

Transcript of Proceedings

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THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

MS E WILSON, Counsel Assisting

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

ST GEORGE

..DATE 04/05/2011

..DAY 14

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.16 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson? We will just take the appearances for the day again. Ms McLeod, you are with us again?

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MS McLEOD: With Ms O'Gorman for the Commonwealth.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls and Ms Brasch.

MR ROLLS: For the State, yes, Your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell?

MR FAVELL: For the Balonne Shire Council.

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COMMISSIONER: And we have got Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: For SunWater, thank you.

MS WILSON: Commissioner, just one matter of housekeeping. As I indicated yesterday, we will be tendering a statement of Kathryn Margaret Jefford. You will note that there is a paragraph that has been struck out. That is paragraph 10. I understand that has been done on instructions. I tender the statement of Kathryn Margaret Jefford.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 260.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 260"

MS WILSON: Commissioner, the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry is sitting today at St George. St George lies in the Balonne Shire, which is known as river country due to the numerous river systems that wind across the countryside and are the lifeblood of agriculture in this area.

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With rivers comes floods and the Balonne region has a long history of flooding since records began in St George back in 1890. The floods that are the focus of this Inquiry took place in January 2011 with the Balonne River peaking at St George on the 8th and 23rd of January. The record flood of St George occurred only nine months prior in March 2010, and it should be noted that the Balonne River flooded here again little more than a week ago. Other towns within the shire that were affected by the January floodwaters include Dirranbandi, Thallon Hebel and Mungindi.

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In all these towns and outlying areas, flood mitigation measures, including levee banks, are used to protect homes,

crops and property from the rising floodwaters. The Balonne River is dammed upstream from St George by the EJ Beardmore Dam. This dam is not built to mitigate floods but simply to hold water for use in the local area. Its operation manual requires the dam operators, SunWater, to let out whatever water flows in during a flood.

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The Balonne Shire Council lies within the Roma Disaster District. This district also covers the Maranoa Regional Council.

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The Commission will also hear about the flooding that occurred in Surat in the south of the Maranoa Council during the January flood event. There the Balonne reached a record peak on 4 January.

Surat is fortunate to be built on a natural rise to keep most of the township above floodwaters of the Balonne. However, the January event saw Surat isolated by road in all directions making the town an island sitting above the flood.

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Surat and other towns in the Maranoa Council area have also been affected by more flooding in the months since then.

The first task for the Commission pursuant to the terms of reference is to provide an interim report due on 1 August 2011 on matters associated with flood preparedness to enable early recommendations to be implemented before next summer's wet season. To that end, we will examine any practical legislative changes that will contribute to a more effective response by government agencies. A purpose of these hearings is to understand what worked well, what can be improved, and what didn't work to assist in making recommendations so that this region and Queensland is better prepared for the next wet season and for seasons to come.

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Today we will call witnesses from a wide range of backgrounds to assess the impact of the floods in the region. We will call Mr Scott Norman, the Chief Executive Officer of Balonne Shire and Local Disaster Coordinator for the Balonne region. Mr Norman will be asked to comment on the overview of the flood event in the shire and the action taken by the local government group. He will be also asked to comment on the levee bank systems in the shire and the lessons learnt from the floods. He will also give a slide presentation about the flooding in relation to the flooding in this region.

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We will hear from Inspector Mark Stiles, the Roma Disaster District Coordinator during the flood event who helped support the local disaster groups in the Maranoa and Balonne councils. He will be asked to comment on his role during the floods and the effectiveness of the current disaster management arrangements.

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We will hear from Cleave Rogan, a local cotton grower who offered suggestions about more rain gauges in the area.

We will also hear from Kylie Kilroy a local resident just

outside St George whose home was inundated during the January floods.

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From Surat we will hear from Wendy Newman, who assisted in the emergency response coordination for the town. She chaired teleconferences to the Maranoa Local Disaster Management Group and was able to assist in addressing the issues that affected that town and its residents.

We will also hear from another Surat resident, Betty Mickelbrough, the owner of an abattoir in Surat who has been hard hit by the isolation caused by this flood event and others in recent times.

