

Transcript of Proceedings

Issued subject to correction upon revision.

THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

MS E WILSON, Counsel Assisting

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

BRISBANE

..DATE 12/05/2011

..DAY 20

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 9.59 A.M.

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ROBERT WILLIAM WAUGH, CONTINUING:

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

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MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. If I can take you to page 8 of your statement, that's where you address the way in which triple O calls should be answered in accordance with the training; and at page 9 you go through the notice principle and it sets out the matters which should be obtained during the triple O call?-- Yes.

Now, have you listened to the telephone call answered by Senior Constable Wheeler from Donna Rice on the 10th of January this year?-- Yes, I have.

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And from listening to that call and taking into account the training that is provided at the BPCC, does that comply with the training that is provided at - at the BPCC?-- No, it would appear to be inconsistent with that training.

And can you inform the Commission how it is inconsistent with that training?-- Well, there would be an expectation that the chronological process be adhered to to extract the best information you can to assist the caller, and it would appear on this occasion that it was not consistent with those principles that are outlined for us.

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What about the references that are made about the caller driving through flooded waters?-- I don't think that'd be necessary to include it in the conversation with the caller.

If we can move on then, if we can go to page 15 of your statement, which is the assessment of any shortcomings and the QPS triple O call operation communication system. You state there that, "The capacity of the BPCC has the potential to be challenged in times of disasters"?-- Yes.

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And it appears from the examples that you provide that the BPCC can't cope with a traffic accident on the Gateway?-- It's not that it can't cope, but at the time-----

Can't cope in the short-term?-- In the very short, an accident on the M1 could, as you would appreciate in peak times, could-----

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COURT REPORTER: Sorry, I'm having trouble hearing you.

WITNESS: Sorry. On the M1 in peak hour traffic, a minor accident could result in 30, 40, 50 phone calls within a space of a couple of minutes and, yes, the centre would not be able to cope with answering all those calls immediately.

MS WILSON: Are you aware of the number of phone calls that were received in the Toowoomba Communication Centre on the 10th of January?-- Roughly I am, yes.

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Could you give us any indication how the BPCCC would cope with that many calls?-- That would be a challenge under the rostering which would probably have applied that day. The peak calls from - or the peak volumes that would come from those very rapid approaching events could cause a - a rapid influx in the number of calls and we would struggle with those calls in the short term, but there is a process in place to stack those calls to prioritise them.

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Well, we've heard about the overflow arrangements that occur and if they cannot be answered in Toowoomba then it goes to Ipswich and then it goes down to Brisbane?-- Yes.

What are the overflow arrangements that occurs with Brisbane?-- We have no overflow arrangements, and if you'd like, I could explain the process.

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Yes, that would be good?-- I'll try to do it in terms that I understand. What happens is a call - a caller makes a call to triple O. Telstra will identify if that is police, ambulance or fire. If it comes to the police, it will be plugged into what is called as a pilot number, the first number which will receive a call. After a time if the call is not answered, it is withdrawn and plugged into a second pilot numbers which takes it to a higher priority. If the caller was unable to take the call whilst it was sitting in the first pilot, when that caller became available, the caller would be moved to the higher priority would be presented to the caller. So it's a system which raises the priority for the number of times that it's been presented to the centre. So we don't have an overflow arrangement, we have an escalating priority arrangement. If the call is unable to be answered while it sits in the second pilot, Telstra will withdraw the call and plug it into our fourth pilot. It will say there until it's answered. It does not go to another centre.

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And how long - how long could this - this system of presentations take for a call to be answered if it got to the fourth level?-- Look, it - it could go on for any period of time until a caller became free to take the call. The call will stay there until it's called - until it's - correction, until it's answered. So in that sense, any caller comes into the Brisbane BPCCC from Brisbane will stay there until it's answered and it will be answered. Now, in that period, I'll just explain it, the caller could abandon that call and decide, "I've had enough." The call will still be answered in the technical sense in that the call line identification will be presented to the triple O call taker, they will identify that number and they will ring that number.

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But in terms of prioritising tasks, would that be at the end of dealing with all the telephone calls that have come through?-- No, when they engage that call.

I don't understand that?-- The next call that the triple 0 caller-taker takes-----

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Yes?-- -----they will be presented with the call line identification which include the number to ring back and they will ring that number then to see what the emergency was.

So if you abandon your call through working through this process, you're saying the BPCC will ring you back?-- Yes.

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But what I'm not very clear on is when that will occur?-- That should occur on the presentation of the call line identification to the triple 0 call-taker.

And when does that occur, the-----?-- Immediately they receive the call. It presents on the computer screen in front of them.

So is it more efficient hanging up and then getting a call back from the BPCC or hanging on and waiting till the fourth level is engaged?-- I'd suggest hanging on would be the best way.

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You talk there that, "The system of managing overflows has been helpful in managing call volumes", is that what we have just discussed?-- Yes.

In terms of managing the overflows from the regions, the overflow system has some limitation due to the connectivity problems that exist at the moment?-- Yes, it does.

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Now, you - in your statement you refer to the telephone system that is being proposed of Genesys, is that the right pronunciation?-- Yes, it is.

Can you tell us about that?-- In basic terms Genesys is a system whereby all calls come into the one point, and the computerisation allows for that system to look down over all our triple 0 call-takers across Queensland and select an empty call-taker and direct that call to that person. So virtually any call was made in Ipswich, for example, could be identified within that telephone system and relayed to Cairns, for example, to receive the call because they have a free call-taker rather than wait in line in Ipswich or then overflowed into Brisbane. It could look smart, if you like, identify a vacant call-taker and direct it to that. That's problematic on the fact on the ability of that call-taker to then return the information to the dispatcher.

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So the information - looking at that example, the information that is taken from the operator in Cairns, that is put into the computer system and that is then available for the Ipswich call centre to action?-- Well, no, Ipswich is on an IMS system, Cairns is on a CAD system.

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Under the new Genesys system?-- With Genesis, no, it would only be able to do it for the call-taking phase. For the subsequent utilisation of that information to get it to a

dispatcher, it is - it is then transferred into the CAD system in Cairns, then it has to be moved electronically to the dispatching area.

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But how does that occur on the present system, say, when Toowoomba is on a stand-alone IMS system?-- And that is the problem part. At the moment if Cairns received a call, a triple O call that was - needs response from Brisbane, it's electronic and quick on the CAD system, but from an IMS system they have to do that manually and transfer that call and any information.

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So for - for it to work as efficient as possible, there needs to be true connectivity between all the call centres so that the information can be processed back to, say, Toowoomba?-- Yes.

Electronically?-- Yes.

And there's no other manual steps that intervene?-- No.

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Is that being looked at by the police service, do you know?-- Yes, it is. There's a project underway as we speak, the new CAD project, that's been underway for a couple of years now. The implementation phase starts in around about November and we'll unroll it for the next 14 months.

When you say "implementation stage", what does that mean? Does that mean that the regions will come on line to this system?-- Five of the regions will. We'll start with north coast region, followed by southeastern region, followed by Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns.

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And where does Toowoomba feature in this?-- At present Toowoomba does not feature in the new CAD project.

Okay. And how long would it take - how long, say - it's coming online next year, did you say?-- Start end of this year.

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End of this year. And how long will it take for this to be implemented using the stages that you've just suggested - just stated?-- I think the expected finalisation date is some time in June or July next year.

And is there any reason why places like Toowoomba are not being included in this project?-- No, I can't answer that question.

Now, in item 9, which is page 16 of your statement, you refer to any operational changes or recommendations to improve communication. You have suggested a number of items there. One of the items is expanding CAD, and is that what we have just discussed?-- Yes, it is.

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The - if we can turn the page, one of the associated items with expanding CAD is giving Statewide CAD training - a Statewide CAD training team?-- Yes.

And that is - is that centralising training in relation to using the CAD?-- Yes.

What about where we've still got these communication centres operating on IMS stand-alones, what about centralising training in relation to answering triple 0 calls?-- That - that could be achievable and that would be a desired outcome.

What does that mean, "it could be achievable"?-- Well, at the moment our training team which currently operates in Brisbane is a CAD-based training environment. So we would have to expand the training skills in relation to the IMS system as well before we're able to embrace those. 10

Okay. Is that - is that an easy step to do, to be able to include training for users of the IMS system within the BPCC training structure?-- Anything is achievable, but, you know, with time and resources. 20

And a desired outcome?-- And a desired outcome, yes.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr Burns?

MR BURNS: Superintendent, you accept, do you, that the training provided to Senior Constable Wheeler and the training provided to persons who work in the Brisbane Communication Centre is markedly different?-- I don't accept that, but I understand that possibly is the case - probably is the case. 30

That's from what you know?-- Yes.

Well, we're talking of weeks of training for sworn and unsworn personnel in Brisbane, aren't we?-- Yes.

Now, you mentioned that the volume of calls received in Toowoomba on this day, the 10th of January, even Brisbane would have struggled with?-- In that hour, yes. 40

In the hour there's various evidence, but there's some evidence from Telstra that between 1.30 and 2, there was something like 83 calls offered and 47 not answered on the first presentation?-- In Toowoomba? This in Toowoomba, is it?

Yes?-- Yes. 50

And between 2 and 2.30, 110 calls came into the centre, 65 not answered on first presentation, they may have subsequently been?-- Yes.

But you have something like - something approximating 200 calls within an hour between 1.30 and 2.30. That's the volume that Brisbane would have struggled with?-- Oh, yes. We

received - between 2 and 3 on Monday the 10th, we received approximately 165 presentations, and we weren't able to answer all of those on the first presentation.

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How many operators are there in - were there in Brisbane at that time?-- I can't tell you exactly on that date, but I have an expectation on Monday there would probably be, around 2 o'clock, probably between four and six triple O call-takers and between four and six routine call-takers.

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All right. Do you understand from Toowoomba that the operators there are both call-takers and radio operators?-- Yes.

Have you worked in the Toowoomba Communication Centre?-- No, I haven't.

All right. You accept though that you also, that is Brisbane Communication Centre, is under a different computer system?-- Yes.

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And it has significant advantages over, for example, the IMS system?-- Yes, they differ.

And you have explained what they are in your statement?-- But - that they're different systems, different platforms, yes.

Well, one significant feature is that under the CAD system used in Brisbane, a number of fields are populated automatically so that the call-taker doesn't have to take down information regarding certain matters?-- Yes, call line information.

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Caller identification?-- Yes.

Is there geo location? Is there a GPS location part of the system?-- No.

No. All right. But other fields are populated?-- Yes, they are.

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All right. You'd accept that in a crisis situation that's confronted the operators in Brisbane and in Toowoomba on the 10th of January, each call operator needs to exercise his or her judgment as to how much information to take down?-- Yes.

Because the aim of the - or the objective must be, do you agree, to obtain as much information as quickly as possible?-- Of course.

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And that may of itself, to fulfil that objective, mean cutting some calls short?-- Yeah, that - that's a difficult area. The calls may be cut short to expedite the attention on the other calls, but equally not so not to gather enough information to provide the best response we can at the time.

All right. But there's a judgment call to be made by the

operator at the time, right or wrong?-- Yes.

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As to what priorities should be accorded to the call?-- Yes.

And one of the bases for exercising that judgment can be, particularly in the case of regional call centres, local knowledge?-- Yes, local knowledge could - could come into it.

So in this particular case in the case of this call, the officer involved, and everyone seems to be agree that this is the case, had particular local knowledge of the intersection involved. Can you comment upon that at all?-- Only what I have read in the media.

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All right?-- It probably does, yes.

It was just that you were asked about this call and asked to express a view?-- Yes.

And I think your view was from reading, I assume, the transcript of the call, you took the view that not - that perhaps the call-taker didn't extract the best information from the caller?-- No.

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But that's perfect well practice, isn't it?-- Yes.

And here the call-taker was dealing with a crisis?-- Yes.

So you'd need to know all of the circumstances and the pressures he dealing under?-- Yes, the total context of the call.

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Before you can be critical of-----?-- Yes.

-----what information was received. Could I ask you about a problem that you deal with briefly in your statement, and that is reduction of the burden of triple 0 lines?-- Yes.

It is a significant problem, is it not, that members of the public use triple 0 lines for reasons that are not genuinely police emergencies?-- On occasions.

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Well, more than on occasion, it frequently occurs, doesn't it?-- Well, you're obviously referring to the statistics in there and I should explain those. I think it's back a page there, I talk about of the triple 0 calls in Brisbane about 96 per cent do not require a Code 1 or a Code 2 response; that is, life threatening. So that if you look at those stats in that form you would say, well, 96 per cent may not be triple 0 calls, but that's not the case. What that identifies is 96 per cent of calls don't require a Code 1 or a Code 2. That doesn't mean that they're not calls that people perceive they need our support and need it quickly, or they are equally calls that a police response is required but not to the extent where we need to provide a Code 1 or a Code 2 response. So of the 96 per cent, it's a particular interest to us at the moment to identify whether or not we can reduce that statistic because in amongst that 96 per cent there are some calls that

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are totally inappropriate to come through in the triple 0 network and that's what we have got to start to look at now and try and identify if we can reduce those calls coming in that do not require a police response and then we can free up call-takers to make sure they can get to the calls that do require the police response.

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Because people tend to ring triple 0 for all sorts of reasons-----?-- Yes.

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-----you agree?-- Yes, it can be a default position for some people that when in trouble, they ring triple 0.

All right. So what's been done to reduce the burden on those lines?-- At present, we've taken a two-phase approach to it. At the end of last year, we started to look at what's called our routine call volumes that are coming into the centre and seeing if we can identify some strategies to reduce those, and that's underway as we speak. The survey has been completed and the actions are starting to be implemented and we hope that we can get a 30 per cent reduction on those calls. What that means for us is we can take a routine call-taker and allocate them to be a triple 0 call-taker which improves that service. By March this year we had hoped to have started triple 0 focus and that would have involved a survey on our triple 0 calls over a period of time and categorise every one of those calls so we can make decisions based on better information than this basic statistics of Code 1/Code 2 responses. So we can take all the calls that are coming into triple 0, categorise them and see where we can manage those calls. And some of them could be - there'll be some calls that come into triple 0 that are inappropriate from people that are affected by drugs or alcohol, from people that have a gripe with the police for example, to placing orders for consumer goods, but equally in amongst those there could be some calls for help and people be mental health conditions that we can redivert. So we want to be able to categorise all those things so that we can make informed decisions on them so that we can not rush in to any changes.

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See, you mention people calling for consumer goods, someone calling for a pizza on triple 0-----?-- We've had some of those.

-----there's been examples of that?-- Yes.

There are no consequences currently for that sort of abuse, is there?-- Not at this stage, no.

No. All right. Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

MR KENT: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Mr Waugh. You're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Chief Superintendent Pitman.

GRANT ALAN PITMAN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Grant Alan Pitman?-- That's correct.

And you're the chief superintendent from the Queensland Police Service?-- That's correct.

And you're the operations coordinator and director of Strategic Services at the Communications and Major Projects?-- That's correct.

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And that's within the information and communications of technology of the police department?-- That's correct.

You made a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- That's correct.

I ask you to have a look at this document, please. And in that statement you refer to number of documents?-- That's correct.

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Twenty documents. Can you have a look at these documents?-- Yes, they're all the documents that were requested by the Inquiry.

And they are referred to in your statement?-- They are referred to in my statement.

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

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 347.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 347"

MS WILSON: Now, have you got a copy of your statement there?-- I certainly have.

Can I take you through some matters you raise in your statement. At page 3, you refer to a detailed study of QPS Communication Centre Operations and QPS triple O call answering performance has been conducted by Acting Inspector Jenkins and Ms Davidson, and their final report is being prepared. How far away is that final report to completion?-- Probably another one or two months.

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And what does that report - what will that report address?-- That report will address the on-going technologies that the police service needs to consider into the digital age. It will also address resource capabilities for standards into the future as well, and will also look at the relationship to what they call memorandum of understandings with telco providers like Telstra.

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And will the report review issues arising in the regions?-- It will cover the regions as well because Queensland has 22 centres, and areas like Toowoomba, Ipswich Longreach, Rockhampton, those areas that were affected by the floods will be contained in that report.

Is this report as a result of the flood events?-- No, these research - or this research from the report were actually commenced as a result of two other projects. One is called the Public Safety Communications or now Frontline Communications Project; and the second one was as a result of what is known as the CAD project, the computer-aided despatch project to look at regionalisation of communication centres or command centres throughout Queensland.

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In your statement you refer to the Strategic Assessment of Public Safety Communications Report?-- That's correct.

And is this detailed study by Acting Inspector Jenkins and Ms Davidson a continuation of material that's addressed in that report?-- That report was actually commissioned as a result of a major project that was undertaken between the Department of Community Safety and Queensland Police about eight years ago and it was endorsed by Cabinet at the time to look at a range of activities between the two departments. This strategic assessment was the review document that looked at those programs and projects that were going on between the two departments, and has set the future direction of the Joint Agency Review into the use of communications and command centres and so on.

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In relation to the communications between the two departments, that is between the QPS, the QFRS and the QAS, there is a no connectivity at the moment in relation to communications?-- At the present time, and it depends which area you wish to discuss in this area. In terms of communication networks, the radio networks, we certainly do not connect totally. However, there are channels where we can interconnect. If you're

talking about what is called the CAD systems, computer-aided systems, no, there isn't any what they call interoperability between the two. If you are talking about mobile services strategies, in other words the transfer of information between areas, no, that's not currently available. And this is what these projects are currently looking at.

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So the only - from that - the only connectivity that exists between the two departments is on a channel that could be predetermined between-----?-- It can be predetermined by a channel or by fax or by e-mail or by a telephone system.

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Okay. And that seems a bit cumbersome?-- If we were looking at an historical nature in which we've operated over the last or four decades, we've been fairly effective in using that, but moving into an age of digital technology plus the changes in demographics in Queensland, certainly there can be some improvements made.

If I can take you to page six of your statement, and that's where you refer to the presentations and how presentations work in relation to the answering of triple 0 telephone calls?-- Yes.

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And they're known as the overflow arrangements because if it can't pick up in one communication centre, then it can go to another communication centre and ultimately may end up in the Brisbane Police Communication Centre. You say there that, "The effectiveness of these overflow arrangements is contingent upon their being operators available at the overflow location to answer the call"?-- Has that been an that there have not been operators available to answer the call?-- If you take it in the policing context in terms of day-to-day operations, there is the capacity to move the calls around. However, when you get a significant event, for example, the floods, then it's more difficult to find the operators or have the communications capability to sustain the calls that would come in.

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And one of the other issues that affect of the efficiency of the overflow arrangements is, of course, the - there's no connectivity between the IMS system and the CAD system?-- That's correct. We use the "interoperability" more and more in policing now meaning that the technologies that are available now throughout the world in policing and emergency services allow that to occur, but at the moment they don't exist in a significant way.

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And when we're talking about interconnectivity, if we can go back to page 9 of your statement where you talk about the interconnectivity between the IMS system and the CAD system, and the no interconnectivity between the QFRS, QAS or QPS.

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Now, can you tell us, is that being addressed by the QPS, to increase connectivity between its own police communications centres?-- Yes.

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Can you tell us how that is being done?-- The major projects, which are mentioned further in the statement, relate to the frontline communications project and the CAD project. The - and also, there's another project which has commenced in the last few weeks. They call it the critical incident management systems in the counterterrorism where we call them incident command systems. And these systems now are being looked at to connect both the QPS systems plus DCS systems as well.

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DCS, Department of Community Services?-- Department of Community Safety.

That is looking at QFRS and QAS?-- Yes, yes.

So it's being looked at. What are the positive steps being taken to achieve interconnectivity between, first of all, the police communication centres?-- The Queensland Police, as a result of the CAD project, has rationalised its centres or is in the process of rationalising its centres to replace the five ESCORT CAD systems.

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And those five ESCORT CAD systems are along the eastern coast, aren't they?-- Coast. The Commissioner two weeks ago, after a debrief from the floods, has also concurred that they should also consider the rollout to what is known as the southern region, which is the Toowoomba, Ipswich through to Charleville and also the Rockhampton or central region, from Rockhampton to - out to Longreach.

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So with the rollout of CAD to these regions, is it expected that these police communication centres will have the CAD system?-- That's correct.

And therefore, if they do have the CAD system, there will be interconnectivity between these various regions?-- That's correct.

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So you won't have - Toowoomba would not be on an IMS standalone and Brisbane on a CAD?-- That's correct.

And would that include Ipswich as well?-- That's - that's correct. But I should just make the point here that the department is still looking at the rationalisation. In the southern region there are two major centres - what I mean by major centres, have high volume - and that's Toowoomba and Ipswich.

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Okay?-- And they are yet to decide which centre would be the centre for using the CAD.

So it would be Toowoomba or Ipswich, not Toowoomba and Ipswich?-- It could be either or. But we also have in the CAD project what we call a light CAD, a light CAD meaning that you can operate a communications capability for dispatching at

other centres.

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Can you expand on that?-- They're used quite often in other police jurisdictions which allow policing from centres which are more dislocated in rural sectors to be able data entry a job that they may get late at night, or if a district officer wants to review what is actually occurring with his resources at any given time, that data can be provided. So it can have a tasking capability or it can have a management capability. So they call them light CADs. In other words, it doesn't perform directly in a major communications centre capability but it's used individually.

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So, say if Toowoomba did not get the CAD system and was provided light CAD system, they would still, in the communications centre, have to run on the IMS system?-- No.

So they could run on the CAD system?-- They run still on the CAD system. It is called light CAD. It's just a variation to it.

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COMMISSIONER: What does it not have that a heavy CAD does?-- It depends on your usage. You can have the light CAD do exactly the same as a standard CAD or you can reduce the functionality depending what you want. A district officer may not want a full CAD. He may not want a data entry jobs into it. He may just want the information. So it depends on the functions or the capacity you want in that CAD. But it can do everything or it can be limited depending on what you want to do with it.

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MS WILSON: Then why isn't it light CADs are implemented across the state instead of the other CAD system?-- The major reason is that light CADs are designed, basically, for the officers in areas who may not have the ability to transfer information because of the networks that we have. For example, a small, say, one officer police station who may get a job late at night, it is easier for him to come back and just put it straight into the CAD as such. But the full CAD systems are usually designated for the major operation centres.

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But Toowoomba Communications Centre is not something you'd describe as a one officer station?-- No, that's correct. It is probably - we usually categorise the communication centres into a smaller one, a medium size and the larger size. They're in the medium size.

And Ipswich and Toowoomba you'd regard as which size?-- Probably at the present time, probably in the medium size.

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Now, you have spoken about a rollout. Is there any timelines that you can give us in relation to when this rollout would occur?-- Yes, the rollout commences in December and starts at Maroochydore police. It would go to Southern Region, then to Brisbane, then to Townsville and Cairns.

And when would a decision be made whether it would be Ipswich

or Toowoomba to receive either the heavy or the light CAD?--
The project that we have in our command which is overviewed by
operational police is resubmitting a submission back to the
Commissioner for consideration as to whether or not and when
they should be rolled out.

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With the implementation of this CAD system being rolled out to
more regions of the state, is it being envisaged that there is
going to be centralised training in relation to the use of
this CAD system or can't you speak about that?-- Yes. No,
the CAD project has a changed management strategy in it which
includes training. Can I make the comment that in the new CAD
systems, they're different to the systems that we currently
have. You're talking about new digital technology, you're
talking about intelligence capabilities in these new CAD
systems. So that the training can be reduced quite
significantly because they have in them greater capabilities
for, for example, tracking where police cars actually are.
They will have sophisticated mapping systems. They will have
the ability, providing the government - the Federal government
brings, for example, GPS messaging on your mobile phones, we
would be able to locate the caller by GPS. It will also have
capabilities like drop down screens which actually will give
information to the person who is data entering details about
how the police handle different types of jobs and the
procedures. We call them our operational procedurals manual.
They will actually be drop down screens.

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So that there is going to be a new CAD system?-- Yes.

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That is going to be implemented that replaces the old CAD
system?-- Yes.

And it's going to be more widespread?-- That's correct.

In terms of training though, if we can focus back to the
training, is it going to be a centralised training program or
it is going to go out to the regions?-- It will be initially
a centralised training program and we anticipate that it will
remain centralised.

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So anyone answering a triple 0 telephone call in the regions
will have to undertake the training program in Brisbane?--
Either in Brisbane or it can be delivered in - in a regional
training package as well.

But it will be standardised?-- That will be standardised,
yes.

Just one other matter. We talked about presentations
before?-- Yes.

