document before?-- I see a lot of documents.

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You are familiar with something like that?-- I am familiar with a flow chart - a fire service flow chart, yes. I see thousands of them.

Okay. And can you say by reference to that where you would have fit in on the 11th of March? Are you the operations officer referred to there?-- On that morning, I was the operations officer, yes.

All right. I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 331.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 331"

MR CALLAGHAN: Can I take you to some of the issues that you've identified in your second statement, perhaps picking up at paragraph 3. You refer to a lack of capability in fire appliances, which I assume is what we'd call a fire truck; is that right?-- Sorry, you will have to speak up.

Certainly. You've got your second statement there? Do you have your second statement?-- Yeah, I can see it, yep.

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I'm just asking you about paragraph 3?-- Roger.

And what you mean by the lack of capability in fire appliances?-- By "lack of capability" is mobility in this particular instance, talking specifically about flood situations. Most of the vehicles that we operate, which are two-wheel drive, low-clearance vehicles, which means they can't travel through very much water at all, they are inappropriate to responding to those areas that are in flood, and decisions are made, at times, whether that vehicle should or should not travel through depths of water.

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I'll just get you to look at paragraph 9 and confirm that that's the same point that you're making in paragraph 9 of that same statement?-- Yes, that's actually a reference to a particular vehicle that we were operating in on the 10th, on that afternoon, and it's suitability was better than the normal fire appliance, because it was a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle.

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All right. Going back then to paragraph 3, and the reference you make there to the use of helicopters; your initial observation, I think, was that there was poor use of helicopters in the early stages of this event; is that right?-- In the initial stages, there seemed to be a reluctance to get helicopters in the area immediately, and with the helicopters that were provided, some were unsuitable for performing rescue work, and I was saying the poor use was the eventual usage of ADF equipment, which did happen, but in the initial stages there was a little bit lacking.

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Do you know if it was a reluctance or just an inability to use helicopters?-- I don't have any direct information as to reluctance, but it seemed to me, out on the ground, that it took a long time for the helicopters to be activated.

Have you been involved in situations where helicopter rescues have been required over the years?-- We do a lot because of the area that we work in. Helicopter dust-offs mainly with medical emergencies, where we may attend a motor vehicle accident, and those people requiring transport to a major centre will be transported via helicopter.

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So-----?-- We don't do many rescues as such, and as far as helicopter activations for rescue, I haven't personally been involved in any in the fire service in my 25 years.

Right, okay. Moving then to paragraph 4, you say, "The issue

I identified was that none of our staff had any training with regard to performing rescues from helicopters.", but you developed procedures as the jobs progressed. From what you tell us, the helicopter rescue situation hasn't been very frequent, or doesn't seem to be a frequent demand for-----?-- I wouldn't say not a frequent demand. I would say that there has been no helicopter rescues used. There's probably been plenty of instances where they could have been used, but we don't have the training and we don't have that facility, so-----

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All right. I think you say in your statement that there's been pressure from within the fire service to conduct training with EMQ in this area; is that right?-- It's not from within the fire service. That was misconstrued. It's from the firefighters on the ground have requested that we do training, particularly with - in our area - where I work - in Ipswich, we have a major centre - airforce centre at our door step, and we don't do any cross-pollination or training with the ADF there. It seems to me it would be an ideal position to do some training with them. We have asked previously about training with them and with EMQ with regards to helicopter rescue, and the response has always been, "We'll look into it.", but with no reward.

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How have those requests been made?-- Those requests have been made verbally through our swift - not swift water, but our rescue coordinators, through our immediate superiors, and through the inspectors and through the superintendants.

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The opportunities that you speak about where helicopter rescues could have been used aren't restricted to swift water situations, I take it?-- No, no.

All right.

COMMISSIONER: When you talk about training in relation to performing rescues from helicopters, do you just mean getting the team in to somewhere where they can do a water rescue, or what sort of training are you talking about?-- This has been an issue that is one thing all of Queensland Emergency Service agencies or agencies don't do very well with regard to gaining access. It's a very wide, diverse state, and the ability to bring men and equipment into an area quickly is something that we don't do all that well. The use of helicopters could be used for rescue, they could be used for placing men and equipment in remote areas with road rescue equipment. We're doing it at the moment with medical equipment on a smaller scale, but that's usually after the event and after a rescue is required.

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What sort of training do you need? Training in what? Assembling your equipment, boarding a helicopter, how to get out, what?-- Yeah, just basically helicopter procedures; what to do with the crew, how to load, how to use their winches, how to manoeuvre in and out of the chopper or the aircraft. We received some basic training about safety when approaching aircraft, but as far as getting in them and operating and

working with the crews, we don't have anything there at all, and it's only through, say, good luck or good fortune that we have a lot of staff that come out of the ADF areas and they bring with them skill sets that can comply with helicopter usage, and that's what I was relating in my statement, saying that we adapt and through the knowledge that some guys bring along with them from airforce, navy, army exposure, that they can guide us and lead us when we do work with helicopters.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Are you able to give an example, just to put you on the spot, when you talk about developing procedures as jobs progressed? Are you able to give an example of the sort of thing that you had to do on the run in this context?-- We do it all the time. It's something that we learnt to do as officers. We do things called risk assessments-----

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No, sorry, I'm talking specifically about this helicopter issue?-- With the helicopter issue?

Yeah, I thought that was where you, in paragraph 4, say the crews managed without training, but developed procedures as jobs progressed. I was just wondering if you could give us an example?-- An example of that was when a crew was working out of the Gatton ICC, they were deployed to the township of Forest Hill to meet up with a helicopter, an emergency services helicopter, to conduct rescues. When they arrived there, it was deemed that the crew - their size and the equipment that they had with them couldn't be carried by that helicopter, and it was only that the crew that were there adopted an alternative, and they said, "Well, why don't we contact the ADF Blackhawk helicopters and utilise them.", which they did, and with the crew - while they were in the air - and I have knowledge of this, because I've talked to the crew members that were on that helicopter - while they were in the air, they were developing strategies of how they would do the rescues, because the ADF guys were saying that they wanted to remain inside the helicopter, and our guys were actually on the wire and went down and did the rescues.

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This was a swift water situation, was it?-- Well, our guys were swift water qualified that did that, and they were rescuing people in swift water flood rescue.

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COMMISSIONER: And when you say they were "on the wire", what do you mean?-- On a cable - a winch rope.

So they weren't winched with an army person who knew about-----?-- The army personnel were operating the winch and directing them, but in relation to the question about developing strategies and what to do, well, our guys have had no training with regards to the use of that equipment.

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MR CALLAGHAN: So, the army plan was to send just the belt, or whatever is at the end of the line, down, was it, or to go - was the plan for someone to go down on the wire?-- That's correct.

But was that the army's plan?-- I'd say-----

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Or the airforce-----?-- -----in consultation with our swift water rescue guys, they would have decided that. I wasn't there, so I-----

No. I was just wondering, I thought you said the original plan was to perform the rescue from inside the aircraft?-- No, the original plan was to use the Emergency Services helicopter that was working in the area.

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On this - well, you also speak in this part of your statement about deficiencies with use of QFRS air observation staff. First you better tell us about air observation staff, what they are, what they're meant to do?-- Well, these are-----

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COMMISSIONER: Actually, Mr Callaghan, might be better to do that at 2.30-----

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: -----or 2.15? 2.30. Thank you. We'll adjourn until 2.30, so we'll get you back then, please, Mr Dixon. Thank you.

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

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.30 P.M.

GEOFF MERVYN JAMES DIXON, CONTINUING:

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Dixon, I was asking you before lunch about the concept of QFRS Air Observation staff. Can you just tell us what such staff are or what they're trained to do?-- Well, to the best of my knowledge, the Air Operation staff are fire service personal who have received training in air operations both fixed and rotary wing aircraft, and basically what their role is to go along and be observers, and from that position of a high point or in the air they're able to observe the incident and give useful information to the troupes on the ground.

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Your point in this case, though, I think is that there was a lack of local knowledge; is that right?-- There was a lack of local knowledge with the air operations supervisors that were detailed to that particular job particularly with the, I say, the information that I have that there were local air obs supervisors or air attack supervisors available locally that would have had a better knowledge of the ground and of the operational capabilities of the appliances in that area. The operational air obs supervisors that were provided mostly came from a Rural Fire Service background which means that they have had exactly the same training as the operational or permanent firefighters, but their area of expertise lies in rural operations with regards to bushfire and wild fire events, and they have no knowledge of swift-water rescues or working with level 2 operators.

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What sort of knowledge do you think might be helpful for them to have for swift water capabilities?-- Well, obviously their

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scope of duties, what they're able to do, and what - more importantly what they're not able to do so.

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All right. Can I move on then to topic of other agencies. I think you refer in your statement to a situation where some people from DERM were offering assistance and that you were going to take them up on that but you were told that you couldn't do that; is that right?-- That's correct.

And were you told why you couldn't do that?-- It was a fairly brief explanation that the fire service is not responsible for external agencies.

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But as I understand your evidence you have dealt with other agencies previously?-- Regularly.

Regularly. What sort of things?-- We deal with other agencies at motor vehicle accidents where we'll deal with the Department of Transport or Road Tech. Other agencies, Energex, gas organisations, we're dealing with other agencies all the time.

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And this is - by "dealing with", do you mean getting them to do things for you?-- Within their area of expertise, yes.

Yes. And you talk about green T-cards can you explain what that's about?-- Well, it's part of our operational process that we have a tally or a T-card and that card is filled out by the crew arriving at the incident and it virtually states on it what type of appliance they ride, how many people there are, the names of those people, and a contact for them whether it be radio or their vehicle number. We have various colours for various agencies. For the fire service personnel we use red coloured card; and for rural personnel that come on scene, we use the yellow card; for police we have a blue card; and for other agencies we have a green T-card. So we can fill out the names and contacts for those persons that are at that incident. It's more a tool to reconcile or to keep track of who was actually at that incident.

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All right. Have you had situations before where crews from DERM were around to assist or was this a first?-- In bushfire situations, yes, we have. We work with DERM in the State Forestries where they look after and manage forestry and they also have their own fire crews, we work fairly closely with them, and on that basis when they arrive we'd fill out a T-card and record who was there and what their truck numbers are and call signs and put them through our management process.

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And you use them according to their capabilities-----?-- That's correct.

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-----is that the plan?-- That's-----

It seems that this approach from DERM came by reason of the difficulties that the Local Disaster Management Group was having, or at least that was your impression; is that right?--

That's correct. We weren't the first point of call for the DERM team, if you'd like to call them that. They made an approach to the Local Disaster Management Group and they weren't able to speak with them or give them time at that point, and I'm not sure whether they were redirected to us or they decided to come to us, but they came to our door offering manpower, equipment and assistance.

1

Did you make any observations about the performance of the LDMG yourself or is this just what you gathered from what the DERM people-----?-- I was working very closely in the ICC at Gatton for most - most of the time during the event. As I said earlier, I was an operations officer in the very early stages. That role was changed where I became an assistant to the operations officer and virtually a gopher or a fix-it because of my local knowledge and contacts. I was in contact with the LDMG by radio, we had a radio set up, and one of our fire service personal manning that radio where we could transfer information to and fro.

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All right. And did that transfer of information work well or were they just-----?-- Not particularly well. There was a lot of one-way traffic. We were asking for information and Intel, if you'd like to call it that, and at times it was very slow in coming. We were passing on requests for assistance that were outside of our scope, and they - the requests were coming back at us sometime later saying, "The LDMG are unable to help us, can you help us?"