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The Commission's work does not stop after these hearings today. These public hearings are only part of the Commission process. If there are matters that need further clarification and investigation, this will be done after the hearings and within the time constraints of meeting report deadlines.

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Madam Commissioner, may we now adjourn for a short period before we call the first witness?

COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn. You can let us know when you are ready.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.25 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.27 A.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson?

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Scott Norman. He is in the witness-box at the moment.

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SCOTT LESLIE DANIEL NORMAN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Scott Leslie Daniel Norman?-- Yes.

Are you the Chief Executive Officer for the Balonne Regional Council?-- Balonne Shire Council.

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Balonne Shire Council?-- Yes.

Are you the local coordinate for the Balonne Local Disaster Management Group?-- Yes.

Have you prepared a slide show in relation to the flood events of 2010/2011?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, it is intended for Mr Norman to present that slide show now, then for him to be stood down and to be recalled later this afternoon to give evidence.

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COMMISSIONER: Does it appear on a disc? Is it contained in some way?

MS WILSON: It appears on a disc and we can tender the disc?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, can the witness leave the witness-box to be able to-----

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COMMISSIONER: Of course, yes.

WITNESS: What we have prepared sets the scene for what happened over the two months December/January 2011. As previously stated, Balonne Shire is located at the terminus point of a lot of rivers that collect water across the Murray-Darling basin, then funnel it down through the Balonne Shire into New South Wales. This map is probably not big enough for everybody to see but it is the entire Murray-Darling basin in Queensland. You will see-----

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Norman, don't forget we're the inquiry and need to see some of this?-- Sorry, yes. I will hand this up. It funnels all those rivers down through the Balonne Shire and I will refer to the slide show now to-----

This can be an exhibit.

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MS WILSON: I tender that map.

COMMISSIONER: 262.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 262"

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WITNESS: Thank you. Can we have the first slide, please?

COMMISSIONER: 265, sorry.

WITNESS: Okay. This is the Balonne Shire. This is the New South Wales border down here. As you can see, we were dealing with three river systems. The first was the Maranoa Balonne, which starts at Mitchell there. That's the Maranoa River, the Beardmore Dam. The Balonne River joins the Condamine further up. Then also feeds to the Beardmore Dam. It then progresses down to St George and that was our first flood peak. From there, it moves down to Dirranbandi. It takes - the amount of time it takes to travel depends on the velocity of the water, obviously, and then to the town of Hebel. So we had separate floods peaks in all those towns and on the river system between all those towns over that period of time. The second river system we're talking about is the Moonie River system, which has a catchment that begins around Tara, and will flow through into New South Wales joining into the rest of the Murray-Darling. We have a village of Nindigully on the Moonie which is not shown there. It is a pub and a couple of houses. It had flood peak. Town of Thallon had a flood peak. Border of the shire just picks up the Barwon system and that's the water that came down from Goondiwindi and moved through Mungindi. The town of Mungindi sits on the Queensland New South Wales border. The Queensland half of the town is in the Balonne Shire. As mentioned before, we had a larger flood event in March 2010 which also included the creek system over here. What you have got to remember is we're trying to manage all three of these river systems at the same time and moving from one peak to the next as it travels through. Can I have the next slide, please? Okay, I will run through the towns separately just to give you an idea of what happened. We peaked - we had two separate peaks with a bit of a lull in the middle. The bridge across the Balonne River went out on the 1st of January 2011 and was out for all of that month except for a brief period in between where we had about 36 hours we could get across in between the peaks. The first peak was the highest, 13.2 metres. That compares to the record of 13.4 metres. Total amount of damage 46 properties were affected in total in St George, 13 water above the floorboards. Seven were protected by private levees that were put up by individuals. As the floodwaters approached, 26 had water in and around the house yards. Can we have the next slide, please? We're going down the river now to Dirranbandi. Dirranbandi is surrounded by a levee. That levee held but