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We talked about presentations before, the first
presentations?-- Yes.

There's a sequence of presentations and then the overflow
arrangements kick in?-- Yes.

If, say, Toowoomba did get this new CAD system and there was an influx of calls like we saw on the 10th of January this year, will that just - will the overflow arrangements then be that any one of these centres will be able to pick up that call?-- If Toowoomba were to become the major centre for the southern region and become the regional communications centre, not only will there be a new CAD placed in there but a range of new other systems will be placed in as well with them, including what they call the Genesys system, which is a telecommunications capability. There will be also what they call a Zetron system. A Zetron system is a radio communications system. They already exist but these will be the upgraded versions on it. As the department moves to regional communication centres, what is able to be achieved in this new technology is that the calls and the data entry and the dispatch could be virtually done from anywhere in the state.

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And dispatch?-- And dispatch.

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So if we can just provide an example of this, a hypothetical example: a call comes through in Toowoomba, the operators are busy; it can be picked up in any one of these other communication centres with a CAD?-- That's correct.

When they see a call is not being answered?-- That's correct.

Then they can take the information?-- Yes.

Put it into the system?-- Yes.

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And then dispatch one of the nearest assets to that problem?-- It can be done from that centre or it can be referred back to that regional centre for dispatch. It can either go either way.

Well, on the 10th of January there was a problem with the overflow arrangements of getting that information back to Toowoomba?-- That's correct.

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Would this new CAD system take away that problem?-- That's correct. Providing the volume is an issue of course.

Providing the volume is an issue. If we have all of these centres that are available to take these calls, should that deal with the volume issue?-- Depending on what the policing capabilities are throughout the state. I provided to the Commission of Inquiry some statistical data which actually shows that there are peak times progressively throughout the year. For example, we did have a peak time across the whole state during the flooding that occurred roughly around about Christmas/Boxing Day and we had significant calls, and that's in the printout. We also have other planned or unplanned events, for example Australia Day, where there could be a volume of policing-type activities where behaviour becomes an issue for police and you get a huge volume of calls on that day. So I'm just trying to indicate that volumes are an issue depending on the policing context of that.

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The volumes becomes more of an issue, I suppose, when there is more than one event, dual events and more than dual events even across the state?-- That's correct.

I understand that. If I can take you to page 10 of your statement where you talk about, "The QPS does not presently have an incident command system or critical incident/information management system to assist with the management of major incidents, disasters or major planned events on a state-wide basis." Then you talk about the Wyvern incident command system. Can you tell us about that?-- Yes. When you are in a situation, either counterterrorism or disaster management, there is a migration or an escalation in use of resources. Certainly, the public phone in to communications centre which can handle the initial dispatching capabilities. When there is a need for major resources, the police standing operational procedures require a more senior officer to handle that. Usually a commission officer would be moved in to what they call the major incident room or an operations room. In those centres, generally speaking, they then provide them what they call an incident command system, or a critical information management system is the business term used now. Those centres then escalate up in terms of command and control and then interoperate with other departments and also provide the corporate resources. And that can move from a district to a region right up to headquarters. At the moment the Wyvern is a military system, it was purchased by the department for counterterrorism, and there is a project which has commenced in the last few weeks to review whether or not we should be looking at a new incident command system and that has been discussed with the Department of Community Safety to look at a wholistic approach in terms of an incident command system for police.

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You talk about in your statement that the Wyvern incident command system is only in use in the Brisbane Communications Centre?-- That's correct.

And has limited functionality. So is what is being considered or looked at has a state wide command system?-- That's correct. There's about eight different systems in the marketplace that can be purchased. Certainly, local government has preferred systems. Some local government departments have. There are other systems called Noggin, which is being used by State Government. WebEOC is a popular one. And then the Department of Community Safety looks at their AIMS equivalent which is systems which fit their approach. So the Queensland Police is currently investigating what their options will be. The interstate experience is that most police have moved into what they call the WebEOC product.

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What does that mean?-- Basically, an incident command system is a system that you can use to make decisions out of. Usually they have decision making model capabilities out of it. They're attached to intelligence cells which allows the intelligence - in the policing context that's more to do with how we use our data from our history and databases on people

that we have. It will also have communication cells in it. It also has media capabilities and can connect into things like social media. It will also have investigation cells into it and it has strategic planning cells and resource cells. So it does a variety of gathering of information for decision making for the commanders who use it and then the resources are allocated accordingly.

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So is it presently the case that the QPS are considering options?-- That's correct.

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And has yet to determine which option best suits their need?-- That's correct.

And is this a long process for - to work through these options and then implementation?-- The products are readily available. In the information communication technology, the requirement is to look at what the business requirements are or the operational requirements, otherwise you have to make too much - too many changes in a product to deliver what you need for the operational area. So the operational context has to be worked out first and then business cases are presented through the government's processes in police and the Department of Community Safety to see what systems are most appropriate for-----

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Are we talking years?-- At the present time the project has started developing their scoping. They have the funding to seek funding to look at a business case. The projection that the project is looking at is possibly next year sometime.

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For it to be implemented?-- Yes.

If I can take you to page 10 of your statement where you refer to the mobile voice radio networks throughout the state and you say that they are police district centric. So are you talking about there the police communications, for example, the police - radios in police cars back to their station and handheld units?-- Yes. The history of policing in Queensland over the last couple of decades has seen a movement into the district as the major controlling area for resources. I think that's probably because of the demographics that have occurred in our state over many, many years. Districts usually have sufficient resources to cover most of the crime activities in their area including their smaller stations in that area. So the communications network has been designed around districts. The current projects we are having a look at is suggesting what we call seamless communications capability which means that an officer could move from Mount Isa to, say, Brisbane without having to change channels or decide what other devices they would use.

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We have heard comment from police officers about how communications failed during the flood event and it was very difficult to use radios in cars and handheld devices. Is this new system that is being considered, will that assist in providing greater communications?-- Having been responsible for providing advice to the senior executive of police during

the floods both in the Lockyer Valley and up in central Queensland, plus the cyclone, the issue of communications and networks is an interesting one because it depends whether or not the network is owned by the government or by the private sector and how the memorandum of understanding actually operates. Most of the systems that either went down that were public or private were as a result of power, because there was a lack of power to that network or the tower that was in operation. Can you guarantee that? You probably could if you could guarantee supply of power to those networks. What we've done in the Queensland Police is to try and provide different types of technology to the police. We have provided mobile phones and we increased that volume of phones out to police during the disasters. We also provide satellite phones to police and most in the rural sector have access to the 3G network for the mobile phone, to the satellite phone plus our radio system. But I should point that out - the radio system is an analogue system, it is not a digital system and it is bound by the radius in which the bandwidth can deliver out. In a digital radio network, it would be far more extensive and cover a wider range.

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The radio network for the Metropolitan North and the South regions is digital?-- Digital, that's correct.

And that works - you don't get any of the black spots there?-- No, but-----

But it is a different environment?-- It is a different environment, and the purchase of the digital radio for that period of time was a result of CHOGM being here in Brisbane and the extra security for that and the counterterrorism issues.

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It's proved to be effective though?-- Yes, very effective.

It is an improvement on the analogue technology?-- Oh, yes. Digital technology is able to allow police officers to move anywhere in the state without having to know what channels, what systems they are. The more capable systems now integrate between the 3G or your radio system, your mobile phone and your satellite, and you can travel anywhere in the state and the system will convert to whichever network is most appropriate at that particular time. So that if you're in a black spot with a radio, it will immediately go to a 3G. If a 3G system doesn't work, it will go to satellite.

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Are these the radio systems that are in the police cars?-- No. These are futuristic. That's another project called mobile services and the direction we're looking at into the future.

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Just in relation to the digital system, the digital technology that is being utilised in the Brisbane area, Metropolitan North and South, how does that deal with black spots there?-- Generally, there aren't too many black spots because of the geographical area. We have what they call a black spot program in police where we seek information from the regions

in terms of their black spots. There are currently identified 150 black spots in police and they are worked on each year in terms of a program as to where we will put additional police radio towers. But, of course, outside of Brisbane that's all analogue, so that it becomes a patchwork quilt approach to managing.

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Is the issue about expanding the digital technology throughout the state just, primarily, one of expense?-- We're currently with a project with the Department of Community Safety in conjunction with the Department of Public Works to look at digital technology across the state. The advice that we have, and it is in draft form at the present time from Gibbs & Clay, who are the consultants, is that to roll out a government wireless network which includes radio and 3G for the government would be in excess of \$600 million.

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So is that not being considered?-- As I said, it is in project at the present time and it's discussions between ourselves and the Department of Community Safety and the Department of Public Works.

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If I can just take you to further down that page where you talk about telephone systems in police communication centres and you refer to them as PABX - Private Automatic Branch eXchange - and they're location specific and operate independently to each other. With these new systems that are being looked at, those sort of issues would not exist anymore; is that the case?-- PABX is set up for managing the number of lines into the station and that then allows the number of calls. The PABX is what they call an Alcatel system and the industry at the present time in the telephone area is migrating from - if I can put it fairly basically, from copper to fibre. Copper is the analogue. Fibre is the new what they call voiceover IP, or VoIP. The issue in the policing context is this, that the VoIP systems, which is the new digital telephones, can't guarantee critical services when it comes to voice. So what we've had to do is maintain two telephone communication capabilities for police. So we maintain analogue which guarantees critical mission critical services to us but we also are moving into the VoIP area as well.

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When we move into the new areas, that will improve connectivity?-- The VoIP systems certainly do but the technology of VoIP is still a few years away to guarantee critical mission critical capabilities.

If I can take you to page 13 and 14 where you particularise the number of calls that were received into Toowoomba on the 10th of January this year. You state that one call required 17 presentations before it was finally answered in Toowoomba on the fifth round of the overflow arrangements and, in terms of durations, this equates to in excess of 12 minutes. We discussed previously about the new CAD system being implemented across the state. Would this ensure that a person wouldn't have to wait in excess of 12 minutes, depending upon what - just looking at the Toowoomba event of those circumstances?-- If you had seven regional centres connected

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with Alcatel capabilities and a new CAD, it would mean that that person who waited the 12 minutes would have been picked up, for example, perhaps in Cairns and that call then data entry into a CAD system in Cairns and either sent back to Toowoomba or could have been managed from Cairns.

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Then if we can go to page 15, looking at the additional resources that might assist, you say that there is no single technology or strategy that resolved the issues in triple 0 call answering processes or police communication centres particularly in disaster events. It can only be improved through the implementation of a range of technologies that are integrated to and form an interconnected virtualised communications network. We have been talking about the implementation of this new CAD system. Does that assist in the answering of triple 0 calls, particularly in disaster events?-- That's correct. That's the experience coming out of our interstate colleagues and our overseas colleagues. That the migration to regional or to corporate they call them contact centres now, because it must cater for social media and other capabilities, allows for volumes of calls to come in and then to transfer the information to the frontline officers to deliver the services.

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And you also discuss that these technologies must be complemented with appropriate organisational changes and staffing models. What organisational changes need to be made to complement the implementation of, say, this new CAD system?-- The organisational change is relating to what these products can actually deliver now. For example, the new CADs actually can have what they call automated vehicle location capability which then means that the police can know where all of their vehicles are. They also have what they call automated resource location capabilities. So not only do you know where the vehicle is; you can actually also know what the police officers in the car, what all their capabilities are. So you can have advice that one police officer is a negotiator, another one is a mental health interventionist strategy trained, another one has these skills. That's in it as well. Plus, it also will have integration functions. This means that not only when we have somebody, a citizen of Queensland phone in, we not only have the data from previous jobs but we will have access to all other data from our back-end systems, we call them QPRIME. So we will also actually know if they may have an issue firearms, they may have an issue with mental health, they may have an issue with police generally and those sort of things. So it becomes a decision making capability or a knowledge management capability. So the police officers will then have to look at the information and interpret it and with the more advanced CAD systems, they may also give them options. They will also have highly sophisticated mapping systems which will allow them to analyse data. For example, a police in the future may be able to go to a crime, for example a break and enter of a house. May be able to also see where all of the other break and enters have occurred in that area and would also see all of the people who have had previous convictions who live in that area. So it may also provide some analytical tools. The

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same could also be done with flooding events and as well and that sort of data could be put onto a mapping system for police in the future.

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And-----?-- It will also have live-streaming capability from CCTVs and also possibly people with mobile phones could live-stream their data directly to a communication centre.

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And can all of this - is this all achievable under the new CAD that will occur-----?-- It has-----

-----in the rollout you have discussed?-- It has a capacity. Whether or not it's fully implemented will depend on costing and capabilities of us to handle that.

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Now, if we can just go to page 16 where we talk about the technologies and strategies for improvement?-- Yes.

Now, the telephone the system of Genesys?-- Yes.

Have we talked about that?-- Yes.

What-----?-- We actually use Genesys in our police link.

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In the police link?-- Yes.

Okay. And then you also discuss the single CAD system used by all police communication centres, that's just what we have been discussing?-- That's correct.

And, "The automated despatching to reduce congestion on the voice radio system", that's also part of the new CAD system?-- Yes. In other words, the messaging would actually go directly to the vehicle or to the officer if they had a personalised computer.

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Another dot point is the connected ^ trunked Statewide communications network for voice and data that would provide scalability and allow operations to be conducted in any part of the State"?-- That allows greater commander control, management of resources and also increases the visibility of police into the public space.

But that's on your wish list, isn't it? That's - we talked about before the expense of that might-----?-- The expense of that, but I do point out that every other police jurisdiction in Australia now has it.

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Has the Statewide digital communication?-- That's correct.

So Queensland is the only one that does not have that?-- At the present time, yes. I'm not positive about Tasmania.

Okay. The - you said at the bottom point is, "The introduction of a regionally-based police communications network to obtain the benefits from economies of scale that optimises the efficiency and effectiveness of police communication centres", can you tell us what that means?-- Essentially the model that we've developed at 22 centres has been based off the dislocation of population and growth - non-growth, I suppose, historically so that our centres have been based off managing police operations from a geographical

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location. As the State population has merged, particularly in the south-east corner, there are greater synergies from allowing police to actually migrate their calls and the use of resources between regions and at a corporate level. For example, in the south-east corner, the Commissioner may want to have greater access to dealing with resources right across the south-east during a major flood event. This would allow that Commissioner or a deputy to actually do that.

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The final dot point you say, "In the longer term, that the QPS considers the recommendations of the draft QPS Contact Management Strategy in particular having only two or three urgent contact centres that are joined up with a whole of Government emergency services strategy", what does that mean?-- This is moving to international best practice and we're suggesting that probably in the next decade or so that there should be a consideration to moving towards the digital age in terms of how resources are managed and how technology is made available. We're also suggesting that the whole of Government, for example, Smart Services ^ also offer call centres may be able to be integrated into a much wider web, and used for disaster management as well as for counter-terrorism and other areas.

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And finally if we go to the public safety frontline communications program and that refers to the - working with the Department of Community Services, and we've discussed that in your evidence here today. You say at page 19, "A Statewide digital communication network that's shared between the QPS and DCS which provide numerous benefits", which you state. And just to be clear, is that the program that you envisage might be on foot next year?-- No, that's the - the issue about the digital radio wireless network which is a longer term strategy and may be need to be implemented over, say, five to 10 years.

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

MR BURNS: No questions, thank you.

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MR KENT: I have no questions, thank you.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: Chief Superintendent, you mentioned during the course of your evidence that whatever system is in place its ability to cope will depend on volumes of call received at any particular time, and you referred to peak periods. I think one of the your attachments deals with a graph which shows that period of volumes. And I think it's attachment or appendix T04. Can you just refer to that if you could for a moment? Do you have that with you?-- No, unfortunately.

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We'll just show you - perhaps a hard copy is sufficient. It's on the screen. Can you see it on the screen?-- Yes, yes, sorry.

And what are the peak periods revealed? And that's just for the January month, is it, 2011?-- That's correct. This was provided from Telstra figures in terms of calls for us. The peak figure there on the 1st of January, that was the flooding issues that were occurring in - the ^ north coast, Rockhampton, Longreach area. The 11th is the Toowoomba, and then the next couple of days the Ipswich area. And the next peak, the 26th, is Australia day. That would have been probably be crime related. Behaviour-----

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Outbreak of crime on Australia Day?-- That's correct, yes.

All right. So any system that's put into place needs to take into account routinely those sort of - or volumes of that nature will be generated from time to time?-- Yes. If there is data available, and generally speaking that's becoming more capable in these new systems, the planning that would occur would be that the communication centres or possibly major incident rooms would have additional staff. For example, on Australia Day there would be significant more staff. Certainly if there were flooding issues to occur, they also increase accordingly. But if it's unpredicted it becomes more difficult.

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That was certainly one of the difficulties in relations to the Toowoomba incident, was totally out of the ordinary?-- It was unpredictable so it would have been difficult based on the current structures and technology that we have in those centres.

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All right. Now, as you say in your statement there is no single simple solution to that problem of triple 0 call answering, is there?-- That's correct.

And you detail a range of technologies and strategies that would be necessary to improve the system overall?-- That's correct.

That comes at a cost?-- That's correct.

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Now, you have mentioned a figure of \$600 million, does that relate to - those technologies referred to at page I think it's 16 of your statement, or is that a separate figure all together?-- No, the - the overall figure, and based off what we have seen in the interstate experiences which include your modern CAD systems, your Government wireless networks and then your delivery of mobile technology into police vehicles and onto the person, the New South Wales experience is well over a billion dollars; Victoria is close to that amount as well, I think about 800 million they have spent already; South Australia had spent hundreds of millions, I think, three or four hundred million; certainly Western Australia has also been in the same category where they have spent that; New Zealand is in a similar category. So to deliver that sort of technology it requires hundreds of millions of dollars.

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All right. And does that cost you're now generally referring

to include the initiatives that are underway as referred to starting on page 18?-- That's correct.

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That's the whole package in effect, is it?-- That's correct.

Now, those initiatives mentioned at page 18 and following are ones that predate these events, don't they?-- That's correct, they were being planned and considered by our department for the last several years.

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These events that we're now dealing with here really indicate the importance of those initiatives?-- Yes. Certainly, with these improvements and the capabilities, we would be able to address in a more significant way the triple 0 calls, the management of those calls, service delivery in the field would be still an issue but could be addressed more efficiently, decision-making into an incident command system and then into the structures that deal with disaster management could be significantly improved and given at a more timely rate to our organisation.

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You have touched upon something there that's - would seem to be very relevant; that is, if you have a system that captures all of the calls, your next difficulty is having to the resources to deploy to deal with those incidents?-- That's correct. The difficulty as any organisation has, and police is in a similar situation, we have set resources generally to manage crime patterns and trends, and that's usually based off historical data, and then we have frontline officers, we have investigators, we have scenes of crime people who are out in the field working. They're certainly available, but in terms of the resources that are available in the district, they have to be called back in and managed according to the demands that are required in any given time.

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Now, the data suggests, doesn't it, that there is a percentage, in some cases a not an insignificant percentage, of triple 0 calls that aren't in reality urgent matters?-- That's correct. We receive, I think, close to about half a million triple 0 calls here in Queensland. The public education for this has been an on-going issue in Australia and I've been involved in major committees with the police and emergency services and the Federal Government about a triple 0 call issue here in Australia for the last five to 10 years, and one of the major issues they're encouraging is further federal funding to look at educating the public in what triple 0 calls are actually to be used for.

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But where you have a system that does manage to capture all of the calls, at least you're in a position to prioritise the truly urgent ones?-- That's correct, and-----

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Discard or put in a queue the ones that aren't really emergency calls?-- That's correct. The new technology allows greater efficiencies in terms of that.

All right. That's all I have, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr MacSporran. Ms McLeod?

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MS McLEOD: I have nothing.

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

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Superintendant, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Stephen Smith.

MR BURNS: May I be excused, Madam Commissioner. That's the end.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Burns.

STEPHEN ANTHONY SMITH, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Stephen Anthony Smith, inspector, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

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Mr Smith, you're the author of a 10-page statement prepared for the purposes of this Commission; is that correct?-- That's correct.

I show that to you?-- That's correct.

That's the statement which you signed on the 9th of May; is that right?-- That is correct.

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I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 348.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 348 "

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MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Smith you're the manager of technical rescue within the QFRS; is that right?-- That's correct.

And we understand there are five different rescue disciplines which you've identified in paragraph 4, the fifth of which is swift-water rescue; is that right?-- That is correct, yes.

We also understand there are three skill sets involved in swift-water rescue; that is to say, awareness, what's known as SW1 and SW2; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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Can you just tell us exactly what is involved in the awareness level of skill?-- The awareness level package is designed to provide - is made available to our rural and auxiliary personnel and it's designed to provide them with the knowledge to be able to responds to an incident and remain safe and to participate in some initial actions to bring the scene to either a stable position. So, you know, effectively they can operate - they do a scene size-up, they can determine what the best access is, what the actual incident as far as how many people are involved, their location, access for personnel, access for vehicles, and they can also communicate with the people on site to determine other factors that provide guidance for further responding crews, and they're informed about the level of training of the level 1 and level 2 capacities.

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What is the package?-- The package is DVD-based package.

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And how long does the DVD go for?-- Approximately 20 minutes.

All right. We are concerned, as you know, with the concept of the number of personnel and the qualifications of those personnel who are required to conduct a swift-water rescue. At page 8 of your statement, you have a subheading concerned with this topic. Do you see that?-- Can you repeat that question, sorry?

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We're concerned with the topic of the number of personnel required to conduct a swift-water rescue, that's paragraphs 48 and 49 on page 8?-- Yes, yes.

And in effect in paragraph 49, I'd suggest that the effect of that is that you tell us that the response numbers provide for a standard approach which can be scaled up or down depending on the nature of the incident; is that right?-- That is correct, yes.

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And that reflects the position which has been put to at least one witness in this inquiry to whom it was suggested that there's no directive making it mandatory to have two swift-water rescue level 2 technicians on board, that the situation is flexible and depends on the circumstances; is that right?-- Yes, that's correct. The - the Fire Communication Centre Directive provides a guidance for resources to be sent-----

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Yes?-- -----and - from that initial response, and they may well be sent from different locations, that provides a starting point for a rescue. So, indeed, you can have - a rescue can be completed by, you know, the first arriving crew based on their knowledge, skill and experience of that area, it might be a quite simple event that they're being responded to. In more complex more resources than that initial response may be required.

And the Fire Communications Directive, Firecom Centre directive, that you talk about is the one you referred to paragraph 48; is that right?-- That is correct, yes.

And this flexibility, this provision for individual decision-making, is something which is sanctioned by the QFRS; is that right?-- There is - yes, there was an expectation of - for our people to be a dynamic risk assessment of any incident that they go to-----

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All right?-- -----and swift water is no different.

Can I just show you a document? It's a document which is titled "Incident Directive Swift Water", a two-page document, you're familiar with that document?-- I am familiar with the document.

At 3 paragraph (c) on the first page, we learn that, "Swift water can be defined as any water moving down a gradient and flowing at a speed in excess of two kilometres per hour"; is that right?-- That's correct.

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At 4.1(c), which over on page 2, it provides that QFRS level 1 technicians, looking at the second dot point, "will not undertake in-water rescues", is that right?-- That is correct.

And similarly in 4.2(c) also on that page, it provides that, "Under deployment conditions, a minimum of two level 2 swift water flood rescue - floodwater rescue technicians are to be mobilised with level 1 swift-water flood rescue" - "floodwater rescue technicians for support to all swift-water rescue incidents or to stand by at areas identified as risk"; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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Tell me, what is the status of this document?-- The status of the document?

Yes, is it - it's a directive from the Commissioner?-- That's correct.

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It's signed by the Commissioner?-- Yes.

It is, as its name suggests, a directive. Is compliance with this directive expected?-- It is. That paragraph 4.2(c) relates to deployment of swift-water resources so when we predeploy resources to areas in high demand periods, we'll deploy teams of two. So it doesn't relate to response based on pumps or initial response actions, it relates to deployment conditions.

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All right. The response issue, is that covered in 4.2(a), mobilisation?-- Yeah, that's correct.

All right. And that will occur as per the Fire Communication Centre Directives?-- Yes.

And regionally agreed mobilisation arrangements?-- Yes. 1

Are the regionally agreed arrangements those which are reflected in regional functional plans?-- And each region has a function plan, that's correct.