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All right. Did it just seem that they were just overwhelmed by events?-- Overwhelmed by the magnitude of the event. And probably being mostly Council employees their priorities were focused on Council's side of operations. Not saying that they didn't do a good job, they did an excellent job under the circumstances, and maintaining water and sewerage throughout the event even though there was damage to the infrastructure, they should be highly commended.

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And accepting that that is so, from your point of view what capability should they have had that they lacked?-- I think they lacked a capability of an effective call centre-----

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Yes?-- -----where they were manning phones and we were redirecting people to that freecall number, but I don't think they had the ability to handle all the calls or the numbers of calls and, therefore, the calls were prioritised, and a lot of people were pushed down the list, as it were, and not seen to for some time.

Is there anything else about the LDMG that you think they were lacking or things that could be improved?-- Yeah, without going too deeply, the LDMG, like I said, did a fantastic job for the community in the early stages and in the recovery. They maintained operational equipment and facility around the town and roads. Some of their procedure as far as replacement of staff could probably be improved. I took notice myself that their staff were becoming fatigued particularly seven or eight days into the event, and I don't think they had the

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volumes of trained staff to continue with fresh troupes all of the time.

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All right. Well, can I turn to the concept of training and staffing levels? In paragraph 7 and 8 of your statement, I think you, in essence, make reference to the lack of swift water training that's been available, and the insufficiency of crews having training to a level 2 standard?-- This is a problem that exists in all rural areas of the State where auxiliary stations or rural stations aren't provided with effective swift-water training or equipment. As it has been stated earlier, there is a DVD presentation that gives an awareness of swift-water operations, but it's not a recognised course as such. There's no qualification or certificate attached with that. It's an information-only type presentation.

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And you also make the point, I think, that the auxiliary fire appliances don't carry swift-water rescue gear presumably because they're not trained?-- Well, it follows on. Obviously they don't have trained personnel so there's no equipment.

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What do you mean in paragraph 7 where you say that you would take gear home with you at the end of every shift so that you'd have personal gear with you. Was that in case you found yourself-----?-- Well, you have to understand my position. During my permanent employment or daytime job, I'm a qualified swift-water technician, firefighter at Ipswich station. When I return home to Gatton where I live, I'm an auxiliary firefighter.

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Right?-- So that means I'll respond when the calls are made. During the period from late November through to this event, we were experiencing jobs that required swift-water technicians, and when I would go home I would take some of my own - or personal issue swift-water gear with me. So that if I was responded on the auxiliary truck, that I could make some attempts to do swift-water work before the urban appliances arrived.

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Well, that's another point you make, I think, is that notwithstanding the lack of training equipment, the auxiliary operate - units do, in fact, perform swift-water tasks because they have to?-- Every auxiliary station they'll do what they can to help people in need.

And even though you, I think, expressed the view that the theory of senior management is that the auxiliary should travel to the event and wait there, that's just not going to happen because there will be an obligation to act?-- Yes.

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The crew will feel the obligation to act?-- There's a moral obligation there, and under our Charter we're deemed to protect life, property and the environment, and if protecting life means that we will risk our own life a little bit, well, that's what happens. It's not uncommon.

At paragraph 10 of your statement you say that the ICC ran reasonably well, but there were some issues with coordination of resources. You might have already touched on that, but is there anything else that you'd like to elaborate to - in that regard?-- With regard to the ICC and the - the initial set-up, I think that the - the event caught people unawares, and in the initial stages of the event, the procedures and information wasn't put together, I would say, quickly enough. We weren't fully aware of all the other events that were going on at the time, but somewhere along the line there should have been a - an overview or picture of the multiple events that were occurring that day and some form of incident management put together a bit more quickly.

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Was the lack of the duty manager of operations that you speak about in that paragraph something that would have assisted in - or if there had been one, that would have assisted?-- That's something that happened very early in the day, and it was probably on the first response that we went to. There was word about from other operators that we were getting into the area that there was no official response as far as having somebody in overall control of that incident in its entirety.

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All right. Just finally at paragraph 11, you talk about the large amount of reporting required by the ICC to higher management. Presumably some amount of reporting must be necessary. What do you say should have been the situation? You seem to say there was too much. If you accept that there should be some, how do we strike the balance?-- Well, I think the priority put on the reporting was the main issue that I - I have with that and have raised in other statements as well, that at different times the ICC management team were placing more importance on having the report looking well and having nice numbers on it rather than getting the guys out on the ground and getting the work done, and to that end I would say that staff were taken out of the management team to collate information and get the reports done while there were crews sitting at the station waiting to receive their daily briefs. And for mine that should have - daily briefs should have been done, the crews should have been activated, and then the reporting done of where those people were and what they were doing, but that wasn't the priority.

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All right. They're the only questions I have. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Any questions from Seqwater?

MR POMERENKE: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: No. Mr Dunning?

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MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Dixon, just a

couple of matters. In respect of the use of helicopters, you'd agree that helicopters were used frequently during the course of these events to transport at least the personnel around the areas?-- Yes, helicopters were used for transport and for evacuation of persons as well.

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And there is an ability to organise air assets through a department within the service, the Air Desk it's called I think?-- Yes. We don't - from the ground we don't actively initiate that. We - our requests go through our fire communications centre.

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Yes. You speak with the commander on the ground, whoever that is, operation controller, or whatever his terminology or her terminology is, they then contact Firecoms and Firecoms make available, if possible, the asset required?-- That's correct.

And during the course of these events there were two aircraft from EMQ being used; do you remember that?-- Two aircraft from EMQ, yes.

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Yes. And there were three organised through private contractors so there was a total of five in use throughout the course of these events that we are talking about?-- I wasn't aware of the five.

All right. Now, your concern is the phase to have trained personnel within the fire service to conduct rescues from helicopters or with the aid of helicopters?-- That's correct.

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Except, I assume, that swift-water rescue involving helicopters, that's an extremely dangerous exercise?-- Well, a lot of the things we do are extremely dangerous but that is-----

That's one of the more - one of the very dangerous exercises to be conducted with the use of a helicopter?-- Particularly since we don't have training to do that.

But you'd be aware that EMQ lost an aircraft in Townsville attempting a swift-water rescue?-- I have no knowledge of that, no.

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In any event, I take you're not aware, but I'll ask you formally in any event, are you aware of the initiative that the service has undertaken to investigate and promote a joint training with EMQ in the use of helicopters; that is, that the service would provide some training to the helicopter personnel in respect of swift-water rescue and the helicopter personnel would provide some training in the use of helicopters in that exercise, but that has been going on since well before these events in January this year, that initiative?-- There's no knowledge of that at station level that I'm aware of.

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Okay. All right. I suppose it wouldn't be unusual at station level not to know that that was going on? I mean, it's a policy thing, I suppose, is it?-- We have a term in the fire

service that a lot of things are secret squirrel and we don't find out.

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All right. Now, you were also disappointed, it seems, through the inability to use the DERM personnel?-- That was a disappointment for me, yes.

All right. There was a use of a DERM's strike force as they're called-----?-- That's right.

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-----through the course of the events?-- They were used, yes.

And they were used out of the Ipswich ICC?-- I believe they were, yes.

And there was about 15 or 20 members of that strike force from DERM?-- I'm not aware of the Ipswich strike force, I didn't work out of the Ipswich ICC.

Right. And you weren't aware of their role?-- Not of their role, not of their direct role. I know that they were there and they were effective.

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Can I just formally suggest to you that they offered and their offer was accepted to use their personnel and equipment involving backhoes and machinery, that kind, to carry out some work?-- I don't - which location are you referring to? Ipswich?

Well, it was organised out of Ipswich ICC, and they were tasked initially to Fernvale, and then they moved to Esk and surrounding areas, and then on to Somerset, so those - that large area?-- I'll take that as being correct because you have said it.

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You didn't have an awareness of that anyway?-- Not aware of that, no.

All right. Now, in terms of paragraph 7 of your statement, you talk about the training in respect of swift-water rescues, and you draw the distinction between the levels of training. There's the level 1, firstly, in training, isn't there, for swift-water rescues? You start at level 1?-- Level 1, yes, that's what all urban firefighters - permanent firefighters receive.

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And then they have a defined capability as level 1 qualified?-- They have a dry capability, so they're all riverbank activity.

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And they're allowed to, for instance, organise to position the potential victim or casualty in a way that they can be rescued by verbal command, for instance, for a start?-- By verbal, yes.

Then to attempt to reach the casualty with a piece of equipment, for example, a pole, inflated fire hose or other object to extend the rescuer's reach without the rescuer

entering the water?-- Yeah, I think you're hinting at reach - yell, reach and throw-----

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Yes?-- -----are the three terms that we have-----

Yes?-- -----that level 1s can do so long as they are not within three metres of the edge-----

Yes?-- -----and if they are within three metres of the edge, they're at the tethered or secured.

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To save them if they fall in being swept away-----?-- That's right.

-----with casualty. And the "throw" aspect use - relies upon the use of throw-bags or other equipment of that kind to reach the casualty and to secure their position?-- Yes, as long as they're within 20 metres.

Now, in terms of actually entering the water, there's a distinction to be made, isn't there, between entering a swift-water situation and entering water on other occasions to effect rescues?-- That's correct.

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I mean, throughout these events, many, many, firefighters who weren't qualified level 2 swift-water rescue personnel entered water of one sort or another to effect rescues?-- That's correct.

And that was all quite appropriate?-- Well-----

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By and large?-- By and large.

Where it wasn't swift water or the kind we're talking about Grantham and Murphy's Creek, for instance?-- Yeah, water that wasn't stagnant that's for sure, yes.

Yes. But where you're dealing with a situation like we hear about in Grantham and Murphy's Creek and so on, there's a very real distinction to be made between level 1 and level 2?-- Absolutely, it was-----

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As a matter of safety?-- Correct.

All right. All right. And since these events, are you aware of a general review taking place into the overall capability of the services of swift-water rescue personnel?-- Not aware of anything prior to the event. I'll read some-----

Since the event I'm saying, since the event?-- Since the event?

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Yes?-- I actually read something this morning that was in a statement from one of the officers relating to that fact that it's going to be looked into, but at station level there's been nothing forthcoming.

All right. You'd support, though, such a review?--

Absolutely.

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And you'd be prepared, would you, to have some input if asked?-- Say again.

You'd be prepared to have some input, express your ideas, if you're asked to have such an input?-- Absolutely.

All right. Now, can I take you to paragraph 9 of your statement. You talk there about a lack - you have identified a lack of the four-wheel drive appliance in that context. Paragraph 9?-- Yes.

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In that area there is, however, is there not, a Rural Fire Brigade four-wheel drive available for use and deployment?-- In that area.

Yes?-- There are light-attack vehicles available to us and medium-attack vehicles. The problem being that those persons that crew those vehicles aren't trained in swift-water rescue at all.

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All right. But just dealing with the four-wheel drive capability, is it the light and medium-attack vehicles are four-wheel drive capable?-- They are four-wheel drive capable.

Yes, all right?-- But as events have shown, they do get washed away.

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All right.

COMMISSIONER: Can I just check, when you said "in that area", which area did you actually mean?

MR MacSPORRAN: Well, I'm just referring to - I should ask the witness. What complaint do you have about the lack of a four-wheel drive in paragraph 9? Which area does that refer to?-- With the area I'm captain for and that I have a say in the vehicles is in the Gatton area.

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Yes. And is there a Rural Fire Brigade in that area that has access to and can make available four-wheel drives?-- They do, but not of that size.

All right. Now, paragraph 10, you acknowledge, don't you, that overall the ICC performed well?-- Overall, yes.