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Dirranbandi was isolated for a long time. We resupplied via air where we had to but primarily by high vehicle pushing through the floodwaters. That means we could get a greater quantity of goods in there. The peak was - was just under the 2010 peak. The amount of water that collected around Dirranbandi was probably significantly less as compared to the 2010 peak because of change flows in the river plus a gap in the railway line that was holding it up the previous time. Next slide, please. Little town of Hebel benefits from being built on a natural rise, however it was isolated for a total of six weeks and resupply was the big issue there. From times it was resupplied from the south and as the water moved south it was resupplied from the north. Town of Thallon, again protected by levees. Those levees breached in March 2010 but they were increased in height before the January flood and they held this time. The flood at Thallon peaked just below the March total and it was isolated for about 10 days. Next slide, please. Mungindi was a watching brief. We had heavy equipment down there just in case. It was isolated. I have got Xs there but I know the levees at Mungindi are nine metres above the river bed datum and I think it peaked at 7.7 metres, well within the levees, and there was no real problem. Next slide, please. This is a history of the flood flows and heights going back to 1890. This was obtained off the Bureau of Meteorology website. As you can see, the highest point at St George was 13.39, 13.4 back in March '10. However, the flood in December/January had a greater volume of water going through. That is because the flow lasted for a much longer duration and there were several rain events backing it up. The water came from much the same direction. Some of it came down the Maranoa River and a lot of it came from the Darling Downs.

COMMISSIONER: Could I get you to just move for a minute and we will have a look at that. Thanks for that?-- Yep. Can I have the next slide, please? Okay, this is flood mapping in St George that was done in March 2010. It was done by a local surveyor shooting flood heights and developing contour lines. This was our earlier response and during that March flood there was some aerial survey work done that generated elevation heights across the town and a lot of the key infrastructure, and from that we developed - can we have the next slide, please - this defence line which we used in St George in January 2011. Now, that line identifies a natural ridge which you can augment with some minor capital works to use to defend the town to about 14 and a half metres. It is problematical in that it does put some houses on the wrong side of the levee. However, it was held back until the absolute last moment so we didn't get people off side in the event the floodwaters only just reached that line.

What would you actually do if you were going to build that line? How would you do it?-- That line was built up, and you can see the remnants straight out the front here, the small rise above the footpath there? That is 14 and a half metres. We then put soil along roadways and just followed the line as best we could until we reached the next height point. There was general agreement within the Local Disaster Management

Group if the water got to 14.25 there was to be an evacuation of the town. That is because the vast majority of the town on this side is under 14 metres. Once it gets over that natural rise, the town will inundate. But we never got there, thankfully. And that is a brief summary of what happened here in January. Thank you.

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MS WILSON: Thank you. Madam Commissioner, I tender that disc that that slide presentation is on.

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COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 263.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 263"

MS WILSON: And-----

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COMMISSIONER: And, Mr Norman, you are excused. Is that the idea?

MS WILSON: That is the case.

COMMISSIONER: Until you are called to give evidence later today.

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WITNESS STOOD DOWN

MS WILSON: Now, Commissioner, I can - also with that tender should be accompanied by a hard copy of the slide presentation that we just saw. I call Cleave Rogan.

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CLEAVE GRAEME ROGAN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Take a seat. Is your full name Cleave Graeme Rogan?-- Correct.

And you reside at Bookamerrie?-- Yes.

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Which is a 500 hectare cotton farm?-- Yes.

And how far away is Bookamerrie from St George?-- Bookamerrie is about 15 kilometres south-east of St George.

And you have lived on this property since 1996?-- Correct.

And you have lived in the area since 1974?-- Yes.

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

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Can I show you this document, please? Is that the statement that you have made?-- Yes.

Is that statement true and correct?-- It is true and correct, yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 263.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 263"

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

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Can I take you to a couple of matters in your statement? Paragraph 2, you talk about Bookamerrie is a cotton farm which is dependant upon a channel farming system?-- Yes.

Can you explain to us how the channel irrigation system works?-- The channel irrigation system in the St George irrigation area works by delivering of water from Beardmore Dam, is the primary source, but has also sourced water from Jack Taylor Weir. When St George irrigation area was first developed the water was originally from the Jack Taylor Weir.

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Okay. How does the channel irrigation system work when there is flooding in the area?-- When there is significant flooding in the area, the channel irrigation system is designed to - when there is large rain within the area, the natural water flow will go into drains that have been built specifically to drain water off the farms and out into the river systems.