All right. I might show you by way of an example the south-eastern regional functional plan. While that's being shown to you, can I ask you, there are different levels of swift-water preparedness, is that right, within-----?-- Swift water - sorry? 10

Well, first of all, take a look at that document on page 11. There are levels of preparedness relevant to swift-water rescues?-- Regions provide a guidance on how they prepare. So there's normal day-to-day activities, normal conditions similar to today. If regions develop the policy, and this is an example of one of those policies, in relation to heightened weather conditions where they may bring up additional personnel, additional resources, based on the perceived risk so that, yeah, there are levels within local policy in the regional policies to that effect, yes. 20

All right. And if you turn back a page to page 10, there's a topic after the number 7 is "Staffing", "When the level of swift-water preparedness is elevated within the south-eastern region, a minimum of two level 2 swift-water technicians will be on duty manning swift-water vehicles at all times"; is that right?-- Yes, that's how I read it, yes. 30

All right. So that at least would seem to require presence of two swift-water technician for each swift-water vehicle at all times in any sort of situation of elevated preparedness; is that so?-- That's definitely what we're aiming for, yes.

Well, that's what you're aiming for. That's what's required, isn't it?-- That's what's required under this, yes.

Yes. All right. And I assume such plans exist for each region?-- They have - all regions have similar plans. 40

Yes?-- There may be variations between them, but all regions have plans, yes.

All right. Well, compliance with that plan will be expected at all times, wouldn't it?-- Yes, it would.

Okay. And you also refer to the, as we have discussed, the Firecoms directives. I think that's Exhibit 329. Just get a copy of that on the screen in front of you. And can you - can we look at page 2 and to the dot point "Despatch"? Can you read that?-- Yes, I can read that, yes. 50

Okay. And it's got, "Initial assignment, one pumper on turnout; one specialty rescue/rescue appliance on turnout"; is that right?-- That's correct.

And that's what's required to be despatched on - to a

swift-water rescue?-- Yes.

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Okay. So if we read that in conjunction with the regional functional plan or the swift-water rescue operational plan, does that not suggest that a minimum of two level 2 swift-water technicians are required to be despatched to a swift-water rescue incident?-- Under elevated conditions, yes.

Under elevated conditions, all right. And an elevated condition is, what, is that what we're looking at page 11? Are they the elevated conditions or is there some other definition of elevated condition?-- Yeah, it would be a level 2 or level 3 as indicated-----

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Okay?-- -----there in that staffing. So "Forecast adverse weather or a long-range forecast of wet weather."

All right. Okay. So level 2 or level 3 would be an elevated level of preparedness?-- That's correct.

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Okay. So if there was forecast wet weather at least, long or short-term, according to the written documents which are relevant to this question, it would suggest, wouldn't it, that a minimum of two level 2 swift-water technician are required to be involved in any swift-water rescue, at least as far as the written document goes?-- Yes.

You agree with that?-- Yes.

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That's not how it works in practice; is that right?-- No, that's the the position to man those vehicles that way, and that's the practice that should occur.

Well, that's the practice that should occur, but the suggestion is, as per your statement, that in fact there is no set number of level 2 technicians who are required to be despatched to a swift-water rescue, that it can be scaled up or down according to the nature of the incident; is that right?-- No, my statement says that we'll be responding in relation to the Fire Communication Centre Directive-----

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Yeah?-- -----and that those two vehicles will be responded. So I'm not saying that two personnel won't ultimately be on that vehicle at the time if it's elevated conditions.

Sorry, you will respond in accordance with the Firecoms directive which requires that two vehicles be despatched-----?-- That's correct.

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-----is that right?-- Yes.

And the plan requires that one of those vehicles have two level 2 technicians on it at all times, doesn't it?-- Yes, under those elevated conditions, yes.

Well, forecast wet weather, long or short-term?-- Yes.

So is that, in fact, the requirement, or is it that there is a more flexible approach that's adopted?-- No, it isn't the requirement. My statement alludes to that incidents can be resolved before those two people - those two level 2s arrive. They may well indeed be responded to the incident, but it can be resolved through the skill of the - and the scope of operations of the people prior to the arrival of those personnel.

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Well, that might be so, but I'm interested to know what the basic requirements are and whether they're being complied with. Now, I think we've agreed what the basic requirements as per the written documents seem to be, but against those documents can you just explain the protocol or the practical way in which those what seem to be requirements might be relaxed?-- They wouldn't be relaxed as a matter of practice. They would be carried out as a matter of practice. My statement was only in reference to the fact that although they responded, and in fact the - you may not need the capacity for two. That's the relationship in the statement that I made.

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So the distinction being between who is sent to one and who can actually carry it out?-- That's correct.

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The way in which it is carried out is a matter of individual discretion. Is that how it works?-- Within their scope of training, within their scope of experience and their knowledge and their risk assessment of the scene, that's the boundaries that they operate under.

But there should always be at least two levels 2s there whether or not they're used-----?-- Or responding, yes.

10

Or responding?-- Yes, yep.

Let's assume that the response gets to the incident?-- Yes.

Once they're there there is no rule as to who has to actually carry out the - as to how many are involved in the actual rescue itself?-- No, that's correct.

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I follow. Coming back to your statement, you speak to the number of resources that are available to meet the requirements for swift water rescue, paragraph 33?-- Yes.

Just by way of interpreting this, which I think you do in paragraph 34, you have the approved number of rescue technicians. Does that mean the number of level 2 rescue technicians who can be deployed at any one time in each of those regions?-- That's correct.

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And I think in paragraph 36 you note that that number has been determined according to a business case based on regional risk assessment?-- Yes. So those numbers are the target numbers. We - as you can see in the table, we are actually over in some areas.

Well, you're only over the level 2 requirement in the far northern region, aren't you?-- And northern region.

And northern. Northern has approved 22 and the number of technicians that are level 2 swift water qualified is 19?-- Yes, 19, yes, that's correct. The actual numbers of rescue technicians beyond - and I'm talking those five disciplines now, is that middle column.

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Yes?-- Yep.

So the approved number doesn't necessarily mean approved for level 2 qualification?-- Yes. So the approved number as designated there is the number that is targeted to achieve for each region in the-----

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Yes, basically-----?-- In the disciplines. The actual number can exceed that to a small extent as, you know, opportunities or training or known retirements or planning for that event. And the number of swift water technicians is indicative of the number of people that have completed swift water training as part of the package. And the difference between the number of

swift water technicians and the actual numbers can be - is related to where they are in their training cycle as well which I indicate in I think 34, paragraph 34. There is another 31 personnel planned training in July/August of this year which is our training cycle for swift water rescue.

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Yes, I see that, but can I just get some help. The approved number of rescue technicians - is a rescue technician trained in each of the five capabilities or disciplines?-- The aim is for those people to be trained in the five disciplines.

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Okay?-- Yes.

But they may not be?-- They may not all be, no.

And they may have either swift water 1 or 2?-- They'll all have swift water 1, being permanent urban personnel, but they'll have - as a minimum to be in the actual numbers, they'll have vertical, confined and trench rescue, which is the initial requirements to move onto either urban search and rescue or swift water rescue.

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It does seem that, for example though, Brisbane is fairly light on for the number of technicians who are level 2 qualified as compared with the approved number of rescue technicians allocated to the area?-- There is two factors in - related to that and that was that they had an increase in numbers from 56 to 86 and we have been over the last couple of cycles increasing that number. And as I speak about in paragraph 35, there is - we run a number of courses per year and there is obviously a limited number of positions that can be on each of those courses and that's part of the process of building capacity that we have been engaged in. And I think I relate some numbers there. In 2005 we had 56 level 2 swift water personnel and as of October last year we had 203, which demonstrates the commitment to grow the capacity up to those numbers that are indicated.

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Yes, I understand. Just before we move on to the question of the number of level 2s who are required to conduct a swift water rescue, is the content of your paragraph 49 reflected in some published documents, some document that's published to the members of the service?-- No. That's - what that is saying is, again, it's not-----

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I understand what it's saying?-- Yes.

I'm just asking whether it's - you can understand that, as we've established, it would seem that the published documents at least suggest that at least two level 2s should be dispatched to any given incident?-- Yes.

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And you can understand that the impression can be created that follows from that that two level 2s should be involved in any swift water rescue?-- Yes.

It does seem to be an impression that some members of the service have?-- Yes. So the impression is and the reason

level 2s are sent as part of an initial response is that the scope of operations of a level 1 is limited to shore-based or dry-----

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Sorry, yes, I can understand all of that?-- Yes.

What I am getting at is the confusion that might exist in the service as to what's actually required of them and what should be involved in a swift water rescue. Whether there should be two level 2 technicians taking part in it or whether they just have to be there, and you've made clear that the protocol, if you like, is as per what you've expressed in paragraph 49. I'm just wondering whether or how that is communicated to the actual members of the service?-- Through their training process, they're very clearly outlined exactly where their scope operates. So they don't need to wait to operate within their scope. So a level 1 response, it may be some time before a level 2 backup arrives so-----

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Sorry, the answer to my question is it's part of the training?-- It is part of their training.

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Part of a level 2 technician's training?-- Yes, and part of level 1's training to understand what their scope of operations is and how they can react in that response.

All right.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, before you go on, would this be a convenient time for the morning break?

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MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: We'll come back at five to.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.38 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 11.55 A.M.

STEPHEN ANTHONY SMITH, CONTINUING:

MR CALLAGHAN: Do you still have that incident directive there?-- Yes.

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Can I just get you to clarify exactly what or repeat perhaps - you probably said it perfectly clearly last time, but just the effect of 4.2(c)?-- 4.2(c) relates to deployments. So when we're pre-deploying teams, swift water teams into locations, we will send - that relates to that number of vehicle people. So you effectively have two people deployed into a township

that potentially never had a swift water capability before.

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How does that square with the last line which refers to "all swift water rescue incidents". You can't pre-deploy to an incident, surely?-- No, it's when - when they're deployed and then when they respond as - as part of that process. So when we deploy them into a township or a location, they'll go in and when they respond to an incident from that pre-deployment, that's the conditions they will respond in.

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I'm still not sure I follow, I'm sorry. Under deployment conditions - you say that should be read as pre-deployment?-- They're pre-deployed, yes. So they're deployed from special operations or from regional capacity into an area or a location to provide at a heightened risk through identified - a request from an LDMG or the like, a team is deployed in for a swift water response in that area and that group will be a minimum of two level 2s.

So under deployment conditions, that's only when you are being asked to send technicians to an area where they're not already operating; is that right?-- That's correct, yes.

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So if you are being asked to do that, you're to mobilise the minimum of two level 2s to all swift water rescue incidents?-- That's correct.

You can't possibly know how many incidents there are going to be though?-- No.

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So how many do you deploy?-- We deploy a capacity into an area as a preemptive capacity in that area and they respond to the taskings that they receive and they do that to the best of their capability at that point in time.

You addressed the topic of training between paragraphs 4 and 26 of your statement, but you're aware, aren't you, of the evidence that has been given here of station officers taking it on themselves to provide extra training in the lead-up to the wet season just passed?-- Yes, I am aware of some of those statements, yes.

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What was done, if anything, above and beyond what would ordinarily be done from October of last year, between October of last year and the flood events?-- A range of activities occur and which go through a cycle of preparedness for events. So it is continuous skills maintenance process. There is a course-----

Yes, sorry to interrupt you but I'm not interested in what's done continuously. I'm asking what was done, if anything, above and beyond that which is done continuously?-- Regionally there is - and I can't comment on what regions did specifically. From a state point of view, we had - over that period of time we established some additional equipment. We were involved in a swift water response forum, day forum, for personnel responding. And the day-to-day processes though are that built in to our systems are preparation for a summer wet

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season which is the core skills maintenance program, for level 1 program, and the ongoing annual requirement for our level 2 swift water operators to maintain their skill.

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So apart from the ongoing preparations that would happen, I take it, every wet season, there was some additional equipment and there was a forum; is that right?-- That's correct. That's from a state perspective. So the regions may well have done more than that in their own preparations.

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Well, I'm interested in, for example, people like Mr Stephenson and Mr Bland, who have given evidence, of which I'm sure you're no doubt aware, were there things happening in the way of additional training and resources for the wet season just passed of which they should have been aware but were apparently not?-- I don't - I don't believe there was anything that they should have been aware of more than their normal operational requirements, to do those skills maintenance and there is an expectation of our station officers that they are proactive in identifying areas of training or awareness that they enhance for the risks that they're facing at that point of time.

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Okay. Can I turn to the topic of equipment. You say that in respect of radios, most regions have purchased waterproof bags for those; is that correct?-- Most regions have purchased a number of those waterproof radio harnesses, yes.

To enhance the continuity of service in a swift water environment?-- That's correct.

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Which I take it you mean you keep them dry and keep them working; is that right?-- That's correct.

Is it such an issue or is there a problem with simply providing service members with waterproof radios?-- Waterproof radios are available. They - to varying degrees. We are currently working on a research and development project to provide swift water comms to our level 2 operators, in-helmet communications capability. So that's part of the ongoing development of - to enhance communications in that environment.

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Where is that at? Where is that research and development project at?-- We have done some field testing and we should have another full working system up and ready for field testing in Tully. We're due in Tully in June.

Is there a target date for completion of that project?-- My aim for that project is to have it in place for the next wet season.

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When you say that most regions have purchased something, is there - are there different budgets for these things according to the different region?-- Regions manage their own budgets in relation to expenditure for equipment or anything of that nature. My role is to provide, from a state perspective, standards and approved items of equipment and they - and

centralised purchasing and they provide an order to me and I provide it to them.

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On the topic of personal floatation devices, how are these allocated? What are the requirements for a swift water rescue team? What's the minimum number, if you like, that they're meant to have, meant to carry?-- The level 1 training vehicles, so the permanent urban appliances and the selected auxiliary stations that have level 1 training, the minimum kit that's provided on the appliance is two PFDs, two throw bags and a hose inflation kit, and two helmets suitable for water.

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I think some evidence that we heard on Tuesday suggested that there was a situation where in a given situation, there was no provision for a PFD being available for the person being rescued. With the allocation, if you like, of these things to various crews, that would seem to be a possibility that would arise from time to time?-- Yes, specialised vehicles have additional equipment onboard for that purpose but your standard pump appliance doesn't have additional equipment unless they use equipment that would be from people who are away from the three metre zone around a watercourse and then they could use those - that equipment as - for casualties.

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Are they a standard size, the PFDs?-- They're a standard PFD that we issue that has a very large range of person fit.

Do they incorporate or do they provide for small children?-- The - on the appliances there isn't speciality PFDs for children or infants. On speciality appliances, they are available. So some vehicles will have them depending on regional arrangements and what's been procured.

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That might vary according to how those things are administered; is that right?-- That's correct.

That's probably something that should be standard though, is it?-- There's certainly an advantage to have those on a specialist vehicle for that purpose, yes.

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All right. Can I take you to paragraph 28 of your statement in the second bullet point there, can you just explain what that means?-- Okay. So each - each level 2 technician, rescue technician, or swift water technician, is fitted out with a personal protective equipment required to operate in that environment. So they are fitted out with a wetsuit, booties, a throw bag, a PFD which is a fitted with a knife and strobe and a helmet. That provides a more - or greater capacity so they're not drawing from vehicles when they respond, they've got their own personal kit. In addition to that each region maintains rescue appliances at their strategic rescue stations which has an inventory of swift water equipment specific to their identified risk and needs within their region. And finally in addition to that, regions have additional caches of equipment for those high-risk periods or higher-risk periods that can be drawn on to increased capacity through the manning of additional vehicles, and State then has the capacity to provide support by way of equipment and personnel in a search capacity approach on request, and that equipment base is quite extensive and provides everything that operators require to operate and function in that environment.

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And was that additional State capacity deployed during January?-- We had - in January, we had equipment deployed across Queensland. Obviously, you know, 85 per cent of Queensland affected swift water rescue wasn't confined to the south-east corner of the State. We equipment deployed to a number of areas.

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Equipment from this additional State?-- From the State cache-----

Yes?-- -----teams to go with that equipment.

And who supervises that?-- I coordinate the deployment of those teams and equipment, and that is - a request comes from regions and it goes to our State Operation Coordination Centre, then it comes across to the special operations support centre which I was running at that point in time, and the personnel and equipment are prepared and deployed to the locations as requested.

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All right. Is that the same thing that you talk about in paragraph 52?-- That's correct.

All right. We are told that there's a comprehensive review of the swift water capability and service delivery underway; is that right?-- That is correct, yes.

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What is your contribution to that process?-- I am a member of that committee.

What aspects of that capability do you feel must be addressed by that review?-- There's a number of areas that from a review point of view that we're looking at, there's no limit to the scope on that review.

No, what aspects do you feel?-- I feel?

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Yes?-- I feel we need to look at our capacity for - our capacity in general, geographically, equipment wise, and where that sits in relation to the risk profile, knowing events that we have just experienced. We need to look at our swift water comms we have already spoken about, and-----

Sorry, which aspect of swift water comms?-- The follow-through of improving the swift water comms for our level 2 operators in helmet communications capability.

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Okay?-- And the - you know, the requirement we're also looking at the enhancement that a motorised boat capacity would deliver to the service. And I also think we need to look at the public education requirement. You know prior to the events of, you know, 10th of January we'd already lost, you know, over a dozen people in Queensland from water. So there's a public education requirement that we need to look at, how we engage in that space with other stakeholders.

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Well, can I just get you to pause there because that's a topic of interest. What do you have to say about how public education might be improved? I mean, we know there is some, and we know in spite of that these incidents still occur. What - what-----?-- I think there needs to be a consolidated approach to it so there's a common messaging. It's delivered in a timely manner so at appropriate times in the year and at various parts of the State to try to reduce it, and, you know, potentially when specific areas are identified there needs to be relationships either through Council authorities, asset owners in relation to signage and the like at high risk areas. I think they're avenues for us to look at to improve public's knowledge and understanding of the risks that they're undertaking and the flow-on effect of the risk that is then posed to rescuers having to respond and put themselves at risk to, you know, to intervene.

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Are you consulted - we know there is a public education program that does happen each - each summer. Are you consulted about that or-----?-- We did a joint public education program with Seqwater and Hannah's Foundation and we have supported that for the last two years around weir safety and general water safety. So that's the limit of my personal consultation. We have a community education unit that would be the - the lead in developing a public education program.

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All right. And finally, I think one issue which has arisen is the situation of rural and auxiliary firefighters not having sufficient, or any in some cases, swift water training. How hard is it to at least give people like that level 1 skills?-- One of the challenges you have is that our rural and auxiliary personnel who don't have that training have a high level of competency maintenance requirements to maintain the skillsets they have now. The more skillsets we provide people, the greater challenge that is for - for those people to maintain and then the demands on those people affect the retention of people in those communities and we need them in those

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communities.

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Sorry, what's involved in maintaining level 1?-- There's a - part of the Core Skills Program requires them to go out and refresh their - the skills or the techniques that are practised in level 1. So throw-bagging, you know, going through signalling and what the specific skillset for level 1, they have to go back and refresh that.

How often?-- It's - on the Core Skills Program, it's done twice a year, I believe, components of it.

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And, what, is that a day or more?-- It's broken up into various sections so they do different - like different periods at different times. Off the top of my head I don't recall the total numbers of hours that are involved.

Right. There might be some difficulties, I'm guessing, in providing that to regional areas?-- There is significant difficulties in achieving that for those reasons I gave previously. And the - one of the other elements is that that core or competency maintenance program is essential so people don't then go five, six years down the road and we go back into a drought situation, they have a belief that they have a skillset, and if they don't maintain it, then they'll be in a situation where they believe they have skills and they'll put themselves at far greater risk and the results of that could be serious.

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Mmm. There'd be some parts of the State, though, where you'd invariably have these sorts of risks every wet season though, so?-- And that's - part of the process is identifying - there is selected auxiliary stations in particular-----

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Yes?-- -----that currently have approval for level 1 training and they are based on the risk assessment of that region and based on the needs of that region, yes.

You have listed those in your statement?-- Yes, I have listed those in the statement.

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All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Can I just take you to your first bullet point in paragraph 28 where you say that each technician has their own personal protective equipment. We have heard some evidence that in the northern region that's not so, they depend on communal cache so that it's literally first in best dressed; is that right or not?-- The current situation is that all personnel now have now personal issue equipment. There was - the far northern region wasn't a hundred per cent complete with equipment prior to this summer event. All other regions were. So far northern regions has since addressed that issue and all personnel are now fully equipped.

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All right. Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: Sorry, I'll just tender the documents that I

have shown to the witness that haven't become evidence yet.

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COMMISSIONER: So what have we got?

MR CALLAGHAN: The incident directive.

COMMISSIONER: That will be 349.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 349"

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MR CALLAGHAN: And the regional plans.

COMMISSIONER: 350.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 350"

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Kent?

MR KENT: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Smith, I might just take you to paragraph 6 of your statement where you mention the often extreme and dynamic nature of these kinds of incidents and the personnel required must have sound judgment and be able to quickly get an appreciation of the scene and act decisively and appropriately. These incidents, by their nature, are perhaps at the extreme end of dynamic, aren't they? They can happen very quickly and escalate very quickly?-- They certainly can and they change very quickly.

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And the part of training of people particularly to swift water level 2 is being able to flexibly respond and assess things quickly and act accordingly?-- Yeah, they have a very high level of skill in assessing the scene, getting a scene appreciation very quickly and being able to make - be decisive in what they decide to do and how they decide to do it based on the risk profile that they're facing.

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All right. Can I now take you to paragraph 23 of your statement, which is on page 4, and you there mention the level 2 swift water training module and conducting training in the Tully River in North Queensland. I think you might have already mentioned that there's another program in mid-year?-- Yes.

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In Tully; is that right?-- That's correct, July/August, yes.

Now, I don't know if you're aware of it or not but have you heard of a resource in Sydney which is the Olympic kayaking

course at Penrith?-- Yes.

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Has any consideration been given to attempting to access that for this kind of training?-- I think the range of exposure that you get on the Tully River far exceeds what you can achieve at the Penrith Aquatic Centre in relation to the sheer number of scenarios, types of environments we can put them in. It provides a far more realistic venue to challenge people and part of the course is, and very deliberately, that the course is challenging. We don't want to be in a position where we're putting out in the field that don't have the skillset to be able to perform at the level in the environment that we require them to operate in. And the Tully River is an exceptional facility for doing that.

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But you'd agree with me it's a less controlled environment though?-- Certainly, it's a less controlled environment and on the Tully River there's a number of variety of locations and we take a very staged approach to how we manage training in that environment. So there's section of the river where we train that are lower risk than other areas and we train in those areas for a period of time until we're confident of the level that we're functioning at with the - in relation to participants on the course before we move to areas that require a greater skillset. And, you know, in specific locations - there's an area on the Tully River call the lava flow and by nature it is a lava flow. So the foot entrapment opportunities, which is the risk in natural flow rivers, are minimised in that area.

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In any case, you have looked at the Penrith resource, have you, and objective-----?-- I'm very aware of the Penrith facility, yes.

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You've been asked about already, and I'm looking at paragraph 27 of your statement on page 5, the waterproof bags and I think you said that they're available in some regions apparently; correct?-- Yeah, available to every region, yes.

Well, available to and the availability has been taken up in some regions but not all?-- The last region that I was aware that did not have them has purchased them since.

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Was that Toowoomba?-- That was Toowoomba.

So there weren't any in Toowoomba on the 10th of January, were there?-- Not to my knowledge, no.

All right. You mention in paragraph 32 that there's current investigation of the possible use of motorised vessels; correct?-- That's correct.

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And is that something that as far as you can see or your personally concerned would be a good idea?-- I am supportive of the - of that component and have been working on that project, yes.

And how far is that being from rolled out, do you know?--

It's at the submission stage now, so approval would - it's an approval requirement that it has to go through before any timelines for implication - implementation can be determined.

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Does that mean that you don't know when it's likely to happen?-- No, I can't tell you when it's going to be implemented. I can't tell you that it's going to be approved.

All right.

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COMMISSIONER: Who has to do the approval?-- I'll make - a submission will go up through the Deputy Commissioner and approval would come back through the Deputy Commissioner in relation to that capacity.

Thank you.

MR KENT: I should ask you this in relation to that proposal. Do the motors on those vessels have guarded propellers?-- The submission certainly includes the use of guards on our - on any motorised vessel that we go down, yes.

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Very well. In relation to - you deal on page 6 of your statement with numbers of staff, numbers of technicians and, in particular, level 2 swift water qualified technicians. As far as you're concerned, is there any ideal limit on the number of swift water technicians?-- Look, the numbers that have been indicated are based on the risk assessment in those regions. So the ideal number of those people is having people that are suitably and are able and capable of achieving the standards that we require in those areas and I think they're based on the current way we operate. So I think - they're part of the review process, that we will look at those numbers and make sure that they're still appropriate based on what we have experienced over the last - over that period of time to make sure that those numbers are still appropriate and that's part of the review process that we're involved in currently.