And do you also acknowledge that the ICC is what is needed in these situations to coordinate and control the events?-- Absolutely, and following the AIMS format is the way they operate, yes.

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And as to when you create an ICC that will depend upon the size of the response necessary and the degree of coordination of the resources necessary for a particular incident or series of incidents?-- Yes, once the incident goes out of the scope of command of an incident controller.

And with an ICC being put - being set up, you don't just turn a switch and then have an ICC fully operational, do you?--
I-----

You'd need to-----?-- Oh, as far as-----

-----deploy personnel for the centre, you'd need to have people man it, and you'd need to have them take over and coordinate resources and make the relevant calls and notations, et cetera?-- Yes, it does take some time to get that equipment to the location and get it all set up.

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And the average time from a decision being made to set up an ICC to it being up and running and fully functional is about four hours. Would you agree with that as a general principal?-- It will take as least that long.

Yes. It is a complex exercise, isn't it?-- True.

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You'd also accept from what you have said, I think, that there needs to be record-keeping in the operation of the ICC?-- That's true.

Now, is it the case that more often than not the ICC records are, at the initial stage at least, handwritten?-- Handwritten?

Yes?-- Yes.

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But it's still a record, isn't it?-- It is.

And you'd support the need to maintain such a record of events as they unfold?-- Absolutely.

Because such records are a necessary tool not only to operate the ICC effectively, but to review its operation after the event, aren't they?-- That's correct, and they would be useful at a debrief if one was held, yes.

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And you can use even handwritten records created by the ICC to track the movement of personnel and vehicles after the event, can't you?-- You can.

And that's one of the purposes of the record - that's one of the purposes of keeping such a record?-- Obviously, yeah. We have to account for all of our people at all times.

That's all I have, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I just check with you, in that paragraph where you talk about having a four-wheel drive appliance but most of them are two-wheel drive, when you're going to a swift water rescue, do you really need the appliance, which I take it is the fire truck, essentially?-- It is more a logistical thing of getting to the incident. Obviously if there's a swift water rescue required, there's going to be rain and creek flooding, and it won't be just at the incident where you are, it will be along the way.

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Mmm, but-----?-- So, one of the problems that we have with swift water rescue is actually gaining access to that area, and having a four-wheel drive heavy vehicle gives you that ability to ford or to cross some water to get to that location.

When you are accepting, though, that there are other four-wheel drive vehicles around, are they not big enough for what you need, or what's the problem?-- Possibly the vehicles that are available are from another wing of our service, from the rural sector. They are available, but not as readily available. Again, it would take time to locate those vehicles and people to initiate them. The size of the vehicle comes into it as well. They are a lighter vehicle, as proved evidence in our area. Our vehicle was stranded in flood water and was able to proceed afterwards, where other lighter tack vehicles were washed away or washed off the road and became unserviceable after that event.

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So it is not just that they're not four-wheel drive, but they're too - well, they might be four-wheel drive, but they're too light for what you need?-- That's correct.

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Thanks, I understand. Ms McLeod, did you have anything?

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: I think there's a solicitor from SunWater still with us.

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MS JESSOP: Yes, Jessop, initial M, for SunWater. No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Kent?

MR KENT: Thank you. If I can just canvass one matter with you quickly. You mention in respect of your particular practice, being stationed at Ipswich and auxiliary at Gatton-----?-- That's right.

-----that you had to take your gear home, referring, I think, to your swift water technician gear?-- Yeah, my wetsuit, PFD and equipment. That's purely off my own decision.

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Sure?-- It's not an operational thing.

I just wanted to check through with you - you've already started on it - what the equipment is. So, there's a wetsuit?-- Head to toe there's a helmet, a wetsuit, a PFD, or personal flotation device, some protective gloves and protective boots, a personal throw line or throw bag with a float rope in it, and a couple of connections and on-board flashing light and a knife, and things like that that go with the PFD.

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And is that all contained in a gear bag that you can easily transport?-- Yes.

And out of all of that, at least the wetsuit is personal to you, isn't it, because your wetsuit doesn't fit anybody else?-- In our area, that's correct. In some other areas in the state, I believe there's communal wetsuits and gear, yes.

Or perhaps it's obvious, but they wouldn't be nearly as suitable as your own proper wetsuit, would they?-- No, having your own gear is much more suitable.

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So as part of having sufficient trained Level 2 swift water technicians, they each need their own set of gear as well?-- That's correct.

Yes, nothing else, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

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MR CALLAGHAN: I have nothing further. May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks very much for your time, Mr Dixon. You're excused?-- Thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MR CALLAGHAN: I call Ian Bland.

IAN BLAND, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Station Officer Ian Bland, Station Officer Queensland Fire and Rescue service. I'm based at Ipswich and I've been a professional firefighter for 22 years.

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Mr Bland, you've provided a statement to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry that's being shown to you now; is that correct?-- Yes, that's correct.

Yes, I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 334.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 334"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Bland, in early January of this year, you were deployed as part of a swift water rescue team to Emerald; is that correct?-- That's correct.

And you were there for 48 hours or so before the risk of swift water events diminished?-- Certainly. It was my - as the team leader - or we arrived to take over from a swift water team that had been - two swift water teams that had been in place for seven days. On arrival, we were briefed that they hadn't had any swift water rescues in that vicinity for the last 36 hours and that water levels were dropping. We were aware, in that particular area around Emerald, that some of the outlying areas - people might be trying to make access, but in the next 48 hours, most of the roads around Emerald were cleared and we had no further incidents of swift water rescues.

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Are you able to tell us approximately when you went to Emerald?-- Approximately the 3rd of January, I believe.

All right?-- But I was on a seven day deployment, and I arrived back in Brisbane on the 10th.

Yes. What were you doing after the risk of swift water seemed to diminish?-- Within the first 48 hours, whilst the swift water threat was still there, but with some concurrent activities, we conducted rapid damage assessments for the Emerald community. That involved us going to each - visiting each house that had been affected by water, and categorising it either on a 1, 3 or 5 scale as to the level of the damage. After that first 48 hour period, my team and I moved into community recovery operations, which involved revisiting those houses with water cleaning equipment - water and hose and

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cleaning the houses and assisting the community to recover.

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How many Level 2 swift water technicians were with you?-- I had a team of four, myself and three others.

Three other Level 2 qualified?-- All Level 2 qualified, yep.

All right. And were you aware of any other areas of the state which were in need of swift water technicians during that period of your deployment to-----?-- Most certainly. I was reporting twice daily to our higher command - or the liaison officer based in Rockhampton. I was - obviously we were aware what was happening to Rockhampton at the time, and the flood water that had been in Emerald was moving downstream. At the same time also, being in contact with other technicians from my Ipswich-based area, we were hearing of increased flood risk through Central and Western Queensland. I did at the time make representation to my local ICC to be redeployed or released from our operations there so that we could be redeployed further afield or where the flood waters were.

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And what response did you receive?-- That consideration would be given, but no action happened.

In fact, it was obviously the whole wet season was a very busy period for swift water technicians. I think you say in your statement that you were only at home, was it, for nine nights out of-----?-- Yeah, my wife made comment about that. Over the - from late December through to probably the end of January, she made comment that she'd recorded that I'd only been home nine nights. Not all of it was on deployment. Other times I was isolated because of the flooding, or I was isolated in Ipswich and my home was isolated from me, and normal shift requirements. So, it was an interesting time.

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You make that reference in paragraph 16 where I think you also say that the QFRS has approximately 160 plus swift water technicians. We have seen some other material which might suggest that there are some 200 Level 2-----?-- My original determination was - I think was - I gave a figure - and I backed it up by saying it as around about July last year. I may or may not have been fully conveyed with the number that have since qualified in the August training period, and-----

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That answers my question. I was just interested where you got 160 from. It was an earlier period of time, perhaps?-- As a general rule of thumb, across the state, 10 per cent of the urban permanents force, which is about 2,000 firefighters, are Level 2 technicians in rescue.

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All right. Upon coming back from Emerald, you describe in your statement at paragraphs 4 and 5 that you were fresh and equipped and ready to go, but weren't deployed at that time; is that right?-- That's affirmative. On the morning of the 10th, I was in communique with station officer Mark Stephenson. I work at Ipswich station. We run two station officers there. Mark is my cohort. We're both on C shift. I'm the Level 2 swift water technician, along with two other

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Can I just ask you, what's your understanding of the number of Level 2 swift water technicians which are required to attend a swift water rescue? Is there a-----?-- There's an incident directive out and it's a minimum requirement of two, along with a safety consideration for the qualified Level 1 technicians to back us up. As a Level 2 technician, let me explain: if I enter the water and I have to cut loose from my tagline - and a tagline is a float rope which attaches to the rear of my personal PFD. It's my way back to the shore. However, being attached to me and such, if any debris comes downstream and hits that line, it will take the line down, and follow down the line to me and take me under. So, as a precaution, I am able to operate a quick release, and that means I float clear of my tagline. Then I have the option of either swimming or wading out, or being hit with a throw rope from my two downstream safeties. The downstream safeties have to be qualified in operating a throw rope and understanding when to use it and the techniques to use it. Obviously I have to be conscious of the fact that I have to be within, realistically, 12 to 15 metres for them to guarantee to get close to me, and then I grab the throw rope and then they recover me to the shore. At the same time also, I've got to be conscious that if I'm with a casualty, I'm meant to try and get that casualty over to that location as well as successfully grabbing the rope and ferrying us to safety. So, when we deploy, personally, I like to have somebody who's going to hit me with that rope, and it makes me a bit more comfortable when I actually go in the water. The disadvantage about being a Level 2 operator, when you do go in the water, is your flotation devices are designed to keep you above the water. I don't really necessarily want to swim out. I'd rather wade out so that I can keep my feet on the river bank - sorry, on the river floor. It gives me a greater success chance.

So, the point being that one of those people downstream should be a Level 2?-- No, not Level 2. They can be Level 1.

Right?-- So, in a Level 1 technician's course, they're taught the dry rescue techniques. Part of the dry rescue techniques is throw. We can utilise GP lines on the appliance, but in the south-east corner, we carry Level 1 support packs on the appliance, which consists of two throw bags. These throw bags are what we train the Level 1s to use, and in annual and competency-based training, we conduct revision of that training so that they continue to successfully hit me when I'm in the water.