These channels that actually deliver water from Beardmore Dam to the local farms in some areas create a levee bank from the river actually inundating the local farming area.

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And what consequences does that have in relation to your own property in times of flooding?-- In times - in big floods - and you have to remember that the last two floods, the two floods that are significant major floods that had potential to inundate farms, these channel banks prevented my farm from going underwater.

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Okay. Now, in paragraph 2 you also say, "In addition to the channel system, the river property owners also gain approval to construct dams and other distributions along the Balonne River that also assist in the irrigation of their farms."-- Yes.

Can we take - can we discuss this sentence in various stages? You say you also gain approval to construct dams. Who do you gain approval for that?-- I don't live along the river, so I have - I am not privy to having gone through the process of applying for dam construction and channel construction but I am aware that this approval has to be sought from different departments, that departments have changed over the years. It means approval is granted for construction of irrigation infrastructure along the river systems.

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When you are referring to other distribution systems, what are you referring to?-- An irrigation farm requires an off-farm storage which is located usually close to the river. It has - the dam has a channel that will lead into the river system, the water will be pumped into the dam. From that dam, there will be several channel systems that will deliver water to the irrigation area where the farm has been set up.

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Are you aware whether that also has to be - approval has to be given?-- Yes. I understand that channel and levee banks that are across floodways seek approval prior to being built.

Now, can I take you to paragraph 9 of your statement? And from paragraph 9 onwards you raise issues and suggestions in relation to the flood events. The first issue that you raise is the consistency of rain gauge locations and central website?-- Yes.

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Could you discuss that for us?-- Yes. For instance, at St George there are two departments, Bureau of Meteorology - BOM is one organisation and DERM, which is another organisation. Department of Environment Resource and Management have gauge stations that their identity is St George but they are actually in different locations along the river at St George, and the DERM one is an automatic station and the Bureau of Meteorology, as I understand, is a manual gauge station.

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Due to their slight different locations within the river system, the classified identification of St George, they give a different reading. And consequently as an irrigator, water is crucial for our industry. I rely on both systems to try and regulate whether I need water on my farm or at what stage to I need to try and keep water out.

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And your ultimate suggestion is that there needs to be some consistency with the gauge location's ID and possibly one website that covers all readings?-- So as a cotton grower in this area, as I've already stated that I rely heavily on water and also access for production - produce going out of the area, and I use about five websites to gain my knowledge. It's very difficult to through all these particular websites working out what the flow is, what the height is, what roads are going to be, cut when I try to get produce in and out.

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In paragraph 10 you refer to the lack of backup systems for river gauges?-- Yes.

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Can you explain what your issue is there?-- As I've stated already, that I rely - as an irrigation farmer, I rely very heavily on water to supply irrigation and water to my farm. I also have on farm storages. In fact SunWater, who regulate the dam, issue me an email twice daily to indicate how much water is coming down the dam, at what levels can I take water, and these river gauge readings upstream will indicate to SunWater on what levels of water are coming down. As I understand - and I'm not on SunWater, but I'm aware that during peak floods that some gauging stations became inoperable, and so they had to rely on local knowledge. Local knowledge is very good in the area because there are a lot of traditional families that have been on these properties. Some of them even prior to automatic rain stations in actual fact had manual stations on their properties, very aware of flooding, so they can give good, accurate information to people that are trying to regulate the streams. But I guess in time these properties may change, knowledge may be lost, and so potentially we may need more stations.

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And your ultimate suggestion there is there needs to be some other backup systems in the form of further gauges and telemetry stations?-- Correct.

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You talked about when SunWater contacted. You are referring then to they contact you in flood events; is that the case?-- Correct. By email.

By email. The last issue that you raise is the ability to fix roads; that is, the suggestion that you provide is that landholders in times of flood when roads have been damaged should be able to fix up roads?-- Correct.

