

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

STATEMENT OF WAYNE ARTHUR HONOR

I, Wayne Arthur Honor, Councillor, Bundaberg Regional Council makes the following statement under oath as required by the Commissioner of Inquiry:

Actions taken by the Gin Gin LDMG Subgroup to overcome deficiencies in telecommunication reception that occurred in the 2010/2011 floods in the Bundaberg Regional Council area

1. Landline phones went out of operation in Gin Gin on Thursday 30 December 2010.
2. On that day mobile phones were not working in the town area and could only be used on the hill on which the town water tower is located. I continued to make emergency calls from this location although there was considerable difficulty in making the initial connection and then maintaining the link. Often the call would drop out in mid conversation.
3. A satellite phone was borrowed from a Telstra technician working at an installation on the water tower hill. This enabled a council officer and I to log on and participate in an EMQ phone link-up around midday. I had a particular issue to raise, namely the presence of stranded travellers in Gin Gin, but given the nature of the link-up and all the people in attendance, this was not the most effective way of communication.
4. I continued to communicate in person with the local police and use my mobile phone whenever possible. Prior to this day, my mobile phone reception had been good.
5. Without a firm communication line with the LDMG, it was necessary for the local police sergeant (██████████) and I to deal with the Department of Main Roads' engineers to negotiate the reopening of the Currajong Bridge on the Bruce Highway so that the existing traffic congestion could be cleared later that afternoon.

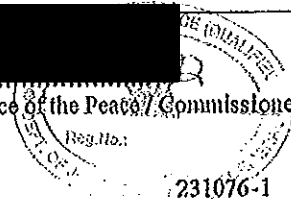
The actions taken by the Gin Gin LDMG Subgroup to assist travellers that were stranded in Gin Gin during the 2010/2011 floods in the Bundaberg Regional Council area

6. Between the evening of 28th December 2010 and 30th December 2010, I estimate that the number of people in the Gin Gin township area grew by several thousands of people. The town that would normally have a population of around 1000 people, may have had as many as 5000 people at some point in time. This huge influx of people needed to be

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accommodated. By now 300 hundred vehicles, caravans and two coaches were parked in the show grounds at Gln Gln. The Bruce Highway was lined with parked traffic from the police station in the south to Gln Gln Creek in the north. All the side streets, adjacent back streets and parks were being utilised for parking and camping by stranded travellers.

7. I called the Local Disaster Coordinator on 28th December 2010. I requested the opening of three halls to provide for the needs of travellers stranded in Gln Gln as a consequence of the road closures on the Bruce Highway and surrounding road networks. Some residents of Bungadoo also needed to be evacuated.
8. It was agreed with the Local Disaster Coordinator that the Gln Gln Community Function Centre, RSL Hall and the Youth Centre be opened to accommodate stranded travellers. I obtained authority to recruit two Council Service Centre staff to assist with opening and coordinating the halls. I requested the assistance of volunteer groups in the Gln Gln area to help with looking after the stranded travellers. These groups included Menshed, CWA, Gln Gln Chaplaincy, AOG Church, Gln Gln Scouts, Lions Club and Gln Gln Neighbourhood Centre staff.
9. On 29th December 2010 I contacted Bruce Green, Bundaberg Regional Council Welfare Officer, with a request for 1000 beds for travellers at the various halls mentioned above. QBulld subsequently called me that afternoon and said they could supply 50 beds brought by Council truck from Bundaberg along the back roads. That was better than nothing.
10. That day I received an offer from [REDACTED] of the Gladstone Salvation Army on recommendation from [REDACTED] of the Bundaberg Salvation Army to assist with preparation and cooking of food for the stranded travellers in Gln Gln. [REDACTED] was able to arrive in Gln Gln that evening and immediately took up cooking duties with the assistance of many community volunteers.
11. I obtained authorisation from the LDMG to buy food items in bulk to feed stranded travellers. This was mainly meat and vegetables bought from local shops in the town for the purpose of the proposed Salvation Army barbecue. [REDACTED] also organised a truck load of bread donated by Tip Top.
12. Volunteers walked the streets handing out flyers to travellers, directing them to the three nominated halls and to the Salvation Army barbecue at the RSL. Approximately 1000 people were provided with food on the evening of 29 December 2010, and then again on the following morning.
13. Subsequently community groups opened three more facilities (AOG Church Hall, the Community Church Hall and the pavilion at the showgrounds).