All right. So, is there - I understand you say there is a directive which suggests that there should be two Level 2 technicians?-- Yes, that's the minimum first response to an incident. 1

But apart from the directive, I thought you might have been explaining the practical reasons why that's necessary?-- In the directive it also does claim that we - from memory, it does say that - with that equipment and support for the Level 2s. 10

I see. All right. You also speak in your statement at paragraph 6 about a - what might broadly be termed a lack of co-ordination at the Ipswich fire station on the 11th. I get the impression that you're perhaps not necessarily being critical, but can you just elaborate on that for us?-- I wasn't being critical, I was just stating what was occurring. At the morning of the 11th, when I arrived, it was about 5, 5.30 from memory. We had the night crew, who obviously had been busy during the evening, and at the same time they're trying to coordinate the oncoming shift, remembering that on the oncoming shift would have been the shift that had been working the day before with a normal 14 hour break. However, a large proportion of that shift hadn't had that break because they'd been working until 3 - 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, so those people had been effectively stood down to give them time to recuperate. So, the oncoming crew was attempting to find replacements and staff as well as look at preparing for the oncoming flood event that was going to hit the Ipswich area, and part of that was also dealing with the isolation of the Karana Downs fire station and replacing that crew, or if they were able to replace that crew. 20 30

All right. Now, can I turn to the topic of communications, and you speak - and by all means look at your statement - I think it might be paragraph 12 - to a lack of communication between the Gatton and Ipswich ICCs and Firecom. Can you explain what you're talking about there?-- When the ICCs were in the process of being set up, Gatton had been set up on the afternoon, I believe, of the Monday, which is the 10th, so they're operating in their area of influence, I suppose - best area - by way of describing it. They're operating out of Gatton. They're responsible for an area which I was not sure where the boundaries were, and Ipswich ICC had been set up to look after the Ipswich area. Again, I was not sure of the boundaries. In fact, when I left on that morning to go to Gatton, I wasn't aware that Ipswich ICC had been set up at that stage. I believed it was in the process of being set up. Normally, on a normal response criteria, I would respond using the radio to communicate with Firecom, and Firecom would run, for want of a better word, the regional ICC. They coordinate and control all the appliances within the south-east region. However, on this particular case, because the Gatton ICC had been set up, I was effectively being passed over to their command and control. However, being responded (sic) to them, I wasn't given a briefing or told of radio frequencies or where I would be communicating or how I would be communicating with them. It was only through my own investigations by trolling 40 50

through radio frequencies, that I came across a frequency channel and identified from that channel someone identifying ICC Gatton. When I arrived at the Fernvale-Forest Hill Road, when I couldn't proceed anymore because of the water, I was able to contact Gatton ICC through the channel I had identified through my trolling through on the scan frequencies.

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You seem to suggest at the bottom of page 5 of your statement that there should be a fixed communication frequency for the ICC use; is that right?-- Yeah, that's affirmative. We have within the south-east command radio band plans. The radio band plans, or Coms plans - an example of that is in the Ipswich area, we have Coms Plan 4 and Coms Plan 4A. They identify when you are setting up an ICC the frequencies - the frequencies or the channels that you should be operating on. On the morning of the Tuesday morning, I would have expected a briefing to tell me that they were operating on Coms Plan 4 or Coms Plan 3 or something of that nature, however the briefing I received was, "Proceed to Gatton and you'll be briefed there". I was unable to get to Gatton.

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Right. Further on the topic of communications, you observed that Firecom had difficulty in managing communications at this time and you make a suggestion in paragraph 21 that a separate communication network might have been created; is that right?-- Yeah. Previous experience - I haven't always been with the Queensland Fire Service - I've been with another fire service - and that particular fire service, they had the ability where they isolated repeaters for an area and then dedicated a Coms operator, still within the one communication centre, but dedicated one operator to monitor all the communications within that isolated area. What that does, effectively, is puts a specialist in there who's not being disrupted by other radio calls from outside that area. This allows for that person to develop a greater situational awareness of what - who is coming, who is going, what they're achieving, what they're not achieving, and, in effect, it isolates that area from normal day-to-day communications. There was an ideal opportunity, with the flooding event, as the flooding was moving through the Lockyer Valley, into Ipswich, into Brisbane, to isolate those areas from the normal traffic, remembering on the day that South-East Command runs from the New South Wales border down the Gold Coast, up to the ranges of Toowoomba. That's geographically quite a stretch of territory. We had a flooding event that had hit in the Lockyer Valley, or the top end of the Lockyer Valley, Murphy's Creek, Grantham, on the Monday. That flooding event had diminished, but it had then widened to hit the lower part of the Lockyer Valley, Fernvale, Minden, Grandchester, Rosewood, those towns there, and then proceeded in to impact on Ipswich. So, the opportunity was there to isolate the Gatton ICC with their one radio, one tower, not to have to compete with the vehicles logging in and out with Firecoms South-East. The advantage of that means that the Gatton ICC, which is more in a recovery mode, is not combating for radio time with the Ipswich ICC which is in a response mode, because they're responding to reports of flooding, or responding to rescues.

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Does it create any other issues, though, if you do that?--
The only issue it would create is that radio-wise, I, as an Ipswich firefighter, would not be knowing what was happening in Grantham, but realistically, in that sort of event, I don't need to know. I need to focus on my own patch. As for senior officers needing to know for monitoring through the RACC, I'm sure the capability is there that they could have had three radios and monitor each of those separate channels.

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I turn to the issue of staffing, and perhaps refer you to paragraph 14, and, again, you emphasise that you are not making a criticism of abilities, but you observe that the Ipswich ICC was staffed by personnel who may not have had sufficient training in the relevant areas; is that right?--
Yes. The difference between the swift water or flooding event versus a wild fire event, the rural officers who did the role - and I would like to make it quite clear that they did an excellent job with what they were capable of and they filled their roles to the best of their ability. By no means am I taking anything away from them. What I am identifying, in a wild fire event where these officers are trained and they exercise most of their time in, the fire passes through, so their focus is on combating the fire front. In a flooding event or swift water event, the flooding event passes through and the floods remain, and then our workload starts, because people are isolated and trapped and we have to get access to them. So, we have the swift water events occurring in front of the flooding event, and then the flooding event, and the recovery operations, or retrieval and evacuation operations occurring at the same time. It's double the workload.

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And on the subject of workers, at paragraph 24, you pick up on the issue of the impromptu volunteers, and the part of that paragraph which interested me was the last sentence where you say, "There are outside agencies in other parts of the country that do have guidelines on how to manage volunteers." Which outside agencies should we be looking to for examples in this regard?-- If you troll through websites on the Internet, you'll come across an organisation called Volunteering Australia. Volunteering Australia is a - I suppose, a quasi-government organisation, it has government support, and it looks at volunteering across the whole of Australia and across the whole gamut of volunteering. In the last three to four years, they have developed a model, very similar to the New Zealand model, on how to deal with impromptu volunteers. The last document I read on that I believe was from the Red Cross organisation, which deals with all the issues in dealing with impromptu volunteers, such as recording their entry into the system, recording their exit, monitoring their progress, monitoring their skill sets, using them to the best of the ability within the organisation, and knowing also your duties as the organisation in aspects of Workers' Compensation and also post-incident debriefing. The issue has come up in pretty much every disaster that Australia has faced. We have impromptu volunteers, and volunteerism in Australia is one of our core beliefs. Organisationally, I believe we need to grasp hold of any guidelines that offer a better way of

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managing those people and doing the right thing for those people who have the gumption not to be a spectator, but to be a participator. 1

Presumably there are always safety issues involved in that sort of thing, but presumably also there are always tasks that can be done-----?-- Most certainly.

Observation and-----?-- Yes. One of the things that I did whilst - later on in the week - the week of flooding of Ipswich, we did have many an impromptu volunteer arriving at the Ipswich fire station. Quickly what we did is we assessed what they were capable of by asking them. We got some extreme examples. I had one gentleman from England arrive and say he was a qualified swift water technician. On further questioning, I wasn't quite sure that he was what he said he was, but I took him on face value, but I redirected him down towards the Goodna area where we were in the process of cleaning out houses down there, and the way I used him, I said, "Well, being a swift water technician, you'd be able to identify risk areas, so maybe you can go down and assist as a safety officer for all the volunteers.", and he was happy with that. 10 20

Were there any other outside agencies that we should be looking to in this regard?-- To be honest, I'm not real sure.

That's all right?-- I just had a look through that.

Thank you. Finally, can we address the issue of equipment? I think paragraphs 19 and 20 of your statement are relevant in this regard. Firstly on the topic of radios, as I read it, you suggest that there's one radio between four in a swift water rescue team; is that right?-- What I was referring to there is not necessarily the swift water rescue teams, it's in our disaster response. As a tech - rescue technician, I get responded (sic) either for a swift water team or an urban search and rescue team or any sort of support function depending on the disaster within Queensland that we're going to or interstate or overseas. Within the urban search and rescue capability or caches that we have within Queensland, we have Coms kits. The Coms kits include one radio. They also include a satellite phone and a mobile phone. But, typically, we get one Coms kit between a team of four. Financially, the devil is in the detail. The radios themselves are expensive to purchase and to maintain, and all the radios that the Queensland Fire and Rescue service wants to use - or has to use, they try and get them out to the operational crews. It is just an anomaly within the system that, unfortunately, on day-to-day operations, answering alarms, responding to car fires, house fires, things of that nature, every fire officer on the fire ground has a radio, but when we go into disaster situations, because those radios are already with on-duty crews and we're bringing in additional crews, we have limited resources where we can offer the same level of protection to each fire officer. So, it tends to get down to a one-in-four ratio. 30 40 50

And in the swift-water context, am I missing something, but would it not be a good thing for everyone in a team to have a user-friendly, waterproof radio?-- Oh, most certainly. It wasn't until after the events I was on another swift-water deployment in Cairns, one of the firefighters was from Central Region and he was operating a radio outside of a protective sock and I was stunned to watch him. He dropped the whole radio in the water and held the remote mic out of the water and transmitted on it. He was trialling it at the time. I don't know the success of the trial or whether the trial has been finalised yet, but I was really impressed with that equipment. There are other options and they are being explored by the fire service. We do have headsets at the moment which we use on the fire ground, they are being investigated in a swift-water environment, and utilising our current general purpose radios, putting them in a protective sock and then interconnecting them with a headset to allow a handsfree capability for the technician that's in the water. That is still somewhat - some time away I believe.

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But from your perspective the two things that they have to - well, I'm suggesting the two things that they'd have to - or two requirements that they'd have to meet would be, A, not to get in your way, to be user-friendly in that regard and; B, to be waterproof for the swift water?-- For the swift water, and realistically for the whole general fire service.

Yes?-- We don't put fires out with sand.

No?-- We use large volumes of water, and one of the things that does happen to all fire crews when you go to fight fires is you end up wet. And, in fact, the fire service actually dictates that we place our radio under our protective dress at a - at a fire to try and extent the life of the radio.

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Finally, I think I'll address the topic of work platforms for swift-water rescue. Again you touch on this in paragraph 19 where you observe that flood boats are currently the domain of the SES; is that right?-- That's correct. Flood boat and flood operations are the domain of the SES. They utilise a heavier boat platform. It's a V bow boat generally. I believe it has a 60 horse power engine on the back of it. It's a heavy craft and it's designed to operate in still or slow-moving water. It's designed to be stable. They are operated by the SES volunteers. They generally consist operationally of a coxswain and a spotter or a crewman, and they can take up to eight people. They're not suitable for a swift-water environment. The V bottom means that the craft actually gets - is susceptible to current and the nose of the craft would be taken with the current. The boat itself is very heavy, it sits very low in the water, which makes it stable and ideal for flood operations but inappropriate for swift-water operations. And the last thing, they run unguarded props and they run a standard - standard engine with an unguarded prop. As a swift-water technician I don't want any floodwater boat near me with an unguarded prop. And particularly in a swift-water environment, with the debris that's coming downstream, you don't want a long-shaft, propped

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craft in the water because it's going to bottom out on debris they can't see. We did have some experience of using the Coast Guard's - in Ipswich using the Coast Guard's semi-rigids which are inflatables with a rigid floor, short-propped, guarded shrouded prop and they were very successful and I believe the fire service has been examining it and is continuing to look at that as an option. 1

Is there any - well, first of all do you do joint training with the SES?-- We - we do some training with the SES cadets where we are part of the program. The SES cadets are now known as the Emergency Service Cadets where we do some training there. The training with the flood boats, we have used them operationally particularly in the Ipswich area looking for body retrievals when assisting police in recovery operations. The training with the boats themselves, they're not a suitable platform for us so we don't participate swift-water training with them. 10

Well, not the boats they have got, but is this somewhere where there would be scope of some sort of joint venture or would that be too hard?-- The difficulty is in the two roles. Realistically if you're an SES boat crew you shouldn't get wet, you should be able to step off dry land onto your boat and go do your task. 20

So they're still going to need the type of boats they have got regardless?-- Certainly, yes.