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And there's another intake in the middle of the year?-- Yes, so those - those individuals that are completing swift water in July/August have already completed vertical, confined and trench. So they sit in where - the actual number in the middle and will move on to swift water.

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As you say, the assessment or the determination of the number to be trained turns on a business case based on regional risk assessment, that's the way you've put it?-- That's correct, it's based on a regional risk assessment. And if you look at the numbers that we actually have in Queensland, it's more than the combined capacity for the rest of the fire services in Australia, so it's a significant capacity.

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That might be right, Mr Smith, but there might be an exponentially larger need in Queensland, mightn't there? So comparing us to South Australia doesn't help, does it?-- That's right, and those numbers have been identified based on those risk assessments.

In relation to the risk assessment, who does the risk assessment?-- It's the responsibility of the region to determine their own risk profile and what resources they need. 1

And when you say the region, who in the region?-- The Assistant Commissioner in each region.

And do you know if the practice is that the Assistant Commissioner receives input from people throughout the service in making that risk assessment?-- The - the exact process that each region follows is at the discretion of the Assistant Commissioner. 10

I see?-- So I can't really comment on how they would - they individually act.

Can I suggest this to you: would it be a reasonable thing for an Assistant Commissioner making that kind of a determination to seek input from his local qualified SWT 2s?-- I would certainly believe that there would be a consultative process involved in that decision making process, yes. 20

Because they're the experts in that field, aren't they?-- They are.

Now, I want to again take you back to paragraph 49, which is on page 8, and you mention there the dynamic nature of rescue jobs, and my learned friend Mr Callaghan has taken you through the written documents which seem to suggest a certain number of personnel involved in these swift water incidents, don't they? That's what the written documents do?-- Yes, they do. 30

And I understand your evidence when he was asking you questions, you were saying that there has to be a degree of flexibility and that's part of their training?-- A degree of flexibility in how they operate not in how they respond.

How about numbers?-- The numbers - the response will be based on the - that fire centre directive in relation to a pump and a special will be responded to it. 40

You're not saying, are you, that no-one is going to get sent to a swift water incident unless there's a total of six, including two swift water technician available? You're not saying that?-- No. There may well be - to get two swift water technicians on - to an incident, it may well be that you need more resources than two vehicles responding. So the - by nature, you might have the closest or local pump responding with four level 1s onboard and then you may need another couple of appliances to get to, you know, that situation. So the initial response is a special and a - and a pump. 50

And did I understand you to say that there's a directive suggesting that specialised appliances should have two SWT 2s on them, there should be two on the appliance?-- In - under the south east region plan, which is a regional plan and is that - specific to that region, in those elevated conditions that's what that document indicates. However, from my

position, I'm a State role, I didn't develop that documentation, but that is what the document indicates, yes.

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And, indeed, the document in that sense is somewhat utopian, isn't it? You know what I mean by that; it never happens in practice, correct?-- In elevated weather conditions, it would be a requirement of the Assistant Commissioner that is met, yes.

Are you aware of what was happening in Toowoomba on the 10th of January?-- Toowoomba is in south west region. It's a different - it would be a different document. It maybe different, it maybe the same. I can't comment on-----

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So you might not be bound by that plan?-- No, that's the south east region plan which doesn't include Toowoomba.

You don't know of any evidence that suggests that any appliance being utilised in Toowoomba on the 10th of January had two level 2s on it?-- I can't comment about the rostering for that day. I'm not aware of it.

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When you speak of the need in these dynamic circumstances for some flexibility, and the way you put it is, "There are many circumstances where a swift water operation can be safely undertaken with less than the number of resources in the directive", that's the way you express it; correct?-- In an operational sense. I'm not saying that they're responding, but I'm saying it can be resolved before the six arrive on scene. There's potential in some instances, based on the nature of the incident, that incident could be resolved prior to arrival of the six people and the two vehicle.

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And let's be brutally frank, Mr Smith: maybe has to be before someone else gets there; correct?-- Indeed, sometimes it does, yes.

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So the officers that respond are caught at times between the pressures of the dictates of these directives versus the urgent need for immediate action?-- There is a balance based on their - their training and their scope that they can open within and remain able to perform their duties and safe. So we give them a skill set where they can intervene up to a point. There are some instances where it is beyond their scope of operations or ability to perform that rescue and at that point, then it's not going to be an easy decision but there is times when those decisions have to be made and those decisions at times have to be made by level 2s - 2 based on what they're facing from the point of view of an operational risk profile.

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Part of the pressures of course that these officers face at such a scene is not just the urgent need to rescue someone who might be in danger of dying but also a number of other members of the public present?-- They are - these incidents are complex incidents as are most emergency incidents you attend. By nature they're emergency incidents. And the - dealing with those aspects of an incident are part and parcel of the training and daily response that our officers have to perform and dealing with members of the public and what they may or may not do is one of those issues that is not necessarily the easiest thing to do but it is part and parcel of that response.

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I'm sure you're not really disagreeing with me that those circumstances together can put officers on the scene under enormous pressure?-- They can be challenging, yes.

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Between conflicting considerations?-- Challenging circumstances, yes.

I just want to clarify if I can, I know you have been asked about this but the topic of juvenile PFDs?-- Yes.

Are they carried generally, juvenile PFDs?-- On standard appliances, no. On specialist appliances, so the rescue appliances, most regions have procured them, to the best of my knowledge most regions now have them, and they are - they're a part of the state kits that we deploy with.

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Are you able to say how widely they are available through the regions?-- No, I can't recall the exact - how extensive they are out there.

I'm sure you'd agree with me that, ideally, they should be as widely available as possible?-- They certainly provide a - an appropriate tool in certain - you know, when you're dealing with children, infants, yes.

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It can be more an appropriate. It could be essential, couldn't it?-- They are - they are the ideal tool, yes, they are.

You can have a circumstance otherwise where attempting to put a small child in an adult device, the child can float out of

the device, not be retained within the device?-- Yes, that's correct.

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What about thermal imaging equipment? Has that been considered at all in the context of swift water?-- Yes, thermal - thermal imaging and the use of it is - it's carried on a lot of appliances and I can't comment on exactly how many appliances and their location but thermal imaging is widely used in the service, and it is a tool that during the training the use of it is well explained and thermal imaging can be used in that environment.

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It can be of enormous assistance. For example, a car is either floating down a creek or trapped within a creek and you can't visually see if there is someone inside but with thermal imaging you can tell if there is someone inside of it?-- Thermal imaging won't pass through glass. So depending on the nature of the vehicle you're looking at it is whether - how effective it will be, whether it is effective at all.

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You're not saying it wouldn't help?-- It is another tool that you can use. It's an assistance, yes.

Now, I just have to ask you about this observation from your statement. Paragraph 55, which is on page 10, you have chosen to respond to something that Mr Burrows said to the investigators about the knot on the line coming undone. You know about that?-- I'm aware of that, yes.

This is an item from a sealed throw bag or a sealed rope that comes in a bag?-- It comes in a throw bag, yes.

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Yes?-- My understanding from the statement that I read was that it was - had come straight from the manufacturer. So it hadn't gone through an acceptance test; it hadn't been checked for operational use; it wasn't off an operational vehicle. It was part of the additional cache of equipment that was at the station.

Yes. Coming from a manufacturer, that meant that it came from someone that the - the manufacturer, someone in their factory, tied up this rope in the knot that we're talking about, right?-- Yeah, it comes - it doesn't come in an operational condition from the manufacturer. It comes with the bag and the length of line required for the bag tied into it so they don't separate, and then they need to be commissioned at the station level, tied up correctly and prepared for response. And as an operator, it's - you check your own equipment. It's your responsibility to make sure that that piece of equipment is operational and it is good practice, indeed, that you not only do that but you use the throw line prior to going out into the field. A line that you pick up out of a truck - myself, personally, if I picked a line up out of a truck I'll throw that line first because I don't know who has stacked that line and whether they've done it correctly and whether it will deploy correctly. So, by nature, you need to do it ensure yourself to ensure that when you do need it which is often a very short period of time and there is no time to-----

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There is no time to check it, let's be frank, Mr Smith?-- Mr Burrows had time, from his statement indeed, that he was waiting around for his partner, subsequent partner to arrive before he deployed any - well had time to check that equipment.

You weren't there, were you?-- No, I wasn't there.

In relation to - I think you said during that answer that the knot is tied into the equipment in the station; is that right?-- Prior to it being used, yes. 10

Yes. That person who is tying the knot in the station isn't under pressure for time, are they?-- No.

They have time to do it right?-- That's correct.

Would you be critical of them for apparently not doing it right?-- My understanding is it was still in the bag from the manufacturer. It hadn't been prepared for operations and, indeed, by taking it, it needed to be prepared for operations. 20

You don't understand Mr Burrows to be saying that he tied this not himself, do you?-- No.

Someone else did it before him?-- That's correct.

Someone who wasn't at the scene of an incident trying to save lives?-- That's correct. 30

Someone who had time to do it right?-- Not - look, I think there's probably two things there. I think the fact remains that it was - it was supplied in a condition at the station and it needed to be made in an operational state.

Yes?-- From Mr Burrows' statement, from what I took from Mr Burrows statement, he had time before Peter McCarrom - I think Peter McCarrom - arrived to check that equipment and be prepared to go out to the scene before he was placed in a position where he was facing the imminent requirement to use that piece of equipment. It takes very little time to look at a knot and determine whether it is tied correctly. It is part of level 1 training to decide whether a knot is tied quite easily. It takes a very short period of time to correct that knot. 40

I understand that you seem to be wanting to have a lash at Mr Burrows. I am just pointing out someone else seems to have had some responsibility here. Do you agree or not?-- No, I don't agree with that, no. 50

So whoever ties the knot in the station, they can do whatever they like; is that right? Is that how it works?-- No. No, the person in the station hadn't tied the knot. From my understanding, that piece of equipment had been provided directly from the manufacturer, a brand-new throw bag, and it was in the condition as delivered from the manufacturer where

there is a length of line inside a bag to make up a throw bag for operational use. 1

I think we are just going round in circles here, Mr Smith. Yes, nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran. 10

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Smith, just that last point, is the reason you have commented on that issue because Mr Burrows raised it in his interview with the Commission staff?-- That's correct, and it indicates that there was some fault with that equipment.

At the level, as you understand from what he said about it, that is Mr Burrows, some fault at the source, the manufacturer's level. It hadn't been commissioned for use by the fire service?-- That's correct. 20

You'd expect that if it had been commissioned, an appropriate knot would have held and would have been able to be used for the purpose?-- That's correct, yes.

Even if it had been commissioned, if a fire officer is going to use a throw bag, is it your view that it is still prudent to visually, at least, check the knot before you throw the bag?-- It's certainly prudent and part of the training. It's something that in my personal experience, that's what you do. You check your equipment because it is your final line of defence. So, yes, you check it before you use it. 30

Now, could I take you to - back to paragraph 27 of your statement, you talk about equipment, and in the third dot point you talk about additional swift water rescue equipment that can be deployed. That's the state's store, is it?-- That's correct, yes. 40

Where is that equipment held?-- The equipment is based at the special operations centre at Cannon Hill in Brisbane.

So what is the procedure? Is there a procedure in place for the rapid deployment of equipment from that store at Cannon Hill?-- Requests from regions comes through to our State Operations Coordination Centre and that is then relayed to the Special Operations Support Centre at Cannon Hill and then that equipment is dispatched by the most - well, the faster means that we can deliver it to the location that it's been requested at. 50

Can I take you forward to paragraph 51 where you talk again about equipment and you talk about each appliance being appropriately equipped. You say this is set-off by additional equipment held by regions at strategic locations for deployment. So does each region have a store of further

equipment available for use as well?-- Each region has an additional capacity of equipment over and above what they have on the specialist appliance for those periods of high demand.

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Do you know where those caches of equipment are located? Is it-----?-- Each - each region has them in different locations so I can't comment specifically on those regions, but they're placed in positions where they can be best utilised within the region based on their risk assessment.

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Well, that's all I have, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: May Mr Smith be excused.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Smith, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call John Gresty.

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JOHN FREDERICK WILLIAM GRESTDY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- John Frederick William Gresty. I'm a fire officer in the south-east region of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Gresty, you have prepared a 10-page statement for the purposes of this Commission?-- Is that correct?-- That's correct.

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A copy is being shown to you now. That's your statement?-- Yes, it is.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 351.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 351"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Gresty, you have been following the course of the evidence before the Commission on Tuesday and today and you're aware that Mr Bland gave evidence about being part of a team which was dispatched to Emerald?-- Yes, I am aware of that.

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And you will recall that he gave evidence about assisting in community recovery out there?-- In Emerald itself?

Yes?-- I have some recollection of his evidence with respect to that.

It may have been in his statement but, in any case, the suggestion is, to put it in broad terms, that he was assisting in community recovery, hosing down houses and the like, whilst he was hearing increasing reports of the need for swift water rescue in other parts of Queensland and what I am seeking from you is a comment on the appropriateness of swift water technicians being used for such purposes as hosing down houses?-- The appropriateness - obviously it is not the best use of that particular resource. However, if the particular operative is in that area and there's a community need to provide that service, I don't see any real reason why they - he wouldn't be used or they wouldn't be used for that purpose.

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That's probably right, subject to competing demands, and the suggestion is that in January there were competing demands where the services of swift water technicians might have been better deployed. Do you have any response to that?-- I understand that there may have been - there may have been competing uses for the resources but I am not sure of specifically what you're talking about there.

Look, I don't want to bog down too much in specifics, although we can descend to them if we have to, but the next point I wanted to make in general terms relates to the evidence of Mr Stephenson, who was here on Tuesday?-- Yes.

Again, I don't want to oversimplify it but, in essence, it seems to have been that he was urgently and persistently requesting additional staff from a very early time on the 10th of January?-- I understand that that's his statement, yes.

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Yes. Indeed, he made contact with you, which seems to have been a most unusual sort of line of communication?-- I read Mr Stephenson's statement and while I will not say that that conversation didn't occur, I have absolutely - had no recollection of having that discussion with Mr Stephenson.

Because he says that at the very least, and I'd suggest he'd say to your credit, you didn't tell him to go away. You did facilitate that extra staff member for him. You don't recall doing that?-- To put that into - into perspective, there was a number of things that occurred on the morning of the 10th. One of those issues was the - looking at the resources that may be required for that day and I suppose what I'm saying is irrespective of any discussion that may have occurred with Mr Stephenson or not, the end result was the same. And particularly, given that we were - at regional headquarters we were already looking at issues with respect to bringing in additional resources.

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Look, is it this simple, that Mr Stephenson and perhaps others like him were urgently drawing attention to the need for extra staff that day and that-----?-- He - sorry.

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-----extra staff was in fact mobilised; it is just a question of timing and perception as to when these things happened and whether they happened quickly enough?-- The additional resources were - there was a direction given to bring in additional resources on or around about 8.30 that morning.

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Which leads me to the topic of communication and the passing of information. It would seem that on that day, on the basis of some weather information that was known to Firecoms, that the Firecoms staff was increased; is that right?-- The South Eastern Region Fire Communications staff were increased in the afternoon of the 10th.

And that was on the basis of the weather information that was being received?-- It was on the basis of the fire communications manager determining that the work - the call rates and potentially, although I can't speak for him, potentially the possibility of the weather deteriorating. However, it was already raining.

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You're not aware of any specific weather or meteorological information which led to that step being taken?-- Not specifically, no.

Are you aware of any specific communication that was issued to fire and rescue stations or rural fire brigades as to changing weather conditions?-- I believe that there was - I believe that there was a - some communication that went out during the day. 1

You don't have any specific knowledge of that?-- No, I don't.

Could I turn then to the situation at Gatton. You were present there on the 10th; is that correct?-- That's correct. 10

And again, without rehearsing all that's been said, Mr Stephenson makes the point that senior management was out of the ICC I think he said for an hour or so or, if he didn't put a time on it, for an extended period anyway while important decisions had to be made by him. Perhaps the best way to do it is for you to just explain the sorts of competing demands that were on you and others in senior positions whilst you were at the ICC on that day?-- Okay. By way of clarification, at the point in time that Mr Stephenson was talking about, I wasn't in the ICC or I'm perhaps not the officer in charge that he is referring to. The incident controller at that location was - was not myself. My primary role in the Gatton location was to take up with the Local Disaster Management Group and provide advice to them as to the availability of QFRS resources that could be made available to the council and to the police during that - during the incident. 20

That does clarify your position?-- Yes. 30

But I'm asking you to respond, I suppose, on behalf of the senior management who might have been absent for various periods?-- Yes, certainly.

I'm sure there were competing demands on their time and-----?-- Certainly, there would have been and while I can't comment specifically about why they may have not been in the room at that particular time, the direction that was provided to the incident controller on arrival to Gatton from myself was to establish the ICC and then identify exactly what appliances and personnel we had in what locations over our area of operations. I understand that - so that time, obviously, would be particularly busy for that group of people and I understand that there may have been a very valid reason for them to - for the incident controller to be out of the room on a teleconference or whatever it might have been, and I don't know what the purpose was, to be able to provide advice perhaps upwards, or it might have been he may have been speaking to one of the control points. I can't answer that because that wasn't my position. 40 50

Were you speaking-----?-- However, can I just say though that in the initial instance of establishing an ICC, there is a massive amount of information that needs to be gathered, interpreted and then start to commence to develop - to develop plans. Like, my understanding is that at the time when - when this occurred, it was still relatively early in the

establishment of the ICC.

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Would those sorts of things though take someone like Incident Controller Humphreys out of the centre itself though? Wouldn't they ordinarily stay in the centre but for, perhaps, the need to participate in a teleconference with other QFRS management?-- Generally - once again, it depends on where the teleconference might be occurring. For the Gatton situation, we were using the area command office which is situated diagonally opposite where the fire station is. He may very well have been there, or it might be that he might not have just been in that individual room where that operations officer was located at the time.

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Can I take you to paragraph 59 of your statement. You make a point there that in a situation - in a disaster management situation, the central coordination function sits with the LDCC. In a situation such as that which obtained in Gatton on the 10th, the demands on the LDCC and the LDMG were obviously extraordinary?-- Without a doubt.

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I suppose I am interested in your take on what the situation is or how things work when communication between QFRS or any agency and the LDCC is difficult or impossible for any reason?-- I suppose that I could divide that into two sections. In the response phase where we are receiving requests for immediate assistance, it would be fair to say that where those calls were arriving to the fire service by triple 0 calls, for instance, direct communication to the LDCC is - wouldn't be that critical. However, where the LDCC holds information and needs to pass that to the fire service, well, then that link of communication is critical, yes.

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Yes, so what happens if the LDCC is taken out of action or incapable for any reason?-- Well, if the LDCC is not - is not operating, well then the information obviously wouldn't be passed to the relevant agency that needed to have that information passed to it.

Mmm?-- I'm not quite sure I clearly understand-----

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I'm just interested in your suggestions, if you like, as to how this sort of situation might be dealt with?-- Well, in the Gatton situation, proactive action by the agencies who are part of the LDMG is absolutely critical in the sense that each agency should be provided a liaison officer as an absolute minimum into the LDCC so that any requests for support from the response agencies can be - can be passed to that person and then passed directly to the controlling - wherever the controlling location is for the incident. In which case, and from the fire service point of view, we had a liaison officer located within the LDCC at Gatton I would say almost continuously for a number of days.

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We've just heard from Mr Smith and we know that there's a review of the swift water rescue capability underway, and may not be an area in which you have any speciality, I don't know, but do you have any view as to the aspects of that capability

which you would like to see addressed by that review?--
Within south-eastern region, the technical rescue coordinator reports directly to me and our technical rescue coordinator has been moving through the region, consulting with the operatives about outcomes that should be required from - not just in a swift water sense but across the full gambit of skills within the technical rescue. That report is due back to our Assistant Commissioner by the end of this month. And while I haven't had any in-depth conversation with our technical rescue coordinator, he has advised me that there are - there will be some recommendations that come out of that work that he has been working on. I'm not aware-----

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COMMISSIONER: I think you're being asked what you thought?--
Oh, sorry.

Is that right, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, I was, but I'm guessing that what you think will be informed by that report?-- Well, the reality is I'm not a specialist in technical rescue.

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No, okay, and the quick way to deal with this might be to say there shouldn't be any difficulty with providing the Commission with a copy of that report at the end of the month?-- No, not at all.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

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MR KENT: Thank you, your Honour. Can I just ask you about a couple of broad concepts. When these incidents unfold and there's an incident control centre setup, there is an officer sort of in charge on the scene I suppose, if I put it that way?-- Yes

Is that right?-- In the ICC itself?

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In the ICC?-- Yes, there is only one person in charge and that's the incident controller.

In relation to that person and, indeed, other supervisors that might be under them, for a swift water event do you think it is an advantage for all of those kinds of people to have training in swift water capabilities?-- From a - from a management point of view?

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From a management point of view so that they have an understanding, you see?-- I think it would be fair to say that they have an advantage but certainly not essential.

Okay.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent, how long do you think you'll be? If

it is only a couple of minutes we might push on, depending on Mr MacSporran too.

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MR KENT: I'll only be a couple of minutes.

COMMISSIONER: What about you, Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I will be five minutes, I expect, depending on what Mr Kent does but I wouldn't be too long.

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COMMISSIONER: We might push on I think, thanks.

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MR KENT: In relation to the incident unfolding on the 10th, as I understand it you're at the Gatton ICC?-- At the commencement of the day?

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Yes?-- I was at regional headquarters at Beenleigh, which is where our Regional Operations Coordination Centre is located. And then in the afternoon, as a consequence of the unfolding circumstances, I moved forward to Gatton, yes.

And did you ever go to Toowoomba?-- I - I attended - it's in my statement. I went to Toowoomba in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

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Yes?-- Yes, I did.

And you would have gone to the Incident Control Centre there in Toowoomba?-- Yes, I did.

Which is at - I'm not sure what these initials are but it's called the ROCC?-- Regional Operations Coordination Centre, yes.

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Is it possible in the Toowoomba area to set up an ICC at the Highlands Fire Station?-- Oh, I have no-----

Highfield, sorry?-- My area of operation is the south-eastern region. It's not appropriate for me to comment about it. It's not familiar with the Highlands location.

I was just interested in exploring that with you, that's all right. Yes, nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Gresty, in relation to the early hours of the 10th of January, you had discussions about deploying extra swift water rescue staff to meet what may have been an incident developing; is that so?-- That's correct.

Did you deploy all of the available resources that were on hand?-- In the morning, into the morning-----

Yes?-- What actually occurred there is I had a discussion with my duty manager of operations and we - - I determined - sorry, I should qualify something first. I had a discussion at around 8.30 that morning with Assistant Commissioner Tom Dawson. Mr Dawson indicated to me that there would be potential issues - significant problems in being able to traverse the Toowoomba Range and where the south-eastern region would normally be able to rely on resources coming from Toowoomba down the Range, that we would not be able to rely on

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that service being able to be provided. As a consequence - that was around about 8.30. As a consequence of that, it only supported what we had already been discussing at regional headquarters, I gave a direction that - that all - all of our three technical rescue vehicles were crewed with swift water rescue staff and that two additional swift water rescue appliances be equipped and manned that morning.

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COMMISSIONER: So was that all available resources or not?-- Well, I suppose that's all available resources at that point in time, yes. We - as the day progressed, there were additional staff called in, and there were additional specialist rescue resources sourced through from Brisbane region out of Cannon Hill and a bit later in the day from Roma Street station.

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MR MacSPORRAN: As part of that early exercise you moved - or directed that an appliance be moved from Beenleigh to Ipswich?-- That's correct.

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And from Robina to Beenleigh?-- Initially it was Robina to Helensvale, and then moved to Beenleigh. Plus an additional - the additional appliance that was being brought up for duty to go from Ipswich to standby at Gatton.

And later you've said additional appliances were deployed as the situation escalated?-- That's correct.

Now, just to make it clear when you spoke to Tom Dawson, he's the Assistant Commissioner for the south-west region?-- That's correct.

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And that the boundary of south-west and south-east is basically at the bottom of the Toowoomba Range so far as that locality is concerned?-- Basically the Range, yes. The Council boundary.

And his concern and your concern was that if a situation developed south of that area, you wouldn't have the advantage because of the conditions of the Toowoomba appliances coming Crown the Range and assisting?-- Yes, that would be east of that location.