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Can you explain to us why you make that suggestion?-- As you can understand by seeing Mr Norman's presentation, there is a large river system complex through the whole area. By nature cotton farms are associated with these river systems. These roads become under great stress during flood events and are

quite often badly damaged during large flood events. In the last few years farmers have been accustomed to repairing their own roads and systems on their own properties and are very proficient at doing so. The roads are often very isolated from the local council workshops and infrastructure, and the local landowners in these areas where roads are badly damaged often wish to transport their produce from their properties to market, and these roads are not able to be repaired in a time often in relationship to this produce movement. So these - there are legal ramifications that landowners are not able to repair roads, and I suggest that under natural disasters, in particular in the last two flood events, that landowners seek approval prior to any flood event from a council that has a State-wide pro forma that under extreme conditions like we've just received, that the landowner will notify the council, which is already set out in what is required. The council will then be able to notify the landowner on what process he is able to go through to repair that road, and then from there the road could be brought only to a minimum trafficable standard. It's not to try and bring it back to brand new. In that process, the council then knows exactly what has happened, the formation of that road to that minimum trafficable standard, and then the council will then go through their approval process to bring that road back to a full trafficable standard.

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There may be a problem with that in the sense of quality control, wouldn't there be?-- By seeking approval from the local council engineer, this will potentially overcome that problem of quality control, I think.

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Thank you, Mr Rogan, I have no further questions.

MS McLEOD: Mr Rogan, can I just clarify. You say there were two river gauge stations; one owned by the bureau and one owned - that's the manual one, the one owned by DERM. The automatic one, is one of those upstream of the weir and one downstream?-- Correct.

One will obviously be affected by the operation of the weir?-- That's correct.

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Thank you?-- Can I say something else?

COMMISSIONER: Yes?-- Obviously during a large flood, the weir has not a lot of significance in these large floods, as you might have seen water going over the top of the bridge. It's not much help.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

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MR ROLLS: No questions.

MR FAVELL: Mr Rogan, I think you made mention property owners gain approval to construct dams and other distribution systems

on the Balonne River that assist in the irrigation of their farms, and also I thought you said there was approval to be sought in respect to levies; is that so?-- Correct.

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Do you know from whom that approval should be sought?-- No, I haven't gone through that process. My farm is not in an area where I have to go through that process.

MS WILSON: No re-examination. May Mr Rogan be excused.

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Rogan, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Wendy Newman.

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WENDY MARGARET NEWMAN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Wendy Margaret Newman?-- Yes.

And you reside in Surat?-- Yes.

And in October 2010 you were elected to the Maranoa Regional Council?-- Yes.

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You've made a statement to Queensland flood Commission of Inquiry as to the flooding in Surat?-- That's right.

That statement is not made by you as a councillor?-- No.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is that your statement that you made to the Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

Do you swear that that statement is true and correct?-- I do.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 264.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 264"

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MS WILSON: I'll just give you a copy of that statement there. Can I take you to paragraph 6 of your statement, where you say that on 30 December 2010 you chaired the first teleconference between the Roma LDMG and the local emergency services agencies at Surat. Why was it the case that this occurred on 30 December?-- The day before, I believe, I had been approached by a community member who was very concerned because they had no - they were about to run out of medication. We don't have a chemist in Surat. So responding to that with my local knowledge, I contacted the Roma chemist and asked if it would be possible to - for them to fill that prescription, and then we would contact the SES to see if that could be delivered to the - to Surat, because I knew the SES were coming in and out of town. When that occurred I believe there was some concern that as a new councillor I was trying to set up an independent process, which I hadn't been. But we decided that a teleconference where we could all get together and discuss what was going on would be useful. It was useful, and it was so useful we just kept doing them because it provided a one-time opportunity for all of the people involved in the various activities to share information efficiently.

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The meeting that occurred on 30 December 2010, was that only to address the issue of getting medication?-- It was to address the issue of what are the lines of communication, what are the different responsibilities of the groups involved, and to make sure that this was being well coordinated in Surat.

During the peaks of the flooding events you decided to continue a teleconference on a daily basis, and at the very height it was a twice-daily basis?-- Yes. That was the decision from Roma each time, not from Surat. That was at their request, and they scheduled each of the teleconferences.

And who attended these teleconferences from the Surat perspective?-- All possible emergency services people at the time. So that across the board always included SES, fire auxiliary, ambulance, hospital, Maranoa Regional Council, because they were all involved at the time, and we kept a very open door policy. We had a room large enough to do that. So it included any visiting emergency services staff, it included water police, swift water rescue teams, the SES teams, et cetera.