Yes?-- Because they're looking at evacuation rather than rescue. 30

All right. Thank you. They're the only questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Any questions?

MR POMERENKE: No questions, thank you.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner. 40

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Mr Bland, just on that last point, are you aware that since these events there's a review being conducted by the service of the entire capability of a swift-water rescue aspect?-- I'm not aware of it, but I would have assumed it would happen. As general, every firefighter does that as a general role. It doesn't matter what job you go to, we'll review our performance. If you're not doing that, you're not really fulfilling your role as a firefighter. 50

All right. And the events that occurred on the 10th of January and the days following were extraordinary in terms of the speed with which they happened and the number of personnel who were deployed; would you agree with that?-- Oh, certainly, yeah.

Everything happened very suddenly?-- I wouldn't say suddenly. I'd say there was some events that happened suddenly, like the event of Murphy's Creek and Grantham, I would classify that as a sudden event. I wouldn't classify the flooding event that happened within the Ipswich and lower Lockyer areas because those events happened from rainfall which were contributed obviously from-----

Yes, the Toowoomba event you'd place in the sudden category as we?-- Mostly certainly that one there.

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And those events in particular occurred on the same day following each other on the 10th of January?-- Yes.

Now, you came back from Emerald on that day?-- Certainly, yes.

Approximately what time did you get back to Brisbane?-- I believe we were back in around about at 5 o'clock that evening. We were scheduled to arrive earlier than that, however there was a delay in our flight.

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And you had been, as you have told us, on a seven-day deployment from the 3rd out at Emerald?-- That's correct.

Were you told to stand down when you came back to Brisbane?-- Yes, we - we were told two things when we've arrived back in Brisbane. When we arrived back at Brisbane we were met by a reception party which was basically one of the officers that came out to pick us up, the four-man team. We had equipment with us that either had to be returned to the main cache or deployed. On arrival he said if we'd got back on time and we'd been back 15 minutes earlier we would have been on a helicopter up to Grantham. We - at the time, I sort of said, "Oh, well, how are we going now? Are we going by road?", and he said, "Oh, no, I think you're going straight back to Cannon Hill" which is our central departure and arrival point. We arrived back there, we checked with what was happening and I was told, "No, you're definitely standing down." Two of the members of my team were from North Coast area. They were immediately rung and placed back on stand-up and responded to Maroochydore station to continue working as a swift-water team. Myself and the other firefighter from Ipswich then had to make our own way back to our home residence. We had a discussion there about whether we should be going back to the station and going out to support our firefighters. Remembering the Ipswich crews were at the time in Grantham; our swift-water technicians, the people we train with, were there and we were in communicate with them.

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But is there a - did you understand why you were asked to stand down?-- Yes. On a normal seven to 10-day deployment there is a requirement under - under normal award conditions and/or management conditions of a 24-hour compulsory stand-down. I actually raised that point with the person who I spoke to, the DMO. He told me to stand down. I explained to him that we had effectively been stood down all day. He

said we still weren't needed.

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In any event it is part of the industrial agreement, isn't it, that there be a 24-hour stand-down after a seven to 10-day deployment?-- Between a seven and 10-day employment.

To your credit, and it was commendable, you wanted to carry on and not avail yourself of that, but that is in the agreement and may have raised duty-of-care issues?-- I can understand somebody raising that issue. I looked at it from the view that we hadn't been on a 10-day deployment, we had been on a seven-day employment, and the option was for us for another three days' work.

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Now, at about 6.30 on that Monday evening you were told that things, in fact, were settling down?-- That's affirmative.

And that's one of the reasons you weren't required to go anyway?-- Yes, I was told that it was basically under control and it was tapering off.

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Now, were you aware that there was an ICC, in fact, being established at that time in Gatton?-- Most certainly.

All right. Had you had contact with them?-- I had contact with the operations officer at the ICC who's my other cohort.

Had you seen any figures that reflect the number of calls coming into that centre for assistance at about that time, 6, 6.30 Monday morning?-- No, I haven't.

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All right. Now, can I ask you this: you've made the point in paragraph 8 which goes on to page 4 of your statement, about the difficulty with the two ICCs being set up, one at Ipswich and one at Gatton, and you weren't aware of where the boundaries of each of those were. It's the case, isn't it, though, that there's no particular boundary that determines the jurisdiction of a particular ICC. It's able to deploy resources if they're available anywhere in the area?-- No, that's not correct.

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You don't accept that?-- No. An ICC set up for either an incident or a series of incidents and they set a boundary. If we don't set a boundary, how does that ICC not start interfering with the neighbouring ICC? So there has to be a boundary set up. It's no different from setting up an urban - your neighbourhood fence.

Well, I'm suggesting to you it doesn't work that way, that there's an overall coordinated approach to make available resources, say, for instance, from the Gatton ICC into what you might have termed the Ipswich area?-- Oh, I understand that the resource - there's resource sharing within ICCs.

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Yes?-- Certainly, but if I'm a resource and I don't know who to report to or to answer to, how can I acknowledge or respond and carry out the task of the area I'm operating in if I don't know which area I'm operating in?

One of your concerns was Brisbane crews being tasked into the Lockyer Valley and not being able, because of lack of local knowledge, know where to go?-- Yes, it was, it was a concern of mine.

There's an ability, isn't there, through Firecoms to have assistance with directions and best way to get to a place and so on and so forth?-- No.

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You don't accept that's available either, through Firecoms?-- No.

Okay?-- The Firecom you're talking about is based in Southport. That Firecom there has only in the last five years started looking after the Ipswich command. What I was raising in that point there was local crews within the Ipswich which regularly respond into the Lockyer Valley to support the auxiliary stations there are familiar with the roads, their names, their locations, their heights. On the Tuesday when I was operating off the 645 Mike, on numerous occasions we tried alternative routes to get through because we knew the road system. An Ipswich - a Brisbane crew would go by the shortest route as dictated by the GPS. So that - and when they asked for assistance, they're asking for assistance from a fire communication centre that's been overrun with fire calls or workload.

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All right. Paragraph 11 on that page 5 of your statement, you expressed concern about the fact that ICC records are by and large handwritten notes?-- That's correct.

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And you claim that results in a loss of data?-- Yes, it has the potential to lose data because handwriting as such is not necessarily clear particularly when we're talking about the differences or nuances in a message. If there is a straight voice logging procedure or a capability of voice logging into radio messages, those radio messages can be played back and clarified, but when you are recording those messages by hand, how do you - how do you interpret somebody's radio message and then you write it down in the shortest, fastest way because you have got another radio message coming in. As a trained radio operator you use shorthand. That shorthand you then interpret yourself because you're using your shorthand. Someone else comes along and is trying to overread, or locate a vehicle, trying to understand your shorthand, it makes - makes things difficult and there is the potential to lose data.

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That's really the nub of it, isn't it? There's a potential to lose the data rather than there being a loss of data?-- Well, I would suggest if you - if you presented a shorthand document, say, to this Court that I had written and yourself were trying to interpret, that my meaning might be lost by your interpretation. Not there's the potential, I would suggest it would probably happen.

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Well, that's your assumption, though. I mean, you don't

know - you say, "This resulted in a loss of data" in paragraph 11, that's your take on it without knowing whether that happened?-- Okay.

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Is that a fair enough assumption?-- I would accept that, yeah.

All right. Now, the use of helicopters, would you accept that they were used extensively to transport personnel during these events?-- I don't know what you mean by "extensively". I believe they were used.

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Well, the five aircraft you used, two from emergency services and three from private contractors?-- I have heard you say that, yes.

Do you accept that that's right or you don't know?-- I don't know, sorry, I'm not aware.

Do you know that helicopters were used to transport personnel?-- I was aware that helicopters were used to transport personnel, yes.

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All right. And that's the sort of thing you think is appropriate according to paragraph 15 of your statement, to rapidly deploy people?-- Certainly. In that particular context of that paragraph, I was talking about how we can address issues and make ourselves available to getting the right people with the right equipment to the right location in the right time.

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Yes. And that - and that was happening, I'd suggest to you, during the course of these events as they unfolded?-- It was happening, not - it's difficult to say because, like you said, it was quite a phenomenal event.

Yes?-- Was it happening in the best possible way? That's not for me to determine, that's for this proceeding to determine. As I said briefly on it, I was aware that some of that was happening, I experienced some of that myself, but I don't know to what extent it was coordinated.

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No, I mean, to be fair to you, what you're really raising is that it's an appropriate use of resources, but you don't know - you don't have an overview nor could you have had-----?-- No.

-----of how it was being used-----?-- Certainly not.

-----on the days that we're talking about here?-- No, and I think I even made that statement in there where I said I was in my fishbowl looking out-----

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Yes?-- -----not aware of what's happening around me. And with - with a state - as a station officer, part of my role is to try and maintain situational awareness. By maintaining situational awareness, I can predict what I may be deployed to, I can try and determine the best resource for that.

Yes. But ultimately you have to rely upon the overview known to Firecoms for your deployment, appropriate deployment?-- If I'm not in an ICC.

Yes?-- Once I'm under the placement of an ICC, I-----

Then it's the ICC?-- ICC's responsibility to determine where I'm going.

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And the reason for that is the ICC, or in the other situation Firecoms, have the overview that's necessary to properly deploy the resources?-- Most certainly, they should have. That's how-----

You're not expected to have the overview, nor could you have?-- I'm expected to have an overview in my area of operations-----

Yes?-- -----but not for a regional overview. However, as a station officer, I most certainly if I was at Beenleigh that particular day, I would have imagined that the Beenleigh officers would have been closely monitoring what was happening in Ipswich because it may have impacted on their operations.

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I understand. Now, can I take you to paragraph 18 in your statement. You talk about the difficulties encountered in your view with the movement of the stores to Southport?-- Certainly.

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There's currently, though, isn't there, there are two logistic stores, one at Southport and one at Ipswich, that contain equipment?-- That equipment stores at Ipswich that you're talking about was not up and running on the days that this event happened.

You say that happened after these events, or it was before and wasn't in operation at the time?-- What happened is on and around about late October we had a regional change in policy. As with new things, there's some teething issues and problems. Part of those teething issues and problems were people like myself based at Ipswich who had always been responsible for maintaining that equipment and we lost control of that and we still hadn't yet at that time developed procedures to recover that equipment when we needed it. On the particular day in question, the equipment had gone to regional stores back in late October, early November, and it was still at the regional store which was not located in Ipswich.

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Where do you say it was?-- At the Southport - well, I don't know where it went. It left Ipswich and what not at Ipswich and available to us.

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All right. So it was either at Southport or - there's a warehouse in Beenleigh as well, isn't there?-- I don't know.

All right. In any event, isn't it the case that if you were - if you wanted equipment, no matter where it was, you could ask

for it to be deployed from another centre, another region?--
Oh, you can always ask for the equipment, but whether it will
arrive in a timely fashion. Remembering that we're asking for
this equipment to be delivered between 5 and 6 o'clock on a
Tuesday morning when the rest of the region is currently
trying to recover or get a handle on what's happening within
the region's area, everyone is quite busy. So that's where
that particular nuance didn't work to our best benefit.

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But in addition to that, there's also - there are caches of
equipment for swift-water rescue in particular available?-- I
don't know outside of my particular area. In Ipswich, as our
command, we run two extra pieces or caches or equipment.