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East?-- Yes.

Yes. Now, can I ask you about the ICC. Does it, when it's set, up routinely operate on a separate radio network to Firecoms?-- The - generally the ICC would not communicate with Firecom via radio, but - but - and generally the area of operations would be supported by a separate radio frequency which is used from the ICC to the vehicles in the field.

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And is that so that there is more direct contact, communication between the ICC and the appliances?-- Yes, it is for that purpose, but it also significantly - significantly takes the - the radio workload off - off Firecom for non-essential information that can be dealt with at an ICC level.

That communication on the separate channel - that's a VHF channel by the way is it?-- That's correct, yes.

That's done on a separate radio to Firecoms radio, is it?-- That's correct.

And I assume that the appliances, whilst they're in direct contact on that VHF channel with the ICC, they also were able to monitor the Firecoms transmission on a separate in-vehicle radio?-- Yes, and generally that would be expected that that would occur.

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Now, in this event, there were two ICCs, one at Gatton and one at Ipswich?-- That's correct.

Was - were there defined boundaries between those two ICCs area?-- The - on around about, as I recall, midnight on Tuesday there was an administrative boundary established between the - with discussion between the two incident controllers between - between the two - the two ICCs, yes, but it was only an administrative boundary.

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Can you just explain that briefly if you could?-- Yes.

Why is it necessary to have an administrative boundary between the ICCs?-- One of the significant responsibilities of an ICC is reporting back to the ROCC, and also to clearly identify if a particular incident occurred in an area of whose area of responsibility that would be. So it's - from an administrative point of view it is important that - that we have a boundary between the two of them so we know who's responsible. That-----

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That's to be distinguished, is it not, from operational considerations between ICCs?-- That's correct. We - we don't have operational boundaries between ICCs. Appliances, or fire trucks, can move - can move across those as they're required or as they're directed to.

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So if there's an appliance in the - within the administrative boundary of the Gatton ICC that might be required to assist in the Ipswich ICC, that can be achieved operationally, can it?-- Yes. Well, by two different methods really. If they were - if they'd been to the Gatton ICC and received their briefing and understood what the communications plan was, they would be monitoring the ICC VHF frequency in this particular case, but also supporting that they would also be monitoring the UHF frequency back to our fire communications.

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All right. Yes, thank you, that's all I have.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms O'Gorman.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: May Mr Gresty be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks, Mr Gresty, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

COMMISSIONER: And we'll adjourn until 2.30.

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THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 1.08 P.M. TILL 2.30 P.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.29 P.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I call Phillip O'Driscoll. Madam Commissioner, this evidence will be taken by telephone.

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PHILIP GREGORY O'DRISCOLL, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED VIA TELEPHONE LINK:

MS WILSON: Mr O'Driscoll, my name is Elizabeth Wilson and I'm a Council Assisting in the Floods Inquiry?-- Hi, Elizabeth.

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I'm just going to ask you some questions. Is your full name Philip Gregory O'Driscoll?-- Yes.

And you're a helicopter pilot?-- Yes.

And you own and operate an aviation business from the Northern Territory?-- Yes.

You've done a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

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You have signed that statement?-- I did.

Okay. Now, have you got that statement before you?-- No, I don't, that I know of.

That statement is six pages long?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 352.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 352"

MS WILSON: If I could take you through - that is your evidence, Mr O'Driscoll, but there's just a couple of matters that I could take you to?-- Yes.

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Okay. Now, your helicopter business that you operate, you have a bell helicopter which is capable of transporting one and a-half tones in payload?-- That's correct.

And you don't only operate it in the Northern Territory, you have also been doing some work in the Mackay area since

December 2010?-- Yes.

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And that's assisting a company called Sky-Ag with a distribution of fertiliser?-- That's correct.

And January 2011 as you're contracting for Sky-Ag, Sky-Ag was doing - was contracted to assist with the flood response by Independent Aviation?-- Yes.

And they were the company you say the Queensland Government used to locate suitable aircraft and helicopters for Government contracting tasks?-- That's correct.

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And during the flood events, you were tasked to do jobs in relation to the flood event?-- Yes, that's correct.

Okay. And at paragraph 8 one of the issues, and it seems to be one of the central issues of your statement, is that you found it hard to operate without being able to call or receive information directly to or from EMQ?-- Yes.

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So-----?-- Sorry, keep going.

Who were you getting your instructions from?-- I was getting it through Independent - coming down the chain through - from EMQ through Independent and then direct to me on the flight line.

And do you think it would have been more efficient if you could get those instructions from EMQ?-- Absolutely. I've worked for the RFS, a very competent organisation, and you'd get direction instructions, it's the way it's structured. From my side it was quite confusing and distressing in some situations.

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Okay. Your recommendations are contained at the end of the - end of your statement at paragraph 19?-- Yes.

And the first recommendation is, "To give direct points of contact to EMQ to minimise confusion and increase efficiency of these resources"?-- Yes, to say - sorry?

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Sorry. And you have given examples in your statement about how it would have been better if you could contact EMQ and get tasked the jobs from them?-- Absolutely. Yes, if I was to have the use of that way of contacting, just the supply of information up and down the chain was very restrictive and frustrating.

Okay?-- There was a lot of time lost and - in areas that wasn't necessary to if we could have got a direct - sort of a direct link.

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Okay. And one of those examples you give is where on the 12th of January you heard a police - a policeman requesting assistance on the helicopter radio?-- Yes, policeman requesting assistance on the - on the radio, yeah.

And you couldn't be tasked on that job until you had been

instructed by EM - by Independent Aviation?-- We couldn't go for a job until we had passed and that came down via - via Independent from EMQ or RFS.

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Okay. Thank you, Mr O'Driscoll, they're the only questions I have of you. Some other Council may ask you some questions?-- Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Just hold on, Mr O'Driscoll, and we'll see if there are any questions. Mr Kent?

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MR KENT: I have no questions of this witness, thank you, your Honour.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: No questions, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Mr O'Driscoll?-- Right.

We can end the connection, and thank you for your time.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Peter Beauchamp.

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PETER JAMES BEAUCHAMP, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could, you tell the Commission your full name and your occupation, please?-- Peter James Beauchamp. Assistant Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Beauchamp, you have prepared a 21-page statement for the Commission; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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I'll show you a copy of that now. That's your statement?-- That's correct.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 353.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 353"

MR CALLAGHAN: And Mr Beauchamp, you're also aware of the evidence which was given to the Commission on Tuesday by a number of fire service staff?-- I am aware of that evidence.

You're familiar, for example, with the evidence of witnesses like Mr Stephenson and Mr Bland who at least had the perception that you - or that the preparation by QFRS for the wet season just past was insufficient, that they had to take it upon themselves to do additional preparation. You're familiar at least with that - with the effect of that evidence?-- I am aware of their statements in relation to - and their claims in relation to QFRS lack of preparation.

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And you address those on pages 5 and 6 of your statement; is that correct?-- I endeavoured to provide some commentary in relation to those statements, that's correct.

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All right. We turn to page 7 of your statement. I'm interested in the second last paragraph on that page referring to the 10th of January where you report that, "QFRS Fire and Rescue stations and Rural Fire Brigades were also notified on" - it might mean to mean "of" - "forecasted changing weather conditions"; is that correct?-- If I may provide some context in relation to that particular comment. From the 17th of December through to the 25th of December, I was on approved annual leave. On the morning of the 10th of January, I was at home and did monitor the Bureau of Meteorology's website, and in particular in relation to some increase in weather activity in South-east Queensland and also looked at the weather situations across our State. On the - on that afternoon, the acting Assistant Commissioner John Gresty-----

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Beauchamp, I don't know that this is answering the question. You were asked whether the last

answer of that paragraph was right and you seem to have started to tell us about the lot of other things. It seems a fairly simple question?-- Yes. In relation to that, Madam Commissioner, I was advised late in that afternoon on my arrival to the regional headquarters at Beenleigh that stations and brigades across the western areas of south-eastern region had been contacted and advised of the pending weather conditions and conditions that were impacting on those communities out there. In those communiques, the question was also asked about the status of their stations and brigades as well as the status of their particular fire stations and crew members, and of all of those stations and brigades that were contacted, other than those at Murphy's Creek and Grantham, advised that they were in a sound condition, their appliances were operational and also that they had crews for those appliances.

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Somewhere in there there's a yes, I think, Mr Callaghan?-- Yes.

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MR CALLAGHAN: And it invites the question as to who advised you that the stations and brigades had been contacted as described?-- On the afternoon of the 10th of January, I attended the regional-----

No, who advised you?-- The incident coord - sorry, the ROCC coordinator at Beenleigh.

Who's that?-- At that time it was Ewan Kaiser.

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All right. And did he tell you as to the means by which these stations and brigades had been contacted?-- Yes, he did.

And what was that?-- The rural operations administrative staff at regional headquarters at Beenleigh had contacted the stations throughout the western areas of south-east, that is rural fire brigades. In addition to that the-----

Sorry, I was asking how, by which I meant was it by e-mail, individual phone calls or-----?-- I apologise, by telephone calls.

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By telephone calls. All right. And would that be something that would be recorded somewhere?-- Information - yes, it is recorded in - in the ROCC documentation that those stations and brigades were contacted.

All right. Thank you. And the time of that contact will be recorded also?-- Yes, it would be.

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Thank you. You would be familiar with the evidence given by Mr Bland about the suggestion of a means by which the communication systems could be improved in a situation such as that which was occurring in and around the Lockyer Valley on the 10th; that is, to say that a repeater can be isolated such that it reduces the amount of competition with radio traffic from other areas for the purposes of the disaster area in question?-- I'm aware of his statement. However, may I add

that I was unaware or advised of any difficulties in relation to radio communications on that particular day.

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Nevertheless, it's a suggestion that there was competition with radio traffic from other areas in that sort of situation and Mr Bland's suggestion is for a method which can be adopted which would reduce that in the future, and specifically the method that involves isolating a repeater to achieve that result?-- If I may provide some context in relation to communications.

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COMMISSIONER: When a witness says that, it generally means they're not about to answer the question, Mr Beauchamp, I have to say. So could you confine yourself very much to answering the question.

MR CALLAGHAN: And the question is simply whether the solution to a problem which you may or may not agree exists, but whether the solution suggested by Mr Bland is something worth considering in this sort of situation? And if not, why not?-- I think any suggestion that was proposed should be considered to look at the enhancement of our operations, yes.

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All right. It's also been suggested in evidence that there's - there may be a shortage of four-wheel drive vehicles for the purposes of swift-water rescue teams. Are you in a position to comment on that?-- South-east region has three rescue appliances that has a number of activities. There were a number of vehicles that were available within south-east region that could be utilised as swift-water rescue vehicles. If I may, for example, there are some 170 rural operations or rural fire brigade four-by-four vehicles, medium attack vehicles which could be converted easily for that activity.

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All right. And finally I'm going to ask you about something which was raised, I think, by Mr Dixon to which you respond on page 18 of your statement, and this is the issue that there's a difficulty in tasking volunteers who offer to assist in an emergency situation of the one that you were concerned with, and you say on page 18 that it's an LDMG responsibility. Is that the end of it because we know, for example, in the Lockyer on the 10th that the LDMG was - was struggling to cope with the situation. Is there an alternative that might allow volunteers or employees from other departments to be used such as by - or pursuant to the green T-card system that we've heard about?-- As I stated there, there is a no framework within QFRS to support volunteers coming off the street to undertake tasks that we perform as part of our core business. I would believe that there may be opportunity to investigate those offers of volunteerism to see how we could work better with local government agencies and other agencies to better utilise those offers of support.

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You don't have any specific thoughts as to how that might be done?-- I - I would have confidence within the local Government capacity and to be able to support that framework. Again my observations and by what I was reported, the LDMG at Gatton was functioning and we did have liaison officers within

that LDMG.

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So to your observations, the LDMG at Gatton was functioning effectively for their purposes?-- From my observation and the relationship that was demonstrated in Gatton, it was working at a level of where we could accept taskings and from those taskings undertake our role within the Lockyer/Somerset areas.

All right. Thank you. I have no further questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

MR KENT: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Beauchamp, may I take you, please, to page 7 of your statement? You see there in about the middle of the page you have a response to the suggestion of forewarnings as to the scale of threat; do you see that there?-- Yes, I do.

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And to quote you, "There was no forewarning as to the scale of the threat and subsequent flash flood sweeping down the Great Dividing Range devastating communities in the Lockyer Valley and Somerset local Government areas." Can I ask you this: in making that statement, are you aware of a swift-water rescue that took place in Murphy's Creek on the 22nd of December 2010?-- No, I'm not aware of that particular rescue.

Given the amount of rainfall throughout the summer, if you'd known of that, would that have given some forewarning as to the possibility of future events?-- I believe that the - the significant nature of the flash flooding, or inland tsunami as it's been called, is unprecedented and whilst there was some rainfall and activity occurring, I don't believe that as a fire and rescue service we received or would be able to make a judgment in relation to the extent of that particular flash flooding event.

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All right. Were you aware that weather predictions were it was going to be a very wet summer?-- Yes, I was aware of the Bureau's advice on the 12th of October. There were a number of video conferencing between the Commissioner and regions in relation to that wet season prediction, and as part of our on-going preparations we focused our preparations within south-east region accordingly.

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And certainly by late December 2010, there was no reason to think that there was going to be a sudden drought, there was going to be as far as you thought a continuation of wet weather throughout the summer?-- My observations and my opinion would be that we were going to have more than normal wet season in south-east Queensland.

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And what you're saying is that you weren't personally aware of a swift-water rescue in Murphy's Creek on the 22nd of December?-- Again, no, I wasn't. I was on annual leave from the 17th of December and-----

I understand that?-- -----unaware of that.

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Had you been aware of it, would you have regarded that as some forewarning of possible future problems?-- With regard to that particular event, and the significant impact of that flooding, whilst I would consider that not just in the western areas but across our region there was potential for maybe an increased level of flash flooding activity in a general sense, the significant nature of the particular event on the afternoon of the 10th I don't believe that we could have been aware of or prepared for that.

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In your position, Assistant Commissioner QFRS south-eastern region; right?-- Yes.

Do I take it from that description that you don't normally have your hands on the Toowoomba region day-to-day; is that right?-- That's correct. The - the administrative and operations and business management is undertaken by the Assistant Commissioner for south-western region.

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And the divide is about at the bottom of the Range?-- Approximately, around the bottom/middle of the Range, but in saying that there are administrative boundaries. Operationally our resources will go and support each region whether it's between south-east or south-west region, or south-eastern Brisbane.

Do you now know, for example, and I'm talking about now rather than back then-----?-- Yes.

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-----do you know that the Toowoomba region was one, possibly the only one, in Queensland that did not have the waterproof socks for the radios as at January 2011?-- No, I was not aware of that.

You're aware of it now?-- From the statements that have been provided, yes.

All right. Just a little by further down, page 7, can I just ask you about this observation, and I'm looking at the end of the second last paragraph, okay? "QFRS fire and rescue stations and rural fire brigades were also notified of the forecast of changing weather conditions." This is in reference to the 10th of January, okay?-- Yes.

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Now, I presume you make that statement based on information that you've received?-- That's correct.

I mean, you weren't doing that yourself?-- No, I wasn't.

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Do you know who did it for Toowoomba? Who let the Toowoomba centre know about that?-- No, I would not be aware.

Just generally in the chain of command, at what level is it likely to have been?-- Again, in relation to how they would set up their structure or management framework, whether it's through their fire communication centre or through their ROCC,

or another system, I would not be aware who would have undertaken that task.

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All right. Now, can I take you to page 8, and it's the fourth paragraph towards the end of that paragraph? You say, "An additional, two fire communications officers were called back to duty to Firecom south-east on the afternoon of 10 January", and you go on, "an increased above normal roster for Firecom was maintained to supporting regional activities." Okay. Do you know anything about the increase of, not Firecom, but operational staff on that day?-- Yeah, within my statement I provided details to the - on advice received as to the increase of numbers of staff and resources occurring over the 10th and subsequent days following the 10th.

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All right. Well, in that context then I might take you to page 13 and again it's the second bottom paragraph. Dealing with your response to the calls for more personnel; do you see that there?-- Yes. I'm sorry, on page 13?

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Thirteen?-- Yeah.

Second paragraph on the bottom starting with the heading, "Response"-----?-- Yes.

-----do you see that there? You say, "I am advised that early on Monday morning 10 January the weather conditions are being monitored. On duty SWR crews and with additional SWR resources are being called back to duty and relocated to central and western areas of the region. SWR appliance crews were located at stations in Logan and Gold Coast to deal with potential flood in those cities". And you say, "An additional SWR appliance was mobilised from the QFRS Special Operation Centre Brisbane and located in Gatton"; right?-- Yep.

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Do you know were any relocated in Toowoomba?-- I'm unaware of appliance crews from special operations that were relocated to Toowoomba.

All right. All right. Can I take you then to page 15? This time is the third bottom paragraph in relation to your response about training for helicopter rescue. You tell us that, "The Commissioner has directed a review of swift water review to cover all aspects related to training, equipment, numbers of staff, training based on regional risk assessments, current procedures, deployments and possible future growth." There's a review committee apparently. What stage has that reached, Mr Beauchamp?-- To my knowledge, the committee structure has been established. The office that is leading that structure is being liaising with those officers in relation to information on crewing, equipment and other aspects, and I believe from my knowledge that they may not have met face-to-face at this stage.

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Do you know whether it's likely they will start to?-- I'm unaware of the time frames and activities associated with that State committee.

Are you on it or not?-- No, I'm not on it, but an officer from south-east region is a member of that committee.

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Do you know exactly what aspects are to be dealt with or is it is, as you say, all aspects, is it completely open-ended?-- I could refer to a executive briefing note that's been provided from the office of the Deputy Commissioner providing a summary in relation to the topics that are to be undertaken through that review if the Commission so requires.

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Well, I'm interested to know what particular aspects, so if it is restricted in some way perhaps you could tell us.

COMMISSIONER: If you want to refer to a note, that's all right.

MR KENT: Yes?-- "The swift-water rescue committee will be convened to achieve the following: undertake a detailed analysis of swift-water rescue training requirements including prerequisites; duration; locations; levels one and two and the capacity of each; review oncall arrangements and capacity of suitably qualified staff to respond; link to the numbers of trained staff by region versus regional risk assessment requirements; complete stocktake of all swift-water rescue related equipment; match training risk and response; highlight areas of gaps and opportunities; review current procedures; ensure compliance with Workplace Health and Safety obligations and undertake comparison with other emergency service organisations, possibly New South Wales SES; ensure and coordinate a collaborative approach with the organisation staff and their union".

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It's a fairly broad-ranging review-----?-- I believe it would be, yes.

-----from that description. Yes. Would you accept this proposition: firstly it's been suggested that in terms of numbers of swift-water rescue technicians level 2, that perhaps there are more in Queensland than any other State; is that right?-- I have been advised that Queensland has possibly doubled the number of swift water level 2 technicians than combined agencies across Australia.

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And for obvious reasons, that it's more of a problem in Queensland than elsewhere generally?-- Because of the climatic impact, particularly wet season, and given the monsoonal and other impacts that occur in central and far north areas of our State.

And, indeed, carrying with that is the idea, is it not, that in this aspect of your service perhaps Queensland should lead Australia?-- To my knowledge, I believe that other agencies are sending their personnel to asked for training in swift-water rescue.

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I take you then to page 16. Again, towards the bottom of the page you're responding to the idea that there are insufficient numbers of SWR trained personnel to perform rescues and in your response you say that personnel were endeavouring to keep their families safe and assist friends and neighbours. Appliance crews and swift water teams were mobilised, supporting local brigade and station crews and worked tirelessly in extremely challenging and dangerous situations. I'm not sure how much of a response that is, but can you just tell me this: from the information that you had - I'm not asking you to overreach the things that you don't know - are you aware of in the Toowoomba region whether there were enough swift water qualified level 2 technicians on duty to have two for each appliance?-- I'm not aware of the roster arrangements for Toowoomba or that region.

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Are you aware of that document that I'll call - I can have it shown to you in a minute, I think - the Regional Functional Plan for south-eastern region?-- Yes, I-----

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

Do you actually have a copy of it?-- I do have a copy of it here.

Good. Can I just refer you to page 10 of that document. There's a paragraph 7 headed "Staffing", providing that, "When the level of swift water preparedness is elevated in the south eastern region, a minimum of two level 2 swift water technicians will be on duty manning swift water vehicles at all times." That's the directive?-- That's correct.

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And to your knowledge is that followed in the south-eastern region?-- To my knowledge, as the weather conditions change, that directive is supported.

I imagine you don't day-to-day have your hands on the South-Western Region Regional Functional Plan?-- No, I don't.

Do you know generally whether it contains a similar provision?-- I'm unaware of the content of that plan.

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Can you think of any reason why it would be different from the south-eastern one?-- I believe that the functional plans that are within each of our respective regions would have some similarity.

Yes?-- And - sorry, if I may add - relevant to the staffing configurations relevant to those regions and the risk within those regions.

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I see. Can I take you to page 20 of your statement, please, and again towards the bottom of the page you say that to be included in the 2011/12 Regional Operational Plan which is under review, you provide some dot points there about things that are being reviewed for that updated Regional Operational Plan. Do you see that there?-- Yes, that's correct.

If I take you to the second dot point: "Reconsider the QFRS fleet profiles with a focus on the stowage and transport of inflated swift water craft (working platforms)." The next sentence seems to suggest that inflating and deflating the craft is problematic and time consuming. In other words, suggesting, at least as I understand it, that perhaps they should be kept inflated because it's simpler. Is that right?-- That's correct.

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Okay?-- If - if I may add, on the 12th of February the director of Regional Operations for South-Eastern Region tasked our Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator to undertake a review of technical rescue including swift water rescue and for that report to be available to me by the end of this month, and that report and the recommendations would also be provided to the state review.

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Can I ask you this question about that aspect of that review?-- Yes.

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What about motorised work platforms?-- I understand from advice from the state manager for technical rescue that the use of motorised rescue craft is being considered and will be part of the state review.

Yes. You're aware of at least some people are recommending that as a good idea?-- I am aware of that and in a - as part of surf life saving, I was a driver and instructor in those types of rescue craft.

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Do you know this much detail: whether it's also being suggested, if they are to be motorised, that the propellers should be guarded?-- I - my personal opinion is that similar to surf lifesaving and particularly when you're dealing with patient retrieval, such that the propellers should have a propeller guard on those.

Okay. I understand that you're not - your area of responsibility doesn't cover Toowoomba, does it?-- That's correct.

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Do you know a bit about Toowoomba nevertheless?-- I know a little bit about Toowoomba. My great grandparents, grandparents and my parents were born and bred in Toowoomba. My grandfather was an auxiliary firefighter in Toowoomba for over 40 years.

So you at least know a little bit about-----?-- A little bit, yes.

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-----the fire fighting situation in Toowoomba?-- I'd probably have a small understanding in relation to their capacity.

Yes, nothing further, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Having set us for that up, you don't want to ask him about Toowoomba?

MR KENT: Well-----

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COMMISSIONER: No, don't feel compelled.

MR KENT: There is a question that I could ask but from what he just said, I very much doubt whether he could really comment on it.

COMMISSIONER: All right, thank you. Mr Dunning.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you. Mr Beauchamp, the Assistant Commissioner for the south-west region, which is Toowoomba and other areas, would be Mr Dawson; is that so?-- That's correct.

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And he is coming today?-- I believe so.

If I could just ask you this. The service received an advice from BOM back in October last year?-- That's correct.

About the likely weather pattern emerging for later in that year?-- That's correct.

And you've referred at pages 5 and 6, I think, of initiatives that were taken by the service following that briefing?-- That's correct.

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The first dot point there on page 5 refers to "Commissioner Briefings", it says "Tandberg", commenced in July and go through into October and so on. What is meant by Commissioner briefings? What does that involve?-- The service takes an all hazards approach to our planning and preparations. Early - as we moved into the middle half of 2010 the Commissioner commenced his audiovisual teleconference with Assistant Commissioners across Queensland and other key players in relation to our preparation for the potential 2010 bushfire season. As it become obvious from the reports that were being provided in relation to a more than normal wet season, the focus then proceeded to looking at preparations relevant to a potential wet season event.