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WALKER Witness Department

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Events relevant to the request for medication made by the Gin Gin LDMG Subgroup to the Bundaberg LDMG on 29 December 2010 and the actions taken by the Bundaberg LDMG in relation to the above request

14. On Wednesday 29th December 2010 I carried out an assessment of the capability of the town to provide essential supplies over the following days. This involved visiting the local chemist and calling the hospital, the service stations, the Gin Gin IGA Super Store and the Gin Gin Bakery to see what supplies they had.
15. The Gin Gin Coral Coast Pharmacy owner [REDACTED] advised me that he had sold three times his daily quota of pharmaceuticals in little more than half a day. He made a request for assistance to obtain a number of cartons of pharmaceutical supplies consigned to his pharmacy but which had been sitting in a warehouse in Bundaberg for the past three days. He explained he was unable to maintain a supply of insulin or blood pressure medication without re-supply.
16. I called the Local Disaster Coordinator to request assistance to obtain various items including medical supplies, which I considered to be the most urgent. I was directed to send a list of these requested items and where applicable, the Gin Gin businesses to which they related. I did as directed.
17. I received a call back from the Local Disaster Coordinator who acknowledged the list of requirements but then went on to advise that no vehicle would be allowed in or out of Bundaberg, nor could we expect an aircraft from the airport. The advice was that the local pharmacy would have to arrange to get its supplies through its pharmacy guild from Gladstone. I formed the view that obtaining supplies from Gladstone was impractical due to road blockages at Tarraran Creek on the highway north of Gin Gin. I, in conjunction with Sergeant [REDACTED] formed the view that the need for medical supplies was of such high priority that there was a pressing need to take action to address the issue.
18. I called Gin Gin Carrying Company to organise a light truck to go via the back roads with assistance from the Gin Gin Police to obtain the supplies. The truck left about 5am on the morning of Thursday 30 December 2010 and returned around 9am with the medical supplies necessary to enable prescriptions to be filled. In addition, I believe that helicopters might have been used to provide some medical supplies for the hospital. It was by this method that police were able to organise the delivery of prescription drugs to very ill patients in the isolated Goodnight Scrub community.

Any other issues relevant to the overall response of the Gin Gin LDMG Subgroup to the 2010/2011 floods in the Bundaberg Regional Council area

19. The Gin Gin LDMG Subgroup and for that matter the Childers LDMG Subgroup, were established, in my opinion, to react to circumstances where their respective communities

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became isolated or were not able to be adequately serviced by the Bundaberg LDMG in times of natural disaster.

20. In order to give effect to this aim, it seems to me that there is a need to establish an objective trigger mechanism for the subgroup to activate notwithstanding that the Bundaberg LDMG has not yet activated. This would be particularly relevant in circumstances where the upstream Gin Gin community is affected by flood waters some time before the Bundaberg area is later affected by the flood waters in the system. I would be suggesting that the existing system of command and authority at least be refined with some degree of flexibility which allows the LDMG Subgroup to activate for the benefit and wellbeing of the Gin Gin community. This might be more relevant in circumstances where the peak of the disaster or hazard occurs at a difficult time, for example in the middle of the night on a public holiday.

Any insurance or land planning issues in division 3 of the Bundaberg Regional Council arising from the 2010/2011 floods

21. I don't regard myself as being qualified to advise about the status or final outcomes of insurance claims in the Gin Gin area and would defer to others who are better informed.
22. As to relevant land planning issues, to my knowledge Council is yet to consider and resolve how it is to incorporate updated flood information into its proposed new planning scheme which is currently under preparation by consultants.

Walt SH

Declared,
Sworn by Wayne Arthur Honor at Bundaberg

this 6th day of August 2011 in the presence of:

September

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Witness Deponent

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Sollitor / Justice of the Peace / Comm. Dec.