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Yes?-- We have a level 1 packs which go on appliance. The
leave 1 pack goes on during the risk, and what it does it goes
onto a standard pumper and on our rescue appliance we have
equipment and we also have two bags, we call them level 2
support packs. Level 2 support pack can be used to support
level 2 techs who have been recalled in and might be going
onto a vehicle that doesn't have any other equipment.

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All right?-- Typically this is like a four-wheel drive
canter.

Okay. But they're the two extra caches available for
swift-water rescue we're talking about, are they?-- That is
the cache, those two bags.

That is it?-- Yes.

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That is in addition to the fully-equipped rescue vehicle
that's at the station?-- Yes, that's normal, yep.

There's also six of those, six of those caches, at Beenleigh;
do you know?-- No.

And two others at Robina, do you know about that?-- No.

So there are 10 in total at the - the three rescue appliance
centres are Beenleigh, Robina and Ipswich, aren't they?--
That's correct.

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And that's where these extra caches are placed. You know
about Ipswich you have told us?-- Yes.

Now, in terms of paragraph 21 being able to separate the
network to have an isolated communications in respect of an
ICC operation?-- Certainly.

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That capability exists already, doesn't it?-- It does.

Because the Firecom network is a UHF network?-- That's
correct.

There's also the VHF which works off the repeater towers. You
have to answer for the microphone?-- Sorry, yes, yes. I was
nodding.

And in particular in this event, wasn't the Mt Perseverance tower, channel 35, used to isolate the ICC communications?-- For where?

Well, wasn't that in the Gatton area?-- I don't know. I didn't operate out of the ICC.

You're not aware of how they - whether they used that facility or not?-- Oh, channel 35 VHF was the channel I contacted them on after I scrolled through and found it.

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So-----?-- I would assume that they would have continued to use that channel as their ICC channel. However, every appliance that was operating in that area would have been responding to and from Firecom on their turn-out system on the UHF system. What I was suggesting in the paragraph there was that UHF channel has the ability to be isolated out through the Marburg repeater and they could have - what they could have done is isolate that out and instead of having to compete with radio time through the UHF frequency back to Firecom, they would have been able to use the UHF frequency from Marburg through to Firecom without it transmitting.

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But can't the fire appliances use this channel 35 VHF to communicate with the ICC?-- They can. Most certainly they will. On our day-to-day operations we use the UHF radio.

Just bear with me for a moment?-- Yes, sir.

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The ICC was using channel 35?-- I-----

That's where you contacted them on eventually?-- Yes, that's what I did on the Tuesday morning, yes.

That's the ICC Gatton?-- Yes, that's correct.

And you'd imagine that that was the means of communicating between the ICC Gatton and the fire appliances deployed by them?-- Most certainly. That would be a smart thing to do.

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So you have the ICC which is coordinating body for those activities having an isolated communication network on channel 35, don't you?-- They may have, except for they weren't isolated, were they? Because every other - every appliance that's in that Gatton area is also using the UHF frequency to book in or book out through Firecom.

But that's - if you're looking at isolating the ability of the ICC to communicate with its appliances, you have done it by the use of channel 35, haven't you?-- What I'm leading by that story - I'm sorry, not story, by that statement, and I think you're - you're misunderstanding about that, and I'll try to clarify it. When we go through the Firecom UHF frequency, every transmission is logged automatically on a voice recorder.

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Yes?-- When an ICC sets up and they utilise, say, channel 35,

they don't have the same capability to voice log.

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No?-- They are - they go through that. Now, a crew, a fire crew, an auxiliary crew, a rural crew, and by no means am I detracting from them, on day-to-day every day of the week they get out of bed, they respond to a job, they pick up the red radio, they talk on the red radio, that's the red - that's the UHF channel. Then we have a significant event where they are perhaps at risk or fatigued and we've created another radio frequency for them to remember to talk on that first rather than the one they're already on. What I was suggesting was rather than reinvent the wheel, why don't we just isolate them so we can - so they can continue to do their everyday practice rather than introduce a new frequency to them.

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But you can't isolate them, surely, from the overriding control of Firecoms which is the - as the overarching control, isn't it?-- No, Firecom is a communications network, it's not a control network.

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Well, the ability to communicate with everyone, if necessary, goes through Firecoms?-- The - but the - but Firecom - what you're missing - misunderstanding is by isolating them, I'm not isolating them off the Firecom network, I'm isolating the rest of the region off their frequency but they're still utilising it because they're going to go through a repeater. The repeater has the ability to go through a link which rather than transmitting back over by radio frequency and having - and having to compete for radio time, they are now going through a landline and talk directly to an operator.

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All right. Well, is this the summary: that you don't accept that your concern in paragraph 21 is, in fact, capable of being addressed by the use of the VHF repeater station at Mt Perseverance on channel 35?-- What I would like to summarise, and I'm not saying I don't accept, what I'm saying is I think we can do it better. What I'm trying to do here is improve. I think that we have the ability to not introduce new systems during time of peak workload and disaster to the crews that are responding. Let them use the same system but use the system better. It's not about trying to find fault with what was done on the day. I'm just saying there are other options to us, let's investigate them and perhaps do it better. And - and I'm not picking on the system that worked.

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Yes. In an overall sense you saw it work fairly well, didn't it?-- No, I don't think it worked fairly well because my experience was that it didn't, but my experience is a very, very small exposure to the Gatton ICC because I was only - I was only in their control for 20 minutes.

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Yes. Para 22, the adequacy of forecast, early warning system and so on. Did you have any reference to the BOM, the Bureau weather information site?-- Did I have access to it or-----

Did you look at the BOM site?-- Me, yes, certainly I did.

Is that something you routinely do as a firefighter?--

Certainly, as a - as a station officer and swift-water technician I choose to do that for myself.

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That's promoted, though, by the service, isn't it, that firefighters generally should access to monitor weather events such as that on the site?-- No, no, not-----

It's accessible via the service website, isn't it, web page?-- It is, yes, but-----

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And that's why you get into it?-- -----it's not promoted as such.

It's not promoted?-- No. Without trying to contradict the way you've implied that. We have access to the Internet to some sites through our Intranet. Myself and my other station officer choose to make ourselves well aware of what's happening within our area. By no means is that a standard practice, I would feel, across all, but I can't say what happens in - in Charters Towers.

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Why do you take the trouble to look at it, the site?-- Why do I?

Yes?-- Because I'm the man that's going to be in the water and I'd like to know-----

Why is the BOM site relevant to that task by you?-- For me?

Yes?-- With-----

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To give you a level of preparedness, does it?-- What it does is it helps me identify where there might be an event coming through. And from that event or that weather detail that - typically it's the radar, looking at the rainfall patterns that might be occurring, also too over the past probably five to seven years, South-east Queensland has been in a drought. So looking at the radar and whether there's going to be rain has been probably a past-time of a lot of people.

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All right. Thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Jessop?

MS JESSOP: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Kent?

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MR KENT: Mr Bland, if I can just take you to paragraph 17 of your statement, please? You mention there that in respect of the northern regions, there are swift water technicians that don't have a personal issue with swift water equipment, correct?-- Yeah, that's correct.

And, as I understand it, what you're saying is that that's not ideal?-- Certainly not. I've exercised and been deployed with people from the northern areas. We regularly take deployments from the south-east corner up to that area because of staffing numbers for events that happen, and the people I work with - I arrive with my personal equipment and, as a general rule, I'm significantly better equipped than they are from their own region. They have a model where they choose to get a cache of equipment, which includes down to personal PPE, and then when an incident arrives, the technician goes in, selects the most suitable PPE for him to wear, and then proceeds to the incident from there.

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And why is that not ideal?-- The issue with not being personal, equipment - in my case, I have a custom-fit wetsuit. It means it gives me a wider range of movement in the water. More importantly, it aids in the speed in which I can actually get the wetsuit on. The quicker I can get the wetsuit on and the less struggle to put the wetsuit on lowers my anxiety levels when I'm at an incident which is time-critical. With more time, I can hasten more slowly. I can have time to do my dynamic risk assessment, I can come up with a better incident action plan and, from that, I can be more successful or come up with the best option for the incident.

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All right. And can I take you to paragraph 26 of your statement where you mention the issue of solar power?-- Fortunately, on my crew in Ipswich, one of the people on the crew is heavily involved in the solar industry. He brought to our attention early - or around the middle of last year that we weren't fully aware of what was happening in the solar industry; in particular, I was under the misapprehension that when the fuses were pulled, all power was cut. On the day of the events and the flooding events, that particular firefighter approached me and said, "Look, you know, be careful, because as soon as the sun is out, all of those houses are still live." Now, what we're talking about is from the solar panel itself at the roof to the one line that runs into the back of the inverter is direct current. It is not

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alternating current, it is direct current, but direct current can still cause significant issues if you are close enough to high enough voltage. On this particular time, I felt that the power industry - the powers to be - not necessarily the Councils - missed the fact that houses with solar panels on them, even though they're under water, the water around that would still have to be considered live with electricity, because the solar power was functioning.

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All right. And you consider that something that should be reviewed?-- I believe it should be reviewed and the fire service is looking at that and we struggle with how we isolate solar panels in fires. So, the same event also occurs in flooding.

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Yes, nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Yes?

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

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you Mr Bland. You're excused?-- Thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Mark Stephenson.

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MARK STEPHENSON, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- My name is Mark Stephenson. I'm a station officer at Ipswich Fire Station, C Platoon. I've been a firefighter for 15 years.

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Mr Stephenson, you prepared two statements. There was one dated the 3rd of March 2011 and what's titled an "addendum" on 29 April 2011; is that right?-- Are you talking about the Task Force Galaxy statement, which is the police coronial-----

That's the-----?-- And the Flood Commission?

That's right?-- Yes, sir, I'm aware of them.

Yes, I tender those.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 333.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 333"

MR CALLAGHAN: What you call the Galaxy statement, which is the one that you prepared in March, records events from the 10th of January?-- Yes, sir.

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And we might just go through, just in broad terms, what you did on that day. You first of all assisted in a swift water rescue - I'm looking at paragraph 8?-- Are we going from paragraph 8?

I'm picking up at paragraph 8. There was a swift water rescue at Warrill View; is that right?-- Yes, that is - swift water rescue at Warrill View. We were backing up 71 Station, which is Harrisville Station.

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Then we go through to 10.30 a.m.. There was an incident-----?-- At Undulla Road, Undulla, which is out the end of Ripley Road, between Ripley and Jimboomba.

And then just briefly summarise what happened that you refer to in paragraph 10?-- 643 Alpha, which is Bundamba station - they were the first appliance to arrive at Undulla Road, Undulla. They proceeded to investigate. Now, they drove through a causeway that had a small amount of water over it. Obviously it was raining. The causeway proceeded, after they had gone through, to cut them off, so there was no way for another vehicle to get to their aid, or - but they were safe on high land. 645 Mike, which I was the officer in charge of, we had at that stage two swift water technicians on board, which was senior Firefighter Wier and Station Officer Paff.

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We then proceeded to that with 635 Kilo. 635 Kilo is a rescue truck out of Beenleigh. That had one swift water technician on it and one station officer.

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All right. You had to extract-----?-- Not me personally. I'm not a swift water Level 2 technician.

No, but you-----?-- I assumed instant control of that point and the first thing was to respond with a swift water team to investigate the rescue. We had confirmed via police radio that the person was high and dry. We were unable to get to them from either the Jimboomba end or the Ripley end, but they would sit with their truck and wait out the event. Then the swift water technicians formed an operational plan to retrieve the firefighters off 643 Alpha and essential gear, including radios.