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And when it mentions actual Commissioner briefings, what form is that taken? Who are they given to?-- The Commissioner, through those briefings, would provide from our state headquarters at Kedron Park information such as updates on forecasted weather conditions that are obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology. There would be BOM officers that would be included in those video conferencing to ensure that there is a broader awareness across our state in relation to those potential events. As well as, as we've seen, for the periods of late 2010/2011 our state has been subjected to a number of significant cyclones and as a consequence significant resources and deployments both prior to and after has been

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actioned as a result of those.

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In terms of the Commissioner briefings, are they documents that are distributed to the service or is it to individuals in the services, or how does it mechanically actually happen? What is done?-- Well, in relation to those Commissioner briefings, in the first instance it is about the Commissioner from state office providing an update to the regions. As a consequence of that, in my region, the south-east region, I would then provide both face-to-face updates to the regional managers across south-east region. And from there, I would expect that those officers, those commanders within their respective commands, would also provide updates and information down to their respective station leaders as well as to our rural brigades across south-east.

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Now, is it also expected from the service that officers in charge of individual stations take initiative in aspects to monitor weather patterns and provide training to the station staff?-- Under our operations doctrine and - which is our incident management system, all officers at all level are required to undertake a level of awareness or situational awareness relevant to their environment, whether it's at a whole of region or command or station. Part of the officer in charge of a shift or station has a responsibility within that structure and system to be aware not only of their immediate station or brigade environment but also aware of the patch of where they could possibly respond to in a particular type of event whether it's wet season, whether it's bushfire or other type of emergency event.

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Now, the second dot point on page 5 there which talks about October 2010, the south-east region technical rescue coordinator tasked to review the region's swift water plan. Was that in response to these Commissioner briefings or was it a routine review done annually, or whatever?-- In relation to that particular review, every year the region will review its operational and functional plans. These are prepared around this time of - of the calendar year and once they go through the process of rigour and approval, then they're posted on our regional website for the next period; in other words, for 2010/2011, 11/12. That regional website is access to - in south-east region, to every full-time permanent officer and every auxiliary officer across this region.

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Halfway down that page you refer to November 2010, "Establishment of an additional cache of technical rescue equipment located at south-east regional operational precinct Beenleigh." Was that something over and above what would normally happened yearly?-- I had an opportunity through ongoing reviews - the first review in relation to technical rescue as a whole since my appointment in south-east in late 2006 looked at improving technical rescue equipment and personal protective equipment for our tech rescue operatives. Through that continual process of review, and it is not just something that may happen on one particular year or occasion, I identified, and through discussion with the tech rescue coordinator and other technical rescue operatives, that we

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required additional capacity including better boats, as we may call them, the inflatable working platforms, as well as enhancing our available additional caches in relation to swift water rescue. Particularly, to ensure that should we bring up additional appliances above and beyond our normal three rescue appliances for that event, we had the capacity to effectively equip those additional appliances.

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So it was designed to, in part at least, give you the capability of equipping additional appliances should that be necessary?-- That's correct.

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We see October/November/December 2011 there was training including exercises in the setting up of ICC structures?-- Again, following my appointment to south-east region I and other officers within the region undertook a review of our capacity to proactively establish regional incident management teams or teams that could go in and set up ICCs, whether it is in the east or the west of the region, and ongoing training and development was provided for those officers. It is just not about providing that additional level of knowledge and not maintain that level of competency. Both through ongoing training, particularly exercising, is a regular activity that occurs over the 12-month period and not just a one-off type event.

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All right. Over the page on page 6, about the sixth dot point down, which stated, "Area Commander, Ipswich Command, initiated with local station officers in charge an increased awareness for all operational staff for flood water related rescue and preparedness arrangements." We see that there is a reference there to the fact that Colleges Crossing was cut for number of days in December 2010. So was there an increased preparedness initiated because of the likely continuing closure of the Colleges Crossing and flooding events in that area?-- Yes, there was. The area commander, in consultation and working with the local officers in charge within that command, undertook a number of initiatives including reviewing the local action plans for swift water rescue within that command. And not only developed those plans but made sure that those plans - or redeveloped or reviewed those plans but made sure that those plans are broadcast to the crews within that station area as well as once those review plans have been completed, then those plans were put back up on our regional website for other staff to have access to.

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I know you're concerned with south-east region. If you can't tell us, simply say so, because Mr Dawson is coming along later on, but would we expect to see the same level of preparedness generated in the south-west region, particularly in respect of Toowoomba?-- I - I would believe that giving consideration to the extensive flooding after many years of drought happened across south-west region, again, they undertake a very similar all hazards approach to preparing and planning and not only in south-west region but I think generally and collectively across the state.

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Is there a system whereby local stations are to identify local

area hazards, risks?-- Yes, within - within our operations doctrine, our incident management system, there are a number of templates and procedures and responsibility matrixes that are available. It identifies, for example, in any permanent station responsibility of the officer in charge to look at operational preparedness for that station, as well as not only for - for example, if it is a 10/14 shift A , B, C, D, that that officer might coordinate the activities for that station, share and allocate tasks within that station on that operational preparedness, and the development of local action plans and other guides in relation to that preparedness and operations.

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Now, the events that confronted the service throughout this period I suppose starting as early as December 2010 and going through January were rather extraordinary, weren't they?-- Without a doubt.

There were multiple areas across the state which were being inundated with flood waters?-- Yeah, from - the information I'm aware in the reports that have been provided, potentially over 85 per cent of Queensland at any given time, particularly in January, was actually under water - an unbelievable event or period of time for Queensland.

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Have you ever seen any indication by way of figures as to how many service personnel were involved in the response overall?-- For whole of Queensland, I would not be able to provide specific numbers but I can provide, for example, in south-east region between the 10th of January and the 25th of January, which was south-east region's response to the flood disaster and also the activities that we undertook, somewhere in the vicinity of almost 7,000 personnel activations occurred - an incredible achievement by the personnel. That's the full-time, part-time and volunteers across all stations and brigades. And extremely well coordinated and supported through our hierarchy of command and control, our incident management systems and processes.

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That number you've mentioned is limited to that period in January?-- That's correct. Even before that I - from the information or what I have been advised, we've had a number of personnel pre that disaster period 10th to 25th that we in south-east region we deployed across Queensland for such tasks as air-based support, incident control, centre teams, swift water teams and the like. And then following the flood disaster 10th to the 25th, we also forwarded from - deployed from south-east region a significant number of personnel again to the far north both prior to Yasi and also following Yasi's events up there.

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Have there been since those events debriefings within the service?-- Within south-east region we have undertaken extensive debriefing activities in relation to the events of the 10th to the 25th, involving discussions and debriefing concessions. I believe at least 60-odd sessions. We have conducted regional operational planning forums in both the east and western areas of the region which include captains

and first officers from brigades as well as station officers to those. We have conducted debriefing for the Regional Operations Coordination Centre, an extensive undertaking. Several hundred people have participated in that and it's been coordinated by a dedicated team from south-east regional council. Two areas that we haven't debriefed at this stage is both the ICC for Gatton and for Ipswich, simply because many of the key players in relation - who undertook tasks within that - those ICCs were either deployed to New Zealand for the disastrous earthquakes that affected that city or they were deployed to events up in Yasi. And, additionally, a number of them have also been ill and have not been able to participate in that. Now, those debriefing processes will be undertaken.

It is just a question of those - the personnel having been involved being brought together for that purpose?-- Absolutely.

When available?-- Now, if I may add, there's two types of debriefing activities. One of those is an operational debriefing and these had been occurring significantly. There's also debriefings in relation to supporting the health and welfare of our people. Our fire care team for whole of state as well as for south-eastern region have been actively engaged both from the start of the disaster on the 10th and the 11th with peer support officers located in ICCs, with our chaplains within the service also located and out into the communities. I had opportunity on the 12th of January to meet personally with the regional fire care peer support coordinator and discuss the impact of the event and also the impact of the event on our staff in south-east region, and he has done a marvellous job in relation to coordinating our PSOs but also seeking support through state PSOs from across Queensland as well as specialist support for our people, and that continues today.

All right. Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: No, may Mr Beauchamp be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mr Beauchamp.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call John Burrows.

JOHN DOUGLAS BURROWS, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Can you tell the Court your full name and occupation, please?-- John Douglas Burrows. I'm a firefighter with a substantive rank of station officer.

Mr Burrows, you took part in an interview with Commission staff, a transcript of which has been prepared; is that correct?-- Yes.

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There were a number of documents referred to in the course of that interview which are exhibited as annexures to that transcript; is that right?-- Yes.

That's just being shown to you now for completeness. Does that appear to be the transcript and the annexures?-- Yes.

Yes, I tender those.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 355.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 355"

MR CALLAGHAN: Now, the transcript goes for, I think over 100 pages. What I would like to do is just summarise in broad terms what you have to say on a number of topics, or at least get a summary of it on the record. Firstly, you draw attention to the long-term resourcing of the Toowoomba QFRS; is that right?-- Yes.

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In essence, your point, I think, is that Toowoomba's actual response capacity has decreased even though the population and the amount of work has increased. Is that a fair summary?-- That's correct. I've based it on figures from 1976 to the present day.

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Yes. And for the record, I'd suggest that pages 9 and 15 and annexure D1 are the relevant parts of your transcript and exhibits which speak to that. The next point you make or the next topic I'd suggest might be relevant is you point to a failure by management of QFRS to act or at least to be proactive during the lead-up to the flood events in January; is that right?-- That's correct.

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One point you make is that a number of senior officers were on leave?-- That's right.

Accepting that, I suppose leave is always going to be an issue at that time of year, do you say that that had an adverse operational impact?-- Yes, most definitely, and I experienced that firsthand, the lack of senior operational support prior to the 10th of January.

Do you just perhaps - can you give an example of that?-- Yes. Went out to an incident involving a car with four people on the Oakey-Pittsworth Road in the middle of the night, hosing down, and our regional Firecom was absolutely overloaded with calls for assistance. All the resources from Toowoomba went approximately 15 kilometres to the west out of the town to effect the four rescues. The only senior on-call, his highest priority seemed to be not really worried about the rescue but get the appliances back into the town-----

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Sorry, what sort of rescue was that?-- We were doing swift water rescues. We had dragged a total of four patients out of a very broad expanse of water, and as the incident controller I was constantly being harassed by the senior on call who wanted to be very explicit and make sure that we returned back to Toowoomba asap. I had to be equally explicit and tell him that I would return when we had in fact effected all of the rescues and checked that there were no people as reported downstream. Then on that particular night, we were returning back to the Toowoomba area, I had heard another two separate swift water rescues go down. I got back to station 11 where I was doing standby. I got on the phone. The crew sensed that I was less than happy with what had been going down. I rang the senior on-call and I advised him that it's absolutely hosing down in Toowoomba, we need to go to an ICC level of involvement to take the workload off Firecom and south-west region and that I believed we needed to go to level 2 incident management system. On ringing the senior on-call he advised me, "It's dark." And I advised him words to the effect, "Turn the fucking light switch on."

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I understand that that might be a complaint about specific incidents, but does the fact that you're calling a senior on-call, does this link in anyway that senior officers were on leave, that's what I was asking about?-- Well, in that where I can verify from - getting no action from the dedicated senior on-call, I then rang Mr McInerney, Mr Bill and, in fact, Mr Dawson, and no phones answered. So I could get no guidance. And unfortunately with the way it works in south-west region, people away from the incident ground seem to be able to make the decision without talking to the incident controller and, in fact, if I, for instance, wanted to make an additional resource it has to be approve via Firecom after consultation with a senior on-call. So the - this administrative log jam stifles effective operational response.

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All right. And, look, you speak in the interview about what you've described as trigger points pointing to the need for an increase in resources or at least awareness of what was about to happen; is that right?-- Well, blind Freddy would have seen that we were heading for, as I'd determined, a timeline for disaster. You had resources such as the Bureau of Meteorology website which amongst other things has got the Keach barren soil moisture indicator on it so you can determine whether or not the soil is one hundred per cent saturated, and as I say blind Freddy on those days would have realised you'd only have to spit on the ground and you have run-off of saliva. There was no soil absorption capacity left. The operational crews on the ground were fully aware of that and were continually asking for support from senior management and we weren't getting guidance.

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Okay. The next topic that you cover in - or another topic that you cover in the interview is a summary of your actual involvement in the events in Toowoomba on the 10th of January, and I'd suggest there are probably three things that I want to ask you about in that regard. First of all, you say that you arrived at the station, and you might in a moment tell us about what time it was, but you say there were two appliances responding and three sitting unmanned including at least one with a 15-metre boom on it which presumably would have been useful in that which was happening at the time?-- That's correct.

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Can you tell us what time that was?-- My only guesstimate is around 1.45. Why I say "guesstimate", the actual event logs when we did the debrief with management almost a month later, we were advised that they were quarantined. So I, to this say, don't know precisely when I rang from station 11, which is Kitchener Street, to Firecom to report a bus with about nine people stuck in some rising flood water.

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All right. You speak about your own response with a Mr McKaren to two people being trapped on a roof at a vehicle - trapped on the roof of a vehicle at Hill and Dent Street; is that right?-- That's correct.

And you record that, I suggest, between pages and 97 to 103 of

the transcript, you describe that in some detail?-- Yes.

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You then speak about a further response to four people who are stuck on the roof of a four-wheel drive at or near the Allied Flour Mill?-- That's right.

And the bit I want to ask you about there, I think you say you saw that some rural firefighters were in the water attending at that scene; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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And you understand that's a breach of the procedures that they weren't level 2 qualified and, therefore, shouldn't have been in the water; is that your take on that?-- As far as I'm aware, they haven't even done the awareness level of training.

All right?-- So unfortunately they were not adhering to the agency's own zero harm policy. I don't know who sent them out. I believe earlier in the day they were attached to the Regional Operations Coordination Centre at the rear of 201 Anzac Avenue.

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All right. And you, as I say, record in the transcript the things which occurred and the things that you did then. The next topic, I'd suggest, is a broad comment that you make about the - the immediate response on the 10th of January and in broad terms you point to a - or complain of a failure to recall staff and to man up the operational stations; is that right?-- That's right. What appeared to have occurred was that administratively the agency had crewed up, and what I mean by that, if I may, is that three auxiliary stations had been stood up for the day with no training in swift-water rescue at all. The Regional Operations Coordination Centre had been manned up with personnel, and the South-West Regional Fire Communication Centre had been manned up to a total of six, three being Firecom staff and three being supervisory or senior officers in a space that is only 10 square metres in size. It's not much bigger than two phone boxes.

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All right. Now, have you seen Mr Dawson's statement that he's prepared for these proceedings?-- No.

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No. All right. Well, I suggest to you that he's responded in terms which suggests that there was some 56 staff, I think, who responded to the flood events on the 10th?-- If I may, with those figures.

Yes?-- Unfortunately the agency is very good in giving terminal numbers. What I mean by that is perhaps by midnight on the 10th you had 56 people there, but on - I'm here to tell you now that when the spam hit the fan at 2 o'clock in the afternoon there were not 56 people there.

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What's your take on how much were - how many operational staff were working that day?-- My take on what I knew was the 10 operational staff plus myself who was recalled to duty by default, and two other firefighters that self-responded after hearing reports in the local media.

Well, touching back with - to what we were talking about before when you say when you arrived, there were appliances which weren't being used?-- That's correct.

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Were you aware as to whether that situation persisted at any stage during the afternoon or was-----?-- That situation persisted. Until 1700 when the local branch United Firefighters Union secretary Remco Spreenebrink had conversations with the Assistant Commissioner and with words to the effect that, "If you don't go and put another crew for each station for the night, it will hit the media."

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All right.

COMMISSIONER: Could you spell that name, do you think?-- Now you're asking me. S-P-R-E-E-N-E-B-R-I-N-K.

And the first name?-- He'll probably kill me because I've probably spelt it incorrectly.

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First name?-- Remco, R-E-M-C-O.

MR CALLAGHAN: All right. Related to all of this, I think, is a separate topic and that is your concern that there was no - or there was a failure to set up an ICC despite-----?-- Am I able to go back to those appliances sitting?

Yes?-- If that's all right?

If you've got something to add to that?-- I got distracted a little bit. Yes, there were - there was the telescopic aerial appliance known as a tap-----

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Yes?-- -----which as you quite rightly said has a 15-metre boom. It could have been used as almost dry land intercept platform to pluck people off that were standing things like barbecues, tops of cars, traffic islands, those sorts of things without the crews themselves necessarily have to - having to enter the water to effect the rescue. It wasn't manned up until after 1700. We also had a Sierra which is a breathing apparatus support appliance, and when I got to station 11 we had the Kilo which was the interim rescue appliance, and as far as I'm aware there was a Zulu which is a spare pumping appliance sitting at station 12. So had a total of four appliances that could have been manned up and should have been manned up.

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All right. And I take it from what you say about at least some of that equipment, that wouldn't necessarily require swift-water technicians to operate it if you don't have to get out of the vehicle?-- That's right. If you're working off the end of a boom, all that you're doing is plucking the person out of the water. They don't have to make entry into the water.

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All right. But on the topic of swift-water technicians, you also, I think, are concerned about the - whether they were recalled to duty in sufficient numbers or at all?-- Well, I

have a - a level 2 technician's pager, and we also normally get an SMS text message on our mobile phones, and to this day I'm still waiting the text message.

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All right. Can I move on then to that topic that I mentioned a minute ago which is the concern about a failure to set up an ICC at Highfields until - or at all on the 10th; is that right?-- That's correct.

What's your concern there?-- My main concern is that you had a really severe crossover of administrative purposes at the - at what was the ROCC at the back of 201 Anzac avenue in as much as it's not designed to make tactical and operational decisions. It's designed by default to make the strategic decisions and then it reports back up to the State Operations Coordination Centre. It's basically an intelligence and resource allocation tool. It should not be making tactical and operational decisions, and yet on the day it was, and it was also crewed and manned by a personnel that were not in any way, shape or form swift water aware so-----

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Who were - who was manning it?-- From what I can gather was the Assistant Commissioner and a number of rural people, but as I have also tendered, the learning transcripts indicate that they are not trained in those areas and I just find it amazing, how can you make strategic decisions on something that you're not trained in?

And your point being that an ROCC is not about command and control, it's about coordination?-- That's right. The purpose of an ICC is to take the workload off Firecom. The Firecom operators on the day did an absolutely brilliant job for the volume of phone calls that they were receiving and radio messages that they would have been trying to disseminate. The purpose of the fire communication centre quite simply is to take the triple O call, integrate the ESCAD system, which is the emergency services computer-aided dispatch system, it will make a recommendation on what resources to send to the specific incident and then to alert them. Now, when you have got this large, evolving incident, the purposes of an ICC is to take the workload away from Firecom after the initial despatch of resources so Firecom would say, "You're operating on either VHF or UH X, Y or Z, and you will talk to Highfields ICC", so then Firecom have the volume and tempo reduced within their very small workplace, as I said. And the incident is then being managed by a dedicated crew that are looking after the incident control. That's what it says by name, Incident Control Centre.

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But from what you describe, did Firecom in effect become a de facto ICC?-- Yes, unfortunately in the past management, and they believe it's their right, that they could at any time stroll into Firecom and run an incident standing behind the Firecom operators, and we have had incidents in the past where you have had a senior manager get on one of the consoles and just have a conversation which effectively halves the capacity of the Firecom at south-west region because there's only two consoles there.

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All right. Another topic relates to the use of resources and specifically helicopter resources. In your transcript, I'd suggest, at pages 50 to 54 you talk about a request of what's known as the Firebird which I understand is a recognisance helicopter-----?-- Yes.

-----is that right?-- That's correct.

It's not a rescue craft?-- No, Firebird designation means that it is a rotary asset, in other words a helicopter, and its sole purpose is for recognisance normally over a fire, hence the prefix of Firebird. And unfortunately on that night it was responded to a motorcyclist who decided it would be good fun to ride into water about 1.7 metres in depth for nothing other than it sounded like something good to do. And about two minutes into the response profile, obviously somebody who is fairly diligent in this Firebird, and it's - the correct call-sign is within the report - or incident report-----

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That's all right?-- Doesn't matter. He's come up on the radio and said, "Look, this is Firebird X. I have 45 minutes of endurance left. Do you require me for tasking?", and I said, "Yes, Firecom respond Firebird", and as far as I'm aware the only helicopter that responded went to a job that I finished on the 11th at Westbrook at 10.30 in the morning, but unfortunately the administrative structure is such, as far as I believe, is the request has to go from Firecom to the senior on-call, to if you had an ICC - which we didn't - it went then to the ROCC, then has to go to the SOCC and then to the State air desk while somebody is still hanging onto a motorbike.

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Can I ask this: that 45 minutes of endurance, is that because it was getting dark then?-- No, he said he had 45 minutes of flight time left. I was very aware that if they're not instrument rated, they have to be on the ground 10 minutes before last light.

Yes?-- Unfortunately in a previous tasking, I worked as a I-zone training officer and we were always told if you wanted to use an aerial asset, the incident controller, and on this particular occasion that was me, that you had the first two hours basically free to utilise aerial assets and you would consider them to be nothing other than another QFRS resource. If you wanted a fixed wing, you called for it; if you wanted a rotary wing, you called for it; if it was to go beyond two hours, then it has to be, and it says in the documents, more - it has to be approved by the area director.

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My only question is this, and I have seen in the - in the materials, that I think this all did happen about 45 minutes before dark; is that right?-- That's correct.

We do have a sense of what was happening in Grantham, I think, at that time and the weather was making it difficult for anything to fly at that time, and I'm not saying that nothing was flying, but we do know that the weather systems that were

in and around that area were affecting the ability of helicopters to respond. The incident that you're talking about was on the Toowoomba Cecil Plains Road which is on the other side of the-----?-- That's correct, at that stage, it was raining-----

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Yes?-- -----but visibility was good. The pilot would not have made the offer to fly if he believed visibility was not appropriate to carry out the mission.

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Okay. Thank you. You also speak about an ADF offer of - or that in conversations with someone in the ADF that they'd indicated that they'd like to assist with helicopters; is that right?-- Well, over the years we'd been encouraged to go out and liaise with the Oakey army base, which is a army flying school for rotary wings. And over the years we'd been talking to up to and including their CO out there, and he said that they'd like nothing better than to be able to be scrambled from flying mindless circuits around the countryside to suddenly a rescue mission. And I have got a little bit of an interest in army equipment and aerial assets and I'm very aware of the capabilities of things like your Aussie Tiger, but, as I say, at four kilometres it can identify whether you've got a moustache on or not using the forward looking infrared systems and other tactical devices they have on board. Whilst they are not a rescue aircraft they could most certainly have been cruised to fly in all weather to identify where people were in the Lockyer Valley.

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Okay. Thank you. Can I turn then to the broad topic of swift-water rescue and have you - were you able to hear Mr Smith's evidence earlier today?-- Yes.

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As I understand it at least at this stage, the actual written requirement would seem to be that when there's a need for a swift-water rescue, Firecoms are required to despatch resources which must include at least two level 2 swift-water technicians?-- That's correct, that's - as per the FCCD.

And he would go on to say but that doesn't mean that two level 2 technicians have to take part in every rescue, that each rescue has to be assessed according to its needs, and that if one gets there first and thinks that it can be done by one person, then they're at liberty to go ahead and do it. Now, is that your understanding of the way the requirements exist?-- The requirements are that, but we're stuck in a - in between a rock and a hard place. It must be said that south-west region is larger than the State of Victoria and we've got 12 swift-water rescue technicians, level 2, to cover that State size or that part of the State.

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Now, sorry-----?-- And to say that - that - and why I say stuck between a rock and a hard place, if we start with one and we effect the rescue, we are legends. But if we start with one and it goes pear-shaped and one of the crew or one of the public drown, we will be nailed to the wall by that very document that you're quoting.

Well, except the document says that two will be dispatched, it doesn't say that you have to wait for the second one to get there?-- It may be that - I would contend that perhaps the document as it stands is defective because it doesn't provide clarity to the responding crews.

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I can understand why the perception might have been created that two are required and it does seem to be a perception shared by others, but in any case you give an example of an incident at Dalby a few days before, the 10th I think; is that right?-- That's correct.

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Am I got this right, that one crew was despatched without any level 2 swift-water technician?-- That's right, the special rescue appliance had no level 2 technicians on it when it was despatched to a life rescue in water.

That's 311 Lima?-- 311 Lima.

311 Lima. But a level 2 technician, a Mr Ashmore, did respond; is that right?-- He-----

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Self-responded?-- He self-responded, but personally I believe he did the right thing because management were aware of the incident and didn't for a period of time until the boat broached in the water and you had the three rescuers sitting in the same tree with the victim that they elect - or it appeared to respond additional level 2 technicians to support them. So if it wasn't for Cameron self-initiating and actually breaching their own directives on self-response, but I believe he did the right thing, morally the right thing, because he knew the guys who were going out there were not trained in water entry.

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Yeah. No, I'm not asking for a judgment on who did anything right or wrong, I'm just concerned with what the actual despatch was. From your knowledge was there, in fact, a subsequent despatch of two level 2 technicians to that particular incident?-- Yes, it was not automatic. It was some time into the incident.

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All right. Okay. During the events of the 10th itself, though, and without actually knowing, but it's - may well have been that many incidents were responded to with less than two level 2 qualified technicians?-- Absolutely. I was involved in one of those.

And part of the - well, that's right, you were. And part of the difficulty with even knowing whether that was the case or not, is that I think you describe the number of people saved that day as a guesstimate because details simply weren't taken of many people who were rescued; is that right?-- That's right. If you were, in fact, to drag out your official file service notebook it would have got to pulp inside a couple of minutes with the volume of rain, and it was just also based on the fact that there were so many rescues queued up. You could see them down the street. So you'd pull one lot out and then you'd respond to the next incident. So on our estimates we

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believe, in the debrief, we saved 90 and lost 2.

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And that's one extraordinary day, and the example in Dalby is another where you say a despatch may not have initially included two level 2 technicians to a swift-water incident. But do you say or are you concerned that there is a systemic issue with requirement with that direction or is it the case that the requirement is being honoured, you are just concerned about the consequences, the requirement to despatch two level 2 technicians to a swift-water incident?-- Well, I suppose it goes back to crewing on the day. If you haven't got two people rostered on, you - the swift water level 2 technician, you can't respond to-----

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But in situations like that, does Firecoms get someone from somewhere else and despatch them?-- At best they may do a recall of the swift-water technicians, but that will take a little bit of time. Normally if they haven't got them on the truck, unfortunately Toowoomba the truck still goes. We seem to have these all hazards approach that you call us and we're suddenly the experts on most things and we'll go and have a go at it. And the next nearest manned swift-water technician truck would come out of Ipswich.

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And finally by way of broad topics, and I appreciate, as I say, there's over a hundred pages of transcript so we can't go through it all, but you also draw attention or suggest a need for day/night thermal scopes?-- Yes.

Did you hear Mr Smith's evidence about that?-- Yeah, unfortunately he's sort of on the mark and sort of not, and I'll give you clarification. On the tour of two before where we dragged the four people out of the floodwater was standing next to a Channel Nine cameraman by the name of Peter Collins and he's looking at the cars that were over a kilometre away with just his TV camera with a nice zoom lens on it and he was detailing what he could see within those cars. Now, there are day/night thermal spotting scopes that the thermal imaging cameras that we got on the appliances at best are two power magnification. So of a night-time you can't, and they don't operate very effectively over perhaps a hundred metres so if you're looking a thousand metres into blackness, you need something that's got a zoom capacity. And what I say is day-night scope, Mr Smith did mention quite correctly that they won't see through glass. But if you switch from the thermal imaging capacity of a scope to the optical magnification, it might be 45 power, you're going to be able to see who's in the car visually. You don't necessarily have to use the thermal imaging capacity of it all of the time. And, in fact, some of our older thermal imaging cameras have got what's known as a video overlay so that you can actually see through glass.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent, I'll leave you till last. Mr Dunning, did you have anything?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Burrows, you took part in an interview with the Commission staff some time ago; is that right?-- Yes.

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And you were aware that Assistant Commissioner Dawson provided a statement to the inquiry earlier this week?-- Yes.

And that's being available to you, has it not?-- I had a quick peruse of it, I think, yesterday.

So you have read it?-- Yes.

I thought you told us earlier that you hadn't read it?-- Well, there's been a couple of different statements cruising around. So unless you table that one, I can't confirm whether that's actually the document that I've read or not.

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Well, there was only one provided to the Commission under the hand of Mr Dawson, I think it was Monday morning from memory.

COMMISSIONER: Do you want it shown-----

MR MacSPORRAN: Yes, perhaps he should look at just for completeness.

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COMMISSIONER: -----to Mr Burrows?

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MR CALLAGHAN: I might just clarify. There might be more than one document. 1

MR MacSPORRAN: Do you recognise that, Mr Burrows? That's the one you saw?-- I'm just scanning through it. Yes, it is.

Anyway, can we now take it that you have in fact read that?-- Yes.

And you would have noticed that he has taken trouble to try and deal with some of the issues, if not the majority of them, that you raise in your interview with the Commission staff?-- Yes. 10

Now, can I take you then to some of these very quickly. Your first concern, you acknowledge, was that the long-term resourcing of Toowoomba has resulted in the Toowoomba response capacity in fact decreasing over time?-- That's correct.

Can I just suggest that's not right and suggest this to you. That in fact this is what's happened over time: in the last 10 years or so the reported incidents in Toowoomba has remained roughly about the same level?-- By - if you're referring to Mr Dawson's statement, that is correct. However, in the last 10 years, the staff from stations 11 and 12, particularly with the special, respond four hours by road out to south-west and, if required, are required to fly right out to the Northern Territory border. That didn't happen 10 years ago. 20

Can you agree with me to this extent, that in determining the most appropriate number of firefighters allocated to a location, say Toowoomba, the service has to consider a number of different factors?-- I would like they do - hope that they do, yes. 30

And these might be the factors: population; you'd agree with that?-- Yes.

Incident call rate data, how much activity there is requiring the services of the QFRS?-- To a degree. If I may, in 1996 we went from the board where the township of Toowoomba was being served pretty much exclusively by the permanent staff. Now we've gone to a state model, the township of Toowoomba services all points west and to a very large extent----- 40

COMMISSIONER: I think you're getting off the point a bit?-- -----down - down to and as far as Gatton.

Look, the question is just is it a relevant consideration and your answer is either yes or no. 50

MR MacSPORRAN: I assume it is yes?-- Could you repeat the question again, please.

Yes. You agreed that population is a relevant factor when you are looking at how many firefighters are needed in a particular location like Toowoomba?-- Yes.

Another relevant factor is an incident call rate data?-- Yes.

Hazardous risk and availability of neighbouring operational resources?-- Yes.

Now, Toowoomba command there's 14 station officers, firstly?-- Yes.

There's 34 permanent firefighters?-- Yes.

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Seventy-two auxiliary firefighters; is that right?-- In area 1 but not in Toowoomba.

The Kitchener Street replacement fire station commenced in September 2010?-- Yes.

That operates 24 hours seven days a week?-- Yes.

It's permanently staffed by four firefighters and two station officers on each shift?-- It depends on what time of the month with regards sick leave, drawdowns are factored in. At the end of the month it may only be four.

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That station is directly supported by the Anzac Avenue station?-- Yes.

And that station is permanently staffed by three firefighters and one station off on each shift?-- Yes.

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It also operates 24/7?-- Yes.

And those stations operate in conjunction with a network of auxiliary staff stations at Crows Nest, Goombungee, Highfields, Oakey and Pittsworth?-- Yes, and the Toowoomba auxiliaries.

Toowoomba itself and surrounding areas. Now, the number of incidents within the urban area levy boundary in Toowoomba Command has remained consistent over the last 10 years. That's what I suggested to you earlier. Do you agree with that?-- By your - your saying, yes.

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Well, do you know or? You don't have to agree if you don't know. Just tell me you don't know?-- I don't know.

Very well. And the Toowoomba area operational response capability has been improving over time. You don't agree with that it seems?-- No.

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And that improvement, I suggest to you, is as a direct result of more effective fire appliances, firstly. You agree that the appliances have become more effective over time?-- No.

No. Additional equipment being provided?-- Yes.

Increased focus on training and skilled maintenance?-- No.

No. Implementation of a number of community education initiatives?-- Yes.

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Building fire safety improvements and increased fire communication capability?-- Yes.

And the total number of incidents in Toowoomba for '07/'08, and I assume you won't know these figures and just tell me if you don't, was 1745?-- I'll take your word for it.

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'08/'09 was 1804?-- Again, your word.

'09/'10, was 1776 and for '10/'11, to the end of February, was 1189. So there's a roughly consistent number of incidents, isn't there?-- There is.

And the average response times to structural fires from the Kitchener Street and Anzac Avenue stations is well below the target response time of 14 minutes?-- That target is an administrative target. It is not necessarily a firefighting target.

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No. I mean, you can always hope for something better but the bar has been set at 14 minutes and you try and meet that target or below it, don't you?-- We attempt to, yes.

And currently Toowoomba, and that area, is performing better than that target time for responses?-- Yes.

Now, things can always improve but that indicates, doesn't it, that the system in that area is operating reasonably efficiently, according to the service's own standards? Do you agree with that?-- I don't agree with the 14 minutes as being the benchmark.

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You think there should be a lower benchmark?-- Yes, based on fire science.

Ideal world, you'd have appliances at the scene much quicker than that?-- Yes.

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But you do what you can?-- Given the limitations by management, yes.

Now, your next complaint, it seems, is the failure of management to be proactive leading up to the flood events?-- Yes.

And the flood events you're talking about those in Toowoomba?-- No, in surrounds.

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In sounds, all right. Just deal with Toowoomba for a moment if we can. You'd agree that the sort of flooding that occurred in Toowoomba on the 10th of January this year was unprecedented?-- Some say that. The historical record indicates otherwise.

Well, let's take, for instance, the Kitchener and James Street

intersection. That has been subject to flooding in the past, has it not?-- Yes. 1

But in recent memory, nothing of the nature or magnitude of what happened on the 10th?-- No, because the recent memory is based on the fact that 25 years ago, as an example, there was no housing in the upstream catchment area that services the Toowoomba environs.

But there hadn't been an event of a similar kind in living memory, had there?-- Well, by the Toowoomba Chronicle, there were - there has been many examples of bullock drays being washed down Ruthven Street and they're certainly not as buoyant as the average family sedan nowadays. 10

Well, did you bring to notice, did you, with the fire service administration your concerns about that sort of flooding taking place in Toowoomba before the 10th of January?-- Yes.

You did?-- Yes. 20

What did you do?-- I - I raised it and that's as far as it went.

When? When was that?-- Again, I'd have to go back through my records, but it's not just me that was concerned about the flooding. On East Creek, Toowoomba Regional Council had obviously thought enough about the potential for flooding the sewer manholes were raised two and a half metres above walking height. 30

One of your concerns is that there were a number of senior officers on leave?-- Yes.

And that the place was short-staffed as it were. That's what you're suggesting, isn't it?-- I believe that people should have seen that it was cycling up for a major event.

Well, the senior officers on leave were these I suggest to you. The first was Inspector McInerney. He was away?-- Yes. 40

But was replaced by Acting Inspector Rye?-- Yes.

That was for October to the end of - almost the end of January this year?-- Yes.

Inspector John Wilcox was replaced by acting Inspector McGrath from Roma command from 27 December to 31 January?-- Yes.

Inspector Lacko was replaced by Acting Inspector Goodman, Manager Business Operations, 20 December to 24 January?-- Yep. 50

Lacko was recalled to duty on the 17th of January and assigned to be the QFRS south-west region liaison officer in the QPS major incident room?-- Yes.

And Acting Inspector Goodman remains in the position as Acting

Manager Operational Business, and Mr Dawson himself returned from annual leave on the 20th of December. Is that right?-- Yes.

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So those senior officers were the ones on leave. They were replaced and there was no gap in the senior management structure at the time you're talking about I suggest?-- Well, if I may put to you, why could I not contact these senior on-calls if they were - weren't at home?

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Your next complaint relates to the Oakey-Pittsworth Road event. That's so?-- Yes.

Tell me this, you took an active part in that?-- I was the incident controller.

Did you deal with Firecoms in managing that incident?-- I was communicating to Firecom, yes.

All Firecom traffic is taped?-- Yes.

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You'd expect there to be a record of your contact and dealings with Firecom over that incident?-- Not all of the radio communications.

Well, there'd be some record somewhere, would there, or there should be, of your involvement with the Pittsworth-Oakey - Pittsworth Road Oakey incident?-- Well, if I may, there are actually three-----

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Can you just bear with me. Can you just answer that question, please, firstly, whether there would be a record in your expectation of your involvement in that incident?-- There will be a radio log of the Firecom communications. There are two other radios on the appliance.

You're saying you used those and there would be no record of those, is that what you're getting around to telling us?-- That's correct, and I raised that with management prior.

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Now, in your terms of your involvement in the events of the 10th of January, could I take you to this topic. You say there was a failure to recall staff and man-up stations and you take issue with Acting Commissioner Dawson's evidence that there were 57 staff available and deployed on that day?-- As I said to the previous counsel, that's - there's probably 58 terminal people that could be counted by midnight. I could not for the life of me see why all operational staff were not recalled to duty for what was the singular largest event in Toowoomba.

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Can I suggest this to you, that the 57 is broken down this way. Toowoomba command permanent staff, there were 10 of those. Is that about right?-- That's correct.

Community safety staff, there was one of those?-- I'm not aware as to who was who and is who.

Okay?-- All I know I was aware of was the 15 that I knew.

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Auxiliary staff, 18?-- They would have been called in at some stage into the event.

Operational callback staff, 11?-- Is that including the night shift?

Well, I'm suggesting to you operational callback staff, in total 11. Do you agree or disagree?-- But I'm just after a little bit of clarity if I may-----

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If you can't answer it-----?-- -----because you're asking me to provide an answer.

All right?-- There is 10 people on nightshift as well as 10 people on day, so is it 10 and 10 make 20?

Firecom, four officers?-- Yes. Again, that could be two day, two night or is it two on the dayshift and two on the night or four on the dayshift and two on the nightshift?

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Five senior officers?

MR KENT: I hesitate to interrupt but this doesn't seem to be a productive process.

COMMISSIONER: Well, isn't it in a sense, Mr MacSporran, that the witness says you can't pinpoint at which time of the day these people were on and it doesn't seem to be clear that they're all on at one time or whether it is the total of who reported for duty that day. So it does seem a little futile arguing about it.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Well, perhaps I could approach it this way. Mr Burrows, you don't suggest, surely, do you, that all of these staff should be on duty immediately to deal with the event?-- I believe all operational staff should have been recalled to duty. We had four uncrewed appliances sitting between two stations. They could have been taking phone calls at the station that were ringing off the hook. They could have been operating in any number of support roles but they weren't called.

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It takes time, does it not, to make operational available staff?-- No.

There is a process that has to be gone through?-- You ring one person on shift and he rings everyone else on that shift.

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It's as simple as that?-- Simple as that.

That's your view of things. Your next complaint is about your request for a firebird. Was this again on the 10th of January?-- Yes.

Tell me this, is this account of the events correct - and there is an incident report dealing with that matter, isn't

there, you'd expect?-- Yes. Yes.

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It was at Cecil Plains Road, Wellcamp, on the 10th?-- Yes.

The crew - and I assume you were on the crew, are you, that responded?-- I was the incident controller.

Responded at 17.36. That's just after 5.30 in the afternoon?-- That's correct.

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You requested two swift water rescue staff to be deployed at 17.44 while you were on your way?-- Yes.

And you requested on the way, again, aerial support at 17.46, a couple of minutes later?-- After hearing the firebird asset say it was still running and at Toowoomba Airport.

Whose helicopter was that by the way, do you know?-- Well, if it's - if it is given the designation of "firebird" it means it's been contracted to the fire service.

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From a private contractor?-- I don't know where it was from.

All right?-- But if it's given a designation of firebird, it means it is under the control of the fire service.

You arrived on the scene at a minute before 6 in the afternoon, 17.59?-- Yes.

And the motorbike rider concerned greeted you as you arrived?-- That's correct.

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He was safe?-- He'd been dragged out of the water by a truck driver.

But when you first arrived, you immediately understood he was safe?-- Yes.

You didn't need the helicopter?-- Hindsight is a wonderful thing, sir. I didn't have that privilege on turnout.

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But the time from your first request at 17.46 until you ascertained he was safe was 13 minutes?-- Yes, and that aircraft could have been there in six.

And it would have been a complete waste of that resource as it turned out?-- That's your word. It would not have been a complete waste of resource if the person was hanging off a tree downstream.

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You understand there's currently a review being undertaken for the swift water rescue capability of the service?-- My swift water coordinator has advised me of that.

Are you keen to provide some input into that?-- Yes, I would like to.

And you intend to do so, do you? Some constructive input?-- I

would like to hope with my submission I have tried to be constructive.

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Yes, all right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman.

MS O'GORMAN: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent.

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MR KENT: Thank you, Commissioner. I might just touch on a couple of other issues that you've raised in the transcript but haven't been ventilated here yet, fairly briefly, if you'll just indulge me, Mr Burrows. One thing that you say is that in your view supervisors controlling incidents, it would be of assistance for these kind of events if they were trained in swift water rescue. Is that something that you say?-- Absolutely.

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And why is that?-- Then they would have some sort of empathy from the incident controllers that are actually at the scene when they request more resources. They would have a sound knowledge base to which they could call on to make a judgment. As it stands now, they're doing it based on something that they might have done 20 years ago.

Another thing that you seem to say is that where decisions are being made how many level 2s should be trained up, level 2 themselves, existing ones, should have input to that. Is that right?-- Yes. It shouldn't - I find it strange that if 85 per cent of the staff on the station want to be level 2s, why shouldn't they be?

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Yes, I see. But you're saying that level 2s themselves would be the best people to have input to that?-- Yes.

Because of their expertise?-- Yes.

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You said something about using the Olympic kayak resource in Sydney as a possible training venue and I think you heard Mr Smith being asked questions about that?-- Yes.

Just briefly, do you still hold to the view that it could be a useful resource to be explored?-- Yes, absolutely. In my previous training as a swift water level 1 and 2 technician that hasn't been recognised in Queensland, where I was trained we had the ability to walk along the dry creek course and the advantage with the Olympic course at Penrith is the students could walk along the dry course, look at what they believed the hydrology effects would be when the water ran over the obstacles, the concrete booms, those sorts of things and then in a controlled fashion, they can upgrade any sort of white water event that they want to the extreme. The downside of Tully is, my concern is that sooner or later somebody will get caught in a natural log jam and they will drown whereas at

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least at the Penrith course, if somebody got into trouble it's only a quick radio call to the pump controller and the water is off. You can't do that in Tully. So even Mr Smith's admission, he said that some areas are a little bit more dangerous than others. We are meant to be working under zero harm. Yes, what we do is risky but the training has to be safe.

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All right?-- And the training at Tully doesn't encompass broadwater walk-ins like Mr Bland may have mentioned previously where you're walking in over a kilometre. Now, they can't replicate a kilometre of broadwater at Tully.

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Yes. Now, you speak in your interview about staff levels and what you think about that and you have been cross-examined about that, but did you make some observations about a possible extra station in Toowoomba being created, particularly near the airport?-- Yes, it's - contrary to what counsel was suggesting, Toowoomba does need at least a third or a fourth station. The station site that I have suggested and it has received lukewarm consideration by management is next to the CareFlight helicopter pad adjacent to the Toowoomba Airport. It would give us the ability to be able to put swift water technicians onto a rotary asset that has a winch, put them into a remote location and extract the patients very, very quickly. And if it was a further distance out into our south-west region, we are right next to the Toowoomba Airport so you can put them onboard a high speed fixed-wing asset and transport them all the way to the Territory border.

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Okay. You also made some statements about a possible purpose-built Firecom centre in Toowoomba?-- Yeah, well, as I say, unfortunately, the Fire Communications Centre that's existing is an open plan environment with Queensland Ambulance Service and quite often it is a bit of a shouting match. It doesn't mean to be but because of just sheer lack of acoustic insulation. And 10 square metres for two people, they can't even go to the toilet without having to cross their legs and their fingers because currently there is no recall mechanism there to come from the toilet back to the console in case of operations. In the Fire Communications Centre it can go from mind-numbing tedium to flat out in 30 seconds.

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Yes?-- And it is imperative, I believe, that the Fire Communications Centre in Toowoomba be put into a purpose-built room that has got space.

You also said, I think, that in your view for these kinds of high intensity incidents where there is an ICC setup, it would be best to have a senior on-call specific for Toowoomba?-- Yes, because unfortunately in the past, and even on the day, the senior on-calls can be very problematic to contact. They have a pager, they have a mobile phone, they have a radio, they have a landline and some we cannot contact, which means that from an operational perspective, we pull up at the incident, request more resources and because the senior on-call is not available to approve the allocation of the

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resources, it doesn't happen.

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All right?-- We have this administrative logjam, and years ago it was drummed into me that administration was to never impede operations.

And finally, we've heard that the ICC for Toowoomba was set up at the ROCC?-- That's correct, because there was no ICC at Highfields running.

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Is it your view it would be best to set up the ICC at the Highfields station?-- Well, in talking to the captain at Highfields, he said it would only take 20 minutes to put everything together. They've got the laptops there. All that it needs is the human resource.

So there are facilities at the Highfield station to quickly-----?-- They're sitting there now.

-----get and ICC up and running at that location?-- They are sitting there now in the station. Have been trained with an incident management system, to which anyone who has been trained can operate an ICC.

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Why is it you think that would be better? Is it speed of getting it going?-- All that that they have to do is activate, in this case, the auxiliary pages for Highfields. They respond to station and are given the task, activate the ICC. They live in the town, they can access the ICC which is in their station.

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Yes. I have nothing further.

COMMISSIONER: Anymore questions?

MR CALLAGHAN: Nothing, may Mr Burrows be excused.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Burrows, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: Madam Commissioner, notwithstanding the time, we would like to deal with Mr McGuire this afternoon.

COMMISSIONER: All right.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Commissioner, can I just make a submission about that. The next witness was going to be, in light of the evidence that has been given today, Assistant Commissioner Dawson and that is entirely appropriate in our submission that he comes next because it is in answer to this last witness's evidence and the evidence given on Tuesday. He is based in Toowoomba. He worked last weekend to endeavour to have this evidence put into a statement form to assist the Inquiry. He

has done that and he has been on-call, on standby, as it were,
for some days now to give this evidence.

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Mr Kent is here and I'm not sure what Mr Kent's availability
will be after today. I expect the evidence from Mr Dawson
will be brief. In my submission, some consideration should be
given to calling him now.

COMMISSIONER: Well, I don't think we can do both of them
operationally. What are the competing considerations,
Mr Callaghan?

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MR KENT: I do have to say that I have another commitment
tomorrow morning, although it would be a brief commitment, and
I was going to ask that if Mr Dawson gives evidence tomorrow,
that he not be the first witness, although perhaps the second
witness would be sufficient to meet my convenience. But
that's my position. I can sit on this afternoon if that's
suitable.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: I'm told that Mr McGuire can come back
tomorrow. I'm sympathetic to Mr Dawson's circumstances. Of
course, Mr McGuire has some special circumstances which have
to be taken into account as well, but we can get him tomorrow
I believe. So I'm happy to call Mr Dawson now.

COMMISSIONER: So Mr McGuire is happy to come back tomorrow?

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MR CALLAGHAN: I don't know that he's happy but he is able to.

COMMISSIONER: Very well then. We'll go ahead with Mr Dawson.

THOMAS CRAIG DAWSON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your name and
occupation, please?-- Thomas Craig Dawson, Assistant
Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, South-West
Region.

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Mr Dawson, you have prepared an 18-page statement for the
purposes of the Commission; is that right? That's a copy of
it, and there is an attachment to that statement as well; is
that right?-- That is correct.

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Yes, I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 355.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 355"

MR CALLAGHAN: Just a few questions. You've heard the evidence of Mr Burrows this afternoon?-- I didn't listen to it directly, but I've read his statements.

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All right. You're aware one of his statements or one of his concerns he's expressed is the number of senior officers who were on leave during the relevant period in January - or December/January of this year?-- I understand that to be one of his concerns.

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And I don't really - I mean, he's raised his concerns and you've responded in your statement, but it does raise this issue which is presumably always an issue for the fire service at Christmas and New Year which is always going to be a problematic period for rescues, be it bushfire, swift water or whatever, both because of the climate and because a lot of people are out doing the sorts of activities which get them into trouble. Is there any particular policy of the fire service on leave being taken during this period?-- The policy would be related to, and I'm just - I'll think about it as I go through, but certainly for normal rostering, maintaining of staffing levels, and that's done through a HR approach through rostering to ensure that the permanent station manning levels are maintained. And certainly if the on-call seniors and the seniors, for everyone that goes on leave there's an automatic replacement, someone will act up. In my region I can bring in temporary auxiliary firefighters at the bottom, I have coverage capability, so I have got to maintain my minimum manning levels. The challenges further out west where casual employees, being auxiliaries, may want to have their Christmas break. But again through the command process and the command system, captains and lieutenants make sure we have got coverage at all times.