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All right. That happened, and then at 12.30 p.m. in paragraph 11, you refer to being sent to the Murphy's Creek area; is that correct?-- Yeah, it was approximately about that time, and by that stage 645 Yanky, which is small four-wheel drive twin cab canter vehicle, which was staffed by Senior Firefighter Chadwick, another swift water Level 2 technician. He came out to provide transport for 643 Alpha's crew and proceeded back to 45 Station to man up a spare appliance. We responded from Undulla Road, Undulla back to - approximately Ash Street, Yamanto is when we responded, so it would be around 12.30 we responded to Murphy's Creek to assist 678 Alpha, which is Helidon, to a swift rescue - people stuck in a car in a creek.

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Now, I want to come back to various aspects of this about which you've got certain comments, but just in broad terms, you're at Murphy's Creek or the Murphy's Creek-Postmans Ridge Road area?-- Yes, I was in incident control in Murphy's Creek and my base of operations was the corner of Murphy's Creek Road and Postmans Ridge Road.

And you've recorded in your statement the number of the things that you saw and did there, but then you were ordered to the Gatton Incident Control Centre?-- Yes, sir.

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All right. And again you recorded what you did there?-- Yeah, I fulfilled the role of Operations Officer. On arrival, I went in to the Gatton station. I met with the incident controller. I identified him, and he instructed me I was to be the operations officer.

As I say, I'm just completing what's contained in that first statement, because you conclude that first statement in paragraph 70 and 71 with two issues that I do just want you to speak about. First of all, in paragraph 70, you talk about having to - on the 11th - perform some rescues of some 17 to 18 people who had been advised to evacuate, but did not?-- Yes. That's in the - a little bit of back history on that. Myself and station officer Paff finished work at approximately 3 a.m. on the morning of the 11th. We were in communication at approximately 7.30, 8 o'clock in the morning. It was

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raining very heavy. We decided that we should go into the station to render what assistance we could. We went into the station. There was no extra staff, bar one firefighter who had come in off annual leave. He wasn't-----

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I'm just going to interrupt you because I'm going to come back to that and ask you specifically about that?-- Yes.

I just want to tidy off this end bit of that statement and then return to your other statement?-- Yes.

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What I'm interested in there is how do you know or what advice had these people had to leave their homes? What had they ignored?-- We provided - I was getting to that. We were provided with flood mapping by the Acting Inspector of our area. It was his first day of acting in that area. He's normally an Inspector in Community Safety. He had some flood maps from the ICC - sorry, from the LDMG in Ipswich, which clearly identified where there would be some problem areas. From past experiences, we know that Leichhardt and One Mile is a problem area. They have a-----

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If I could just ask you to slow down a bit?-- Sorry. We - it was decided that I would take an appliance and I would be the fire services representative. I took a photocopy of the map - of the UBD - outlined the flood, where the flood was predicted, and we proceeded about giving people notice of impending evacuation.

You actually did a door knock?-- Certainly did, sir.

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Okay?-- I had a crew of myself and three firefighters.

And you just spread out and knocked on doors?-- No, we drove - we had pretty good mapping at that stage, and we drove around the areas that were going to be affected, as per the map, by flood, and gave the people a warning advice. It had the date, the time that the flood was expected to reach its peak. We gave them advice that they would have to evacuate their homes and to start preparing. This gave them a fair amount of time to prepare, and some people who took our advice straightaway managed to withdraw all their possessions from their house.

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Okay?-- Point 71-----

Yeah-----?-- -----I met with - there was very little Council representation. There was two QPS officers in that location, no QAS. I went up and identified an area that had generated power backup, air-conditioning, food, showers, water. I met with the management of the Ipswich Golf Club, and they set it up for me.

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There's a glass of water beside you?-- Yes, someone else has used it.

We'll get you a fresh one?-- They were very supportive. They worked for about three days, and they stayed onsite. They

took shifts and provided counselling to people.

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And this was something that you did of your own initiative. This wasn't something that any-----?-- Well, if we're going to evacuate people, we have to tell them where to go. We can't just say evacuate to nowhere, and the facilities provided at Ipswich Golf Club, and knowing the terrain, if that goes under, the whole of that area is gone. So, it was the best location that I could find.

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I'm just interested in whether there was any communication with the LDMG or anyone else-----?-- I did give some updates to the ICC, but it wasn't until probably about 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock that that's what I done. I met with the local councillor. We had a discussion, because he'd set up another evac centre - I was unaware. He was unaware of the one I set up. I met with him - I was out at Leichhardt that day, and on the 13th or the 14th I met up with him again and provided him with some assistance with the people left in the evac centre he set up, and he commended me and thanked me for setting the other one up. We housed roughly about 150 people on the first night and then it diminished down. As the flood waters went down, we were able to release more people to their homes or to relatives.

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All right. Which councillor was that, do you remember?-- He's actually my local councillor as well. He's Mr Pisasale's brother, which would be - not Paul, but-----

Okay?-- Sorry.

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We can work that out. I'll take you now to the statement that you provided to the Flood Commission headed "Addendum Statement", and in that, in the first place, you talk about making repeated calls to management for more staff; is that correct?-- Yes.

Now, you've described who you approached and what happened. We don't need to go over all of what's there, but perhaps, for a start, can I ask you your understanding of the requirements - the deployment requirements for a swift water incident?-- We have - there's an incident directive, there's also a South-East Regional Swift Water Rescue Plan, which deals with the activation. So, 24.5.1 is the incident directive in relation to swift water rescue, in which it states about the response and back-up of the swift water rescue technicians conducting swift water rescue. The plan, which I've brought along, in case there was any questions on it, is a regional plan - every region has one - and we talk about different levels. We have this in wildfire as well. So, we have Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. Preparations, is Level 1 is normal times. Level 2 is predicted swift water events. Level 3 is highly adverse weather where we have a set recall of staff.

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So, what number of Level 2 swift water technicians are required to respond to a swift water incident?-- Two.

And what else? What support should they have?-- They should have Level 1 support. They should have an incident controller, because it is very hard to be in control if you're in the water. So, an incident controller protects their safety. Obviously I'm not tech rescue Level 2, and I take advice - specialist advice - as I would from scientific if we had a scientific job - I take special advice from trained technicians where they will come up with a set of plans, also alternatives and safety considerations for their safety that I can implement in consultation with myself and the on-duty crews.

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Well, as I say, you describe the efforts that you made and the unusual efforts you made to secure more staff on this day?-- I've never done that before.

Were other additional staff recalled to Ipswich while you were station officer there on the 10th of January?-- Yes, after I had discussion with the Acting Assistant Commissioner South-East Region - I explained to him the situation, detailing the last few weeks, that we'd had technical rescues on every shit. I only had one swift water Level 2. I'd been in contact with Beenleigh, 35 Station, and they only had one. In my view, I was compromising the safety of my crew by not ringing. The Acting Assistant Commissioner granted me an extra staff member and a swift water rescue technician was called in. He arrived at approximately 09:00 hours. At 09:15 we went out the door and we got home at approximately 3 o'clock in the morning.

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And you mentioned the period immediately preceding this - or immediately preceding the 10th of January itself. During the lead-up to that date, was there any communication or preparation efforts made from management in anticipation of a significant wet season?-- I watched a news broadcast in October where the Premier and Cabinet and the State Disaster Management Team were briefed by the Senior Meteorologist in Queensland. That, to my knowledge, has never happened before, and I thought, "Well, if that's where they're going, we should start preparing." So, myself and Mr Bland, who is my fellow station officer at C at 45, we updated LAAPs. As from October through to December, we went on regular visits out to the known trouble spots. So, that's what LAAPs - or known hazards in our area - that's what they're there for - so we could update the information. I don't recall seeing anything from management about - there were some times of rain where they upgraded the response or the level of preparedness to bring in two swift water level technicians, but, on a whole, there was no - to my knowledge, there was no clear direction that we were heading into a very, very bad season and to do certain things.

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Nothing specific suggested or directed in relation to swift water rescues?-- Not as far as I'm aware.

That you knew of?-- Mmm.

All right. Another issue you raise in your addendum statement

is in relation to the decision you made to close the highway?-- Yep. The computer has gone, so can you tell me what point, sir? 1

Yes, it's paragraph 19?-- Yes. The decision I made to close the highway was because we had a large volume of water come past us at Murphy's Creek. To give you a little bit of history, we actually arrived at Murphy's Creek before the water. The rescue we were turning out to was a rescue in a flooded causeway. We, on arrival - 78 Alpha had completed the rescue. They were on high ground. They told me the radio channel was channel 17 VHF. I was operating on that radio channel. Myself and the 645 Yanky vehicle, which was then crewed by Paff and Chadwick, met on the crossroads. We had a discussion, and then we heard a noise and then the water came. 10

But I'm interested in the decision you made being overruled. Do you know who overruled your decision?-- I believe it was the Inspector from Gatton. 20

And do you know where they were at the time? Were they in Gatton?-- I'm not aware that they were - they had situational awareness of how much water was going to come across that highway.

The highway was ultimately blocked?-- Certainly was.

Yeah. And the water did go-----?-- Yes, it went across the Lockyer Creek Bridge, which, in normal times, you'd expect to have probably 10, 15 metres clear. 30

You also speak about lack of managerial support or direction at the Gatton ICC; is that right? Paragraphs 21 through to 26, perhaps?-- Okay, yep. When I first arrived, there was confusion. They did have an incident controller appointed. He appointed me operations. My first task was to get people fit for tasking in the right jobs. I considered that two Level 2 swift water technicians, one answering the telephone and one filling out paperwork, was not helpful to me. As operations officer, I had strategic tactical command of that incident. 40

Do you know when the ICC was set up?-- They were still in the process of setting up the radios. We only had - the cache that came up wasn't complete. In the south-east, we have two caches, one blue IMT case and one red IMT cache. The cache that came up was partial. So we had one radio that had an antenna and it worked, and the other radio was not working, so we used the station radio and the one useful radio for communications - channel 35. 50

That was being dealt with when you arrived?-- That was being dealt with as I arrived. We were setting - I noticed they were setting up the stations for each. We got the boards off 645 Mike, which are tactical boards, which replicate a battle board and logistical board for allocation of crews and tasking. That was set up within the ICC in the Gatton room. I asked, "Did we know where everyone on the fire ground was?"

We weren't sure. T-card management - you are aware of what T-cards are now?

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We are now?-- T-card management is crucial on a fire ground, especially a dynamic fire ground, because you have to keep track of where people are, otherwise you can lose people. So, some of my first roles to the logistics officer and the radio communicator was to find out where people are, that they were safe, what vehicle they were in, how many people were in it and what they were doing. To the crews assembled outside, I got them to strike themselves into teams so that I could immediately deploy people without having to ask, "Which truck are you off?", or whatever. They presented T-cards to the logistical officer and we formed them into teams, similar to what we do with BA.

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Can I just ask you to slow down?-- In breathing apparatus at structural fires, we have teams: BA Team 1, BA Team 2. Very easy to keep track of. I decided the best way to keep track of the swift water teams in this event was to put them into teams. For example, the two Brisbane swift water guys who were dropped into Grantham by helicopter, they were out of - they used Grantham 91 as their reporting vehicle. They were known as Swift Water Team 1. Swift Water Team 2 entered via the Helidon-Grantham Road. They weren't just a swift water team, they may have had a pump assembled with them, but it made it very easy for logistics to keep track of who was who in the zoo.