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All right. Second point I wanted to raise, if you can turn to paragraph 67 of your statement?-- Sorry, could you repeat the number?

Paragraph 67?-- Sixty-seven. Yes.

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And this is broadly on the topic of preparations that were being made for events of the summer?-- Yes.

You say you gave a direction that there were no financial restrictions in terms of the project described in the paragraph above that?-- Yes.

What's - what's - I assume there was some financial restrictions as much as there is a budget?-- Without a doubt, and I oversee that budget, and to what the team was presenting to me I saw that well and truly within my budget requirements. And the other part of that is that I supported their request to maintain staff on the TR through over the Christmas period which I supported and staff were rostered on overtime.

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All right. Again, you're aware of the broad thrust, at least, of Mr Burrows' evidence, and I'm particularly concerned with the issue as to whether there were appliances, technical

rescue appliances anyway, available in Toowoomba on the 10th which weren't being used which could have been had there been more staff or had more staff been mobilised at an earlier time. What's your response to the suggestion that there were appliances there which weren't being used at the critical times?-- Well, certainly as the event of the 10th unfolded, I can assure the Commission that the appliances were drawn upon as staffing levels came back in through the call-backs and things of that nature. The previous planning, if I can just take people to there, was to have the TR, which is the Lima appliance, at the rescue station at Kitchener Street fully equipped and fully manned and I believe on that day we actually had two swift water team people, qualified staff, on those appliances for use at that station. Back in December, we also put together these little yankies which were a small appliance, four by four capacity or large carrying capacity, and they were equipped out as well. And the game plan simply was that as additional staff become available, these resources were in the backyard at Kitchener Street fire station for deployment. That - those appliances were made ready on the 10th, they were on the 10th. They were utilised on the night before in Grantham on the 9th. What happened on the 9th simply limited access to some of the staff we used on the 9th weren't there on the 10th, but came later in the day as call-backs and as the event unfolded.

All right. Again, without bogging down into too much detail, one concern that has been expressed was the failure to set up an ICC on the 10th and the suggestion, I think, perhaps my words but adopted by Mr Burrows, that the Firecom in effect became a de facto ICC on that day. You have addressed this, I think, and maintain that the flexible approach which you adopted was suited to the circumstances; is that right?-- Yes. Suitable in the sense of getting us off to launching to the best starting position. I had to secure Firecom as that's where all the intel comes in by causing additional staff be called back possibly through the storm season approach, by bolstering in there and getting four people into Firecom from the operator's side of things, getting a inspector or an acting inspector in there and ultimately chief super, I believe, gave me some capacity which I believe I needed on the day.

Perhaps to get to the point, there's been a debrief as to way everything operated on the 10th, hasn't there?-- We've had several debriefs and we particularly had one which I call the 10th of the 1st debrief early February, and where we called in as many staff who actively engaged on that day. Subsequent to that we have had Firecom debriefs, technical rescue debriefs. The individual stations that were stood up and came in and their little local country towns, we had their debriefs as well.

Specifically on the 10/1 debrief-----?-- Yes.

-----and with the experience of that extraordinary day on board, have there been suggestions specifically as to how the response might have been better coordinated?-- Certainly.

The nature of the debriefs is about let's talk about what we did, talk it all the way through. It's a non-blame approach, it's what actually happened because in any incident people may know what they did, but may not know what other teams subsequently did. It's an opportunity for everyone to sit there and hear the whole picture-----

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I understand-----?-- -----unfold.

-----what's involved. What I'm interested in is whether something has actually emerged which suggests how in this sort of large scale disaster with a demand for multiple responses, how such a thing might better be coordinated?-- Certainly, and that's where people did raise issues about ICCs and things of that nature.

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And did something come of that? Is there a project or a document or any learning which-----?-- Oh, yes.

-----which is going to be taken forward from this event-----?-- Yes.

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-----to be used next time, that's what I'm interested in?-- A local situation operational plan has now been developed for Toowoomba city-----

Right?-- -----in hindsight of what's occurred-----

Yes?-- -----and that plan has been put together in conjunction with some operational people, and it's - it's in draft for me to review on my return.

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Okay. So what's the timetable for that?-- I have actually read the plan.

Okay?-- I'm very encouraged by it. I hope to action that almost immediately with very minor changes.

So the Commission should be able to have a copy of that?-- I believe a copy has been made available if needed, yes.

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All right?-- It's still in draft, but I can authorise it.

I just mean when it's finalised?-- Okay.

When it's actually functional, if that's going to be in the near future as it would seem to be?-- It can be done fairly quickly.

All right. Were you here on Tuesday when Mr Dundas gave evidence?-- Not here directly, no. I was in another office in Brisbane.

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He gave evidence about a response to a swift-water rescue at Murphy's Creek not, I think, on the 10th but on another occasion on which he responded with a Lima as well as an Alpha appliance with at least - well, with the attendant personnel, and on returning - I think someone else dealt with the

situation, but on returning he was queried as to why he'd responded with both appliances because there was a temporary directive issued by the Assistant Commissioner which had suggested that he shouldn't have done what he did and he hadn't got to hear of that temporary directive. Are you aware of the incident that I'm talking about?-- Yes. Since hearing Mr Dundas's comments or statements, I've gone away and tried to investigate that so I had some clarity on it. I believe the incidence is on the 12th or the 13th, I can confirm that because I found the actual fire report. What occurred post 10th, just for a bit of background, is the sense that the police around the 12th/13th set up a major incident room out at Toowoomba to run all the events in the Lockyer Valley. They - we - by that stage on the 12th, the evening of the 12th, we implement a liaison officer into that MIR. So with my ROCC and the liaison officer I have direct communications. Some e-mails were sent clearly indicating all movements into the Lockyer Valley need to be controlled, reason being police have declared under the Coroner's Act a scene - a crime scene for a major large area. Also too please note bridges and roadways, we cannot guarantee their safety. So from my perspective I thought, "Well, look if south-east region make a request"-----

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COMMISSIONER: Well, please, can we just get to the point. Was there a directive-----?-- Yes, there was-----

-----and didn't this man get it?-- -----yes, there was.

Well, did you find out whether he should have had it, might have had it, what was the situation?-- No, he came on for a night shift and there's a chance it got to fire communication centre, it didn't get to Stewie.

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MR CALLAGHAN: All right. And it was a directive which, in effect, overrode the standard directive that was applicable to this despatch for swift water-----?-- Yes, it was temporary directive, correct.

You have got some authorisation to issue a temporary directive of that kind?-- Particularly when I'm requested by the QPS and under - they were overseeing the disaster management operations and there was a direct request from them to control vehicles moving to that area.

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I'm not questioning the wisdom of doing so-----?-- No.

-----I'm just wondering whether you were actually authorised or whether what you did-----?-- To put a temporary variation in place, yes.

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All right. Okay. All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent?

MR KENT: Thank you, Commissioner. Just in relation to this local situational plan that you told us?-- LOSOP or LAAPS, yes, sir.

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Sorry?-- It can be LAAP or a LOSOP, local specific operational plan.

Forgive me if avoid the acronym?-- Understood.

Do I understand that to be in development at the moment or in draft at the moment that it's going to be finalised, from what I understood a minute ago, in the relatively near future?-- Yes, the final phase for that is for me to meet with the team that put it together, for me to have - ask any questions of them that I may have after the first and second readings, seek their explanations. I also will also ask for an understanding, "Is this the best plan we can come up?" I'd really like to push them to say, "After all the lessons we've learnt from the 10th, have we done it?" So just an opportunity to talk to the people who put it together for me.

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The people who put it together don't include the station officers though, do they?-- Yes, they do.

Oh, which station officers?-- The people comprising it is the chief super, Inspector Eddie Lacko from Business Operation Management Group, Station officer Stewart Lange, and I believe Station Officer Tony Goose may have had some support in there as well. As soon as I say SO Stewart Lange, he's the regional technical rescue coordinator so I'm assuming, and this is the areas I'll pursue, "Have you gone back to a collective group of your technical rescue people and what do they think?" That's something I'll be pursuing.

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You will be pursuing that?-- I guarantee it, sir.

Does it surprise you if the station officers, other than Mr Lange, don't know about this at the moment?-- Well, no, it doesn't, but specifically hopefully the people I'll be pursuing with are swift water team because the plan is generically a swift-water rescue plan, but certainly if Stewie wanted to talk to his entire technical rescue team and that, I'm open to that as well.

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Does it - and I won't belabour this, but would you expect by this stage of this document that you're talking about that these kinds of people who have given evidence in this Inquiry about this would have heard about this plan?-- Unless they're talking about at it station level. Once I have authorised it, we go to the implementation phase. And one thing I have taken some feedback from staff members is that we've got to make sure it gets all the way down and are learning out of certainly the 10th of the 1st. I want to make sure they get it and they actually understand it.

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You can particularly understand from what's been said in this Flood Inquiry about this topic that these people on the ground are complaining a bit, aren't they, about the channels of

communication up the line?-- I'm certainly hearing that, sir, yes.

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Yes. All right. Well, anyway. Can I just refer you to a few passages in your statement, please, Mr Dawson? Looking firstly at page 2 paragraph 6, you mention there, "Every Local Commander has an operational plan, and the Toowoomba command as a 2010/11 operational plan in place"; right?-- Yes, sir.

Can I ask you this: is that document, we've seen from its title, in place for about a year normally at a time?-- Yes.

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Is it sort of a work-in-process in the sense that you respond to things that are happening during that year to maybe amend or, you know, put directives out relevant to the plan to respond to changing conditions?-- That operational component you're quite right, it is a dynamic movement.

Yep?-- The generic plan itself, it's almost fixed and they may alter the number of buildings they're going to inspect and things of that nature. I noticed in that plan that the local action plan, LAAPs, they already had there money focused around our traditional business, that's chemical plants, structural fires and things of that nature. Where that may vary is an incident like Thackery Street where through an inspection we discover we have got 2 or 300,000 stored car tyres. So a special LAAP was done for that and they go into there. If I can just extend that thought, one thing I did notice was there was no flood plans in there and risk areas for Toowoomba.

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You have anticipated me, Mr Dawson?-- And that's why the other plan will be in there.

I was going to ask you particularly in relation to one incident. Are you aware that there had been a swift-water rescue at Murphy's Creek just before Christmas 2010, 22nd of December I think?-- Can you be specific with the date because I am aware of a few rescues around that time.

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All right. What I'm suggesting to you is the 22nd of December?-- Yes, yes, and that - that was preceded by the one on the 20th at Dalby.

Okay. And this is all in the context of-----?-- Yes.

-----you being aware that '10/'11 was a wet summer-----?-- Yes.

-----to put it mildly?-- A different summer, yes.

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Flooding was expected, wasn't it, throughout the summer?-- Certainly, and I think there's a document in here where, sort of, it looks at the regional progression where we start around July getting ready for our traditional bushfire season. There's comments in there that I'm very mindful of that - we've experienced both in the region where we'll get a severe storm season so I have got half burning and half flash

flooding in local country areas. So we're very mindful, but certainly I'd say around that October/November there's a distinct movement that 99 per cent we're going to get more water than we're going to get fire, but we still need to prepare for both, but there was a distinctive move to the wet season.

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In that context was anything in particular done about either enhancing or changing or improving the ability to respond to swift water events?-- I need to qualify it in the sense that, yes, we were leading up to that because the same group of people - I think it's been mentioned once before, all hazard approach. We don't - we go through the same process as what any hazard in command in management of that incident, be it bushfire refers the same infrastructure we have in place as obviously for floods or a large chemical incident, things of that nature. So we're just trying to adjust the hazard, and there's a beautiful part out west is where the fire wardens become flood wardens, it's a means of communicating. And we were moving almost 12 months before, we were in Charleville and Roma with major flooding out there, so it's not unusual for us. So our plan has shift back to the western floods was a repeat of what we did around that March - February/March period. And certainly that talks about deploying staff to the far west swift water teams. We tend to get the role of managing air bases out there as well, and that's how we support our colleagues in EMQ, and this is prior to the legislation change. So we were tarring up to that. So we'll either going to burn or flood and we - it's the same plan, same people, we just change and adjust. The swift water component you are referring to, we normally draw upon resources out of Cannon Hill, Brisbane, or a larger region. My staff had approached me and said to me, "This time, boss, can we get front row? Can we go?", so we adjusted the rotational rosters to include more of our own people to go west, and that's where we started our flood season. Certainly after the incident on the 20th of the 12th, and I'm mindful of that incident at Murphy's Creek which I - if that's the one that involves an SS flood boat, I have read that report.

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All right. In terms of being ready then, what about numbers of SWRT2s?-- Yes.

Did you do something to increase those numbers of those qualified personnel?-- I certainly accessed to them. I certainly did that post the 20th, and I'm not going to offer it as an excuse, but I was on leave up until 20th. I resumed annual leave - back from my annual leave on the 20th of the 12th, and we had that incident when I was getting my handover back from the acting AC back to me, we had that incident unfold, and that caused me to really reflect seriously on how we were doing it.

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And I was mindful that the technical rescue coordinator was going to work off the old plan and, I must admit, I caused Stewie Lange, our regional technical coordinator, to come with the chief super and I said, "Guys, we need to sit down and revisit this"-----

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COMMISSIONER: Can we have less of the conversation and the thoughts and what you actually did, do you think?-- Yes, sorry.

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So did you increase the number of swift water rescue technicians or do something about it?-- We - we increased our access to our existing ones but I didn't go get any new ones, other than I had access to other regions to call them in.

MR KENT: And did you call any in to be stationed in your region?-- Not at that stage, no.

I'm not suggesting for a minute that you could anticipate the way the 10th of January happened?-- Thank you.

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I'm not suggesting that. But, even without that, bringing people in from Cannon Hill, for example, requires not only some distance but getting up the Range, doesn't it?-- Certainly. Or we were deploying them to the Roma division, our far western division that was looking after towns out west, and our central division by Dalby, we can access planes and they can fly straight from Archerfield and go straight there.

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But to Toowoomba, they would have to come up to the Range or I suppose be flown-----?-- We can fly them in and deploy them from Toowoomba, yes.

I understand. Anyway, that didn't happen, as it turned out, on the 10th, did it? No-one was flown in to be a swift water team technician?-- No, but we ended up with two from Brisbane. We had a logical request in for some additional people and, certainly, to my surprise and amazement I discovered late into the event on the afternoon of the 10th, but there were two swift water technicians from Brisbane.

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These are not the two that had returned from Emerald?-- No, not to my knowledge, no.

I'm just looking at something, I want you to be able to comment on it if you can, I might have to show it to you. But what I'm looking at is the south-east, right, Regional Functional Plan and I know that's not you?-- Okay.

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But it's suggesting in terms of staffing for swift water preparedness a minimum of two level 2 swift water technicians will be on duty to man a swift water vehicle at all times?-- Yes.

Is there a similar provision in your regional plan?-- We certainly strive for that and on the 10th, fortunately, that was the case-----

Sorry, I really have to stop you and ask you to answer the question. Is it in your plan? You might strive for it but is it written in your plan?-- We refer more to ours about the rostering capability. But, yes, yes that is the perfect position.

I think you've answered me saying it is in your plan?-- Yes. If you haven't got my plan I can-----

I don't think I have. Oh, maybe we do have?-- I think around 2.2.

Did you find it?-- Look, I'm referring to 2.2 on - there is no page number here, sorry. But 2.2 on the measures where it refers to technical rescue, 12 staff, preferred breakdown of one by station officer, two by firefighters trained as level 2 technicians rostered to selected technical rescue stations and that would be Kitchener Street on the leading vehicle.

Is there a requirement in that directive for a swift water vehicle to be manned by a minimum of two level 2 swift water technicians?-- No, look, I - I interpret that as being technical rescue staff across the disciplines and certainly if the season is flood, especially the swift water would be applied.

It's really not practical to suggest you could put that into effect most of the time, is it, because you're not - you don't have enough rostered level 2s to have two on a vehicle? Correct?-- Look, we have a total of - 15 is our total complement in the swift water area. I currently have 11. We had one on leave and we actually have one stationed at Warwick, so I'm going into this nine if my maths is quickly right.

So you're agreeing with me you can't really have two per vehicle?-- And two per shift is more the challenge. You only have one vehicle. So trying to get two there on shifts with annual leave and few other things to juggle, it can be a rostering difficulty, yes.

Can I then take you to page 6 of your statement, paragraph 25?-- Page 6?

Yes. Paragraph 25?-- Twenty-five, yes.

You're there talking about something that had been raised particularly by Mr Burrows, which is swift water rescue training for senior officers. And you say generally that doesn't happen and to boil it down, I think you're really saying it's not completely necessary to have that; correct?-- Certainly an understanding I've indicated there or I'm trying to indicate is very required.

Yes?-- Particularly across all the disciplines. I can't just isolate that statement to swift water. USAR, like the earthquakes and things of that nature, if you haven't

noticed-----

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Just for today you can limit it to swift water I think?--
Yes. Very - very few. And as I said, I can only find
Hemo De Vries I understand as being - was a technician
practicer.

COMMISSIONER: What was that expression again, I didn't get it
either?-- A practitioner. His name is Hemo De Vries.

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Well, could you spell it?-- Yes, I can. It is H-E-M-O, is
his first name.

Right. And then?-- D-E V-R-I-E-S. I believe it is a Dutch
origin.

Thank you.

MR KENT: It is in the statement, your Honour. So you would
agree with me, I take it, that if it happened that all of the
senior officers relating to an event, a swift water event, did
have swift water training, that would enhance their
understanding and perhaps enhance the whole process?-- Well,
personally I would support that statement.

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Yes?-- And for the future.

Can I then take you to the following page, page 7. You're
dealing there in paragraph 28 with, generally, the topic of
the Herries Street Communications Centre and as you put it,
perhaps diplomatically, "Both QAS and QFRS management continue
to manage workspace areas in this centre"?-- We do.

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And you might be aware of it, but Mr Burrows makes some
suggestions about this?-- Yes.

Suggesting, firstly, that an advantage would be a
purpose-built fire communications centre for Toowoomba. Would
you agree?-- I think that's a good point to raise.

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Subject, like everything else, to budgetary-----?-- To
business cases and consideration and consultation, yes.

On a slightly different topic, the ICC on this occasion was
set up in the ROCC, right?-- No.

Right?-- That's incorrect.

Well, tell me what's right?-- The ROCC was the ROCC. The
Regional Operational Coordination Centre at Anzac Avenue was
the ROCC.

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Yes?-- If we're talking for the Toowoomba event on the 10th.

Yes?-- We opted to hold on the formation of the ICC.

All right?-- I ran with forward control, the incident control
points hoping to establish more operational points which as

the event decreased, that was allowed. The ICC eventually got established on the 11th at Highfields for two reasons: one for the requirements at Oakey, which were merging, and the recovery phase for Toowoomba CBD and Toowoomba surrounding areas.

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Isn't this part of the reason too, that the facilities at Highfields are such that it's fairly easy to establish an ICC fairly quickly at Highfields?-- I caused up to six permanent incident control centre locations throughout the regions for the purpose of bushfires. So within hours they can be manned up and they can be activated, yes.

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But, certainly, Highfields is an-----?-- Highfields is our latest addition in the new station.

Yes, all right.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Kent, how much longer are you going to be?

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MR KENT: I would be another, perhaps, 5 minutes at the most I think.

COMMISSIONER: And Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing at this stage.

COMMISSIONER: All right. We'll keep going.

MR KENT: Thank you. Paragraph 29 on the same page, you mention the fact that the Firecom operators express concerns about the space they had available and we've discussed the exigencies in relation to that. That's something that would be good if you could cure that?-- On a monthly basis I meet with the AC ambulance, my counterpart for ambulance.

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Yes?-- And the two managers of the respective Firecoms.

Yes?-- And we focus and talk about the future developments and the ongoing developments. Because of the nature of that business area, we're very mindful about our handling systems, all those sorts of things. So it is on my agenda on a monthly basis.

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Could I then take you over to page 9 paragraph 35 and this has been touched on, the number of incidents being stable over, as you express it, the urban levy boundary in Toowoomba Command. Right?-- Yes.

Now, I don't want to be picky but the area is bigger than the urban levy boundary, isn't it?-- The area spoken here is the Toowoomba command urban boundaries.

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Right?-- But, certainly, the region goes beyond those boundaries, yes.

And do you know anything about the figures for the region?-- Yes, because I - I collate and review for the whole region.

The point in issue here is the Surat Basin developments. I'm very mindful of the regional growth and command by command. 1

So it might be that if one looked at the region rather than the urban levy boundary, there might have been an increase?-- We count all incidents and all activities both within urban boundaries and outside.

Yes?-- So the data that's reviewed here is all activity. In particular, one of the benchmarks is structural fires and that's why there's a reference to attendance times and things of that nature. 10

So you're telling me that there has been a stability in the figures whether one looks at the urban levy boundary or more generally-----?-- Collective, yes.

COMMISSIONER: Where are the other figures? Are they somewhere in your statement?-- They're within our database, in our business operational management unit, and also within state headquarters in the office of the Commissioner. You can view them day by day. 20

Not in your statement?-- No, sorry, no.

Thank you.

MR KENT: Just go to page 13 paragraph 54 where you say - have you got it there. 30

You say, "On the 10th of January for the peak of this event, Acting Inspector Rye was located in the Firecom and supported the Chief Superintendent and Firecom operators." Are you aware of a concern that for some time during that peak event it was difficult to contact Acting Inspector Rye?-- This came up in the debriefs. I'm aware through the debriefs, yes.

Sure. Have you investigated that at all?-- Mr Rye is yet to provide a report on his activities. I think they have been summonsed by the Commission, so. 40

It is something you're still looking it, does that summarise it?-- Yes, I am, sir.

Finally, we're all pleased to here - I'm bowled over by the collective sigh of relief - page 18, paragraph 70, you found that there were no waterproof jackets for the portable radios in your region; correct?-- That's correct.

And that problem has been remedied now, I take it; is that right?-- A recommendation from the debrief of the technical rescue people. The simple question was asked, "How soon can we get them, put them in?" and we purchased the quantity. I'm just not too sure on the quantity but a substantial quantity had been purchased for the swift water teams. 50

And before it went onto the appliances?-- Yes.

What about radios that are not just water resistant and you have a waterproof jacket but actual waterproof radios where you can drop them in the water and they still work. Is that being considered?-- I understand through the technical rescue people Cannon Hill, Mr Smith and so forth, and I think it's certainly in the review that is about to be undertaken, for these considerations to be looked into.

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What about this, finally: for SWRT2s who are actively engaged in swift water rescue and need to have their hands free, we've been told that people are looking into an equipment set that has a headset in the helmet?-- The same as our structural pursuit in structural fires and that, to keep the officers' hands free to do all sorts of tasks.

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Yes?-- I quickly bring to mind scuba divers and you watch TV - I'm assured it's out there and I'm sure the experts will look into it.

Do you know? Is that part of the review?-- It is not something that I would personally - however, I have an interest through my committee, my technical rescue coordinator chief super, and I know they're passionate about pursuing it.

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So we go back to someone like Mr Smith about that?-- Certainly. And I believe in the review that's coming up on technical rescue, all the technical rescue, and I know my team put together recommendations in their debrief which I've endorsed. They will get tabled and hopefully get a good ear.

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Thank you. Nothing further.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Perhaps can I say this, if the Commission is interested in those other figures, I am sure Assistant Commissioner Dawson can dig them out and supply them.

COMMISSIONER: The question is whether they have remained stable, what they are. So perhaps that could be provided to the Commission.

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MR MacSPORRAN: Yes, for completeness. But I have nothing else, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: On the question of figures and with a view to laying one issue to rest, this whole question as to the adequacy of the SWT 2s, could - what's involved in an audit? That is to say, you would have a record of all swift water incidents of the fact that they were - existed?-- Yes.

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You would have a record of who was dispatched to them?-- Yes.

And you'd have - and it would be a short step from there to

work out the qualifications of those who were dispatched?--
Yes.

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So we could - there'd be a bit of labour involved but it would be a simple enough thing to actually answer the query as to whether the directives concerning the dispatch to swift water incidents are being complied with?-- Yes.

Yes, all right. Thank you. I better tender the plan that was shown to you, that is to say the south-western region operations plan.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 356.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 356"

MR CALLAGHAN: And I have nothing further for Mr Dawson. May he be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Dawson, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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COMMISSIONER: We'll adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 5.07 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY

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