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This might be obvious, but you've told us that you were appointed Operations Officer. Were you the first such appointment? Was there no other operations officer before you arrived?-- Not as far as I'm aware, sir.

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All right. As a general rule - well, you've given us an indication of the sorts of things that you were doing, but what about the sort of support that an operations officer should receive. Were you receiving that?-- It took a while for us to set up. They were still setting up computers. The senior officers who were assembled had to go and do a conference or an update somewhere and were missing for the best part of an hour, and in that time I made decisions as both the Incident Controller and the Operations Officer. I knew they had gone somewhere to do a teleconference, but I was unaware as to exactly where they were. In that time, we made some decisions, some that I was tasked with and others that I wasn't.

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Another decision you made was in relation to the need to break in to a vehicle. You speak to that in paragraph 24, I think-----?-- Yes.

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-----of the second statement. Was there a need for that to be authorised in that sort of situation?-- The officer that contacted me asked to speak to a senior. I told him there were no seniors in the room. I was fulfilling the role of Operations Officer, so therefore I could make a decision, and I did make a decision that we had to make sure there was no

signs of life.

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I was just wondering why - you can't speak for the officer concerned, obviously - I'm just wondering why he felt the need for authority in that situation?-- You'd have to ask that officer.

Fair enough. All right. There were difficulties with radio communications. That might have something to do with the terrain around Murphy's Creek area. We understand all sorts of communication difficulties-----?-- We had some difficulties with communications. Tried to get the sat phone working in the command vehicle. It was unable to work - whether it was due to cloud coverage or whatever. We had intermittent communications via one of the officer's smartphones. Communications on channel 17, especially going into Murphy's Creek where I sent the guys to do the Icings Road (sic) rescue, was very poor. The guys were sent up to Spring Bluff to do the rescue up there - it was virtually non-existent and they ended up communicating via Firecom for their personal safety.

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Just on the topic of equipment generally, in paragraph 29 you talk about the fire truck not being appropriate for the terrain; is that correct?-- Yeah, the command vehicle fulfils various roles. It's a rescue vehicle, it's a road accident rescue vehicle, it's a chemical response vehicle - very long, very low to the ground. It has a - it's an extra-long truck. It is not exactly suitable to going over country roads or dirt tracks. This presents a problem when dealing with swift water rescue - is that to get close to the incident for the operators. It does a lot of jobs.

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At paragraph 57 you speak about being aware of helicopters but having no contact or feedback regarding any of those rescues. Would you expect to? And if so, through which source?-- I found out later that they were being tasked, I think, through the RACC through Beenleigh. I didn't see any helicopters when I was at Murphy's Creek. I noticed a helicopter on the ground because I talked to a crew that got out of one, but I didn't have any personal communication with any helicopters.

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All right. But as I say, would you - would you have expected to or-----?-- Eventually. It takes a while to get an incident under the control-----

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Yes?-- -----and I understand that they were operating out of the RACC. Once the ICC was fully set up and running, which would have been the next day some time, I don't know whether they tasked crews via helicopters up there. I'm unaware of that as I was not back in the Lockyer Valley again.

And, finally, you observe, I think, that there's been no debrief to the wider service?-- I have received no operational debrief as yet.

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Presumably you'd be interested to learn from the experience of others and for them to know about your experiences during those events?-- Yeah, at an operational debrief, we learn from each other, and as we said, it's not a witch-hunt. We take each other apart a bit and make sure that - everyone will make some mistakes or could have done it differently, and make sure we explore them avenues so, therefore, in future we have a better than working knowledge.

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All right. Thank you. They're the only questions I have.

MR POMERENKE: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No question, thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Mr Stephenson-----?-- Yes, sir.

-----you learnt of the briefing by BOM, the Bureau of Meteorology, to the Government in October 2010?-- It was around that time. I can't give you an exact date. I watched the news and was on there.

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Yeah. After that time, did you receive information through the service highlighting the what looked like being a very wet season?-- I don't actually recall a specific document dealing with it. There may have been in the Assistant Commissioner's newsletters that we're expecting a wet season, but I don't actually recall.

Was there any training given to update and make sure your swift-water rescue capability was functional?-- We did extra training on our shifts. Myself and Mr Bland and a senior firefighter went into the auxiliary stations and made sure that they are properly trained.

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Was there an initiative generated within the service?-- No.

Was there any such initiative generated in the service to deal with the what looked like being a wet season out of the ordinary?-- I'm aware that they watched the DVD and the awareness package. Apart from that, no, I'm unaware.

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Were you aware in October 2010 in respect of South-east region, the Technical Rescue Coordinator was tasked to review the regional swift-water plan and ensure the planning activities have necessary caches of equipment?-- I'm aware that that's part of his portfolio and management. I'm unaware. I'm not a tech rescue level 2 operator. I'm a station officer and I'm unaware that he had fulfilled or done that job between October and January the 10th.

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You'd expect that to be something that would be natural for a response by the service to these - this impending weather event?-- One would assume.

And that would involve, in the ordinary course, a review of equipment stations at Robina, Beenleigh and Ipswich?-- Yes.

Because they're the three areas where the swift-water rescue capability resides?-- Yes.

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Was there ongoing swift-water rescue level 2 technician training undertaken at Wet 'n Wild on the Gold Coast?-- I'm totally unaware of that. I have never seen an invitation to Wet 'n Wild.

Okay. You would have gone if you had an invitation?-- I would have gone if I had the invitation, definitely.

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I suppose to be fair to you, it might have been limited to level 2 technicians?-- I would say that would be the case.

All right. In November 2010, the establishment of an additional cache of technical rescue equipment at Beenleigh?-- Unaware of that totally.

But again that would be something you'd expect to be appropriate in the circumstances leading up to these events in January?-- I would it to be appropriate, but I would also expect that it would be communicated because it's - it's really good that they did that, and - but if - without communication of it you don't know what's in your cupboard, do you?

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Do you recall there being any IT training for ICC personnel at the Ripley and Ipswich Stations?-- Negative.

Sorry?-- Negative.

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You're not aware of that at all?-- I - no. I'm unaware that they did any IT training, and IT training was certainly not offered to on-duty operational personnel.

Again you'd expect if there's a belief that there may be an incident arising, training for setting up an ICC would be appropriate?-- One would assume so.

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And two were - and a number were set up during the course of these events?-- A number of ICCs were set up.

The area commander, Ipswich command, initiated with local station officers in charge and increased awareness of all operational staff for floodwater related rescue, preparedness arrangements?-- The area commander? The inspector?

I'm assuming that's the case, yes?-- Yes, we've just gone through a change of names and where people sit. We discussed it informally, but nothing that I can remember that was formally written.

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What about the updating of LAAPs? You've mentioned LAAPs before. That's the local risk assessment?-- Local action or Local Area Action Plans. Myself and Station Officer Bland decided we needed to know our patch better and that falls under an all-stations or all-shifts responsibility under the site model. We set about doing that. By a couple of days we were lucky enough to have three technical rescue guys on at that stage. They went out and they assessed every swift-water area we had or - identified by LAAP and made sure that the LAAP was correct.

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I'm suggesting this occurred in the context of Colleges Crossing being out for a number of days in December last year?-- Yes, it was.

Sorry?-- It didn't occur just for that reason.

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But that was-----?-- We knew that-----

That was the impetus to have people update their LAAPs and preparedness?-- We'd done it a bit earlier than that because Church Bank Weir is one of the more dangerous areas in our patch that we respond to with swift-water rescue. There's been a number of deaths there over the years and is very, very dangerous even for trained swift-water level 2 technicians.

Was there swift-water awareness sessions provided to auxiliary staff within both Ipswich and Lockyer/Somerset commands?-- There was swift-water awareness packages provided by C Shift 45.

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And again that appropriate in light of the belief about the impending incidents?-- We believed it was-----

Yes?-- -----when we went out and did it on night shifts and

the guys who we went and seen from the auxiliary stations, they definitely believed it was.

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Okay. Now, in terms of your requests for additional staff, you made the request you have told us about. You have no overall understanding, nor could you have at the time, what arrangements were being put in place to properly resource areas. The only thing you know is what you're claiming you were told by as a result of these calls in - in the period you mentioned?-- I know what I said to the people I rang. I asked, "Is there any plan?" They said, "We're having a meeting later today." I said, "Later today will be too late, we'll be out the door by about 9 o'clock", therefore, that's what made me ring the Acting Assistant Commissioner. It's not something you would generally undertake lightly.

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Yes, I understand that. Now, you state at paragraphs 45 and six of your statement-----?-- Of the Galaxy statement.

Yes, Galaxy statement. You radio Firecom and told them you'd be locating to Murphy's Creek?-- Sorry, which section - oh, 45, 46.

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Yes?-- Yep, at that stage the incident was getting - the swift-water event had passed. We were starting to move into recovery. I felt that the best place for that vehicle, because it has a very big generator to be able to provide power, I knew that Murphy's Creek Tavern was without power. I thought that my best course of action was to go down there, provide a Government presence, take accurate information for who is missing. Therefore would be able to give - give good intelligence back to the ICC or to Firecom on to who was missing, where was their last known location, and where we were going to begin our search.

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Okay. Now, your belief, I'm not being critical at all, your belief was your best - the use - the best use of your capabilities was in going to that location and carrying on with the work you proposed to do?-- That would have been a good choice-----

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Yes?-- -----because it would have gave the community a contact point. However, I do understand why I was ordered to Gatton as I was the only guy in the field who was available, was a swift-water level 2, who was able to go and give a good summary of practically what was happening on the fireground.

And that was at about, you say, 5 or 6 in the afternoon on the 10th?-- Yeah, you'd have to appreciate the time was very compressed and very hard to judge what exact time it was.

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And around that time, I'd suggest to you, was at the time that the ICC at Gatton was first being established, set up?-- I take it that that would be - yes, I was unaware of what time people arrived at that station.

In any event, the task for you was to walk in and take charge?-- No, I was reporting to the ICC at Gatton. With a

set up of an ICC, one would assume that there's an incident controller.

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All right. Well, what - what role did you play then upon taking up - taking up your task at the ICC at Gatton?-- I was operations officers. I was responsible for tactical, fireground decisions.

And you immediately, as you've set out in paragraphs 22 and following of your statement, setting about - setting clear command intent within that field of operations?-- Yes, sir.

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And you set out in detail the steps you took to organise things?-- Yes.

And that included noticing there was a large pool of firefighters that were basically, in your words, standing around awaiting tasking?-- Yes.

And you immediately tasked them?-- No, I immediately sort them into teams so I knew that I had teams so that I could task them safely.

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To allow ease of task?-- Ease of task and safety. Safety is pretty much our game. We like all our people to come home.

So at the end of the day you performed a very useful role at the ICC. You've been told that, haven't you? You have been commended for your role there?-- By who?

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Well, haven't you been told that you performed well in role at ICC?-- Apparently I did okay.

And would you concede in hindsight, at least, that it may have been a sensible management decision to use your skills in that role?-- In hindsight. However, I still have some guilt for people at Murphy's Creek's that they left without Government representation.

All right. At the end of the day, are you aware that there is a review of the service's capability in respect of swift-water rescue personnel and equipment being undertaken?-- I am now.

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And you support the appropriateness of that review in light of the events in January and December?-- Definitely support the appropriateness and would like to take part in that review having first-hand knowledge of incident command on a fireground that was rather extreme.

Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Jessop?

MS JESSOP: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

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MR KENT: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No re-examination. Can Mr Stephenson be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks for your time, Mr Stephenson?-- Thank you.

You're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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COMMISSIONER: And we'll adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 4.43 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY

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