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And the information that you were conveying back, was that information in relation to the coordination of agencies, or local information about the conditions in Surat?-- It really was more the local conditions in Surat. All the agencies were working very efficiently. I mean, there was never any concern about the disaster management process that was going on. It was - the specific local questions of concerns were being addressed, and that could be as general as saying it looks like the road to Roma will be open tomorrow at approximately 10 o'clock. That will mean there will be a deluge of people from Surat trying to get supplies. Are there any in Roma? Whatever was a concern at the time after we went through all the agencies, give them the opportunity to give reports or ask questions, the question was always asked: is there anything else? And it was as wide ranging as it needed to be at any time.

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If you gained information like that, would there be supplies available, how was that information then conveyed back to the residents of Surat?-- We kept up a communication flow in writing mainly. It was interesting. Because we're cut off, there was no mail deliveries even. So Surat has one main point where everyone knows to look for information. That's at the board outside the post office. So we were putting notices up in all key places, but anything that was really important we would door knock it and make sure it was hand delivered to everyone involved. There was two levels of that. Once the surveyor - at the start of this event there were no flood levels known - current flood levels for Surat, so we weren't sure, if it got as high as it was predicted to get, which houses would actually need to be evacuated. So a surveyor was brought in. He spent two and a half days there surveying the town. In the process, of course, he was talking to the locals anyway in that area, but the moment we had the information sent back to us, we pulled together - we'd already organised what would happen, where will people have to go, what have we got to organise. All that was put in writing, and the people who were possibly going to flood were door knocked, had explained to them individually, and they were given the written information as well.

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How big a task was that? How many people - when you're talking about in relation to door knocking?-- For that one, there would probably have been about a dozen people on the go. That was a mix of SES staff, some of their relatives of Maranoa Regional Council staff, some of the fire auxiliary. It was constantly a very much community response, not a one - we weren't looking in terms of this is this organisation's task. It was who is available today and is able to do this activity.

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In paragraph 8 of your statement you discuss that in one instance your group organised specialised equipment to be sent to the swift water rescue teams based in the town. This was enabled due to the local knowledge of community members being imparted to the emergency services?-- Right. That directly came out of - specialised equipment is quite right, that it's not exciting in a sense. It was some ski ropes. When the swift water team arrived, they were sent to Surat in response to mention being made at one of the teleconferences that this was the fastest we've ever seen the river flowing and the March 2010 flood when water was going through at an extremely rapid rate. It was being measured at a third again faster. It was horrifically fast as it flowed around the town. This was mentioned, as a consequence, two swift water team members were sent down from Townsville. When they sat in at the first teleconference and had a chat to everyone they said, "Are there any ski boats in town?" And we sort of said - we named a few people who we thought might have them and we asked "Why?" "Well, we need some ski ropes." "Oh? Why?" "Because they float." In Surat you don't think of things like that. We've got plenty of rope, but we've never thought about the different in ropes. That moment that was said, one of the SES family members sitting there said, "The fishing club has got plenty of that in their shed," and in five minutes later we had it, which was the effectiveness of that process.

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You state some issues of concern which start at page 4 of your statement. If I can take you to a couple of those. At paragraph 12 you refer to a lack of a contact register?-- Yes.

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Can you explain your concern in relation to that?-- As the river was rapidly rising - and each time there is a flood, the floods act a little bit differently. It depends which rivers are coming down, which ones back up. Sometimes the river - the Balonne at Surat will be running in a different direction if there's more water come down from another river to block it and back it up. So we weren't sure exactly which properties would be flooding when. We wanted to get in contact with all properties. The starting point for that had to be sitting down with the local stock routes officer, who has lived in the area all his life and has a tremendous knowledge of the area, sitting down with him and getting a list of names from him, and then we started chasing up phone numbers. And this was all voluntary, of course. People then were just manning phones and ringing around. But we didn't know - if the phone wasn't answered, we didn't know if they were away for Christmas or they were in strife. So I'm very strongly of the belief that we should - when you know that an event like this

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is potentially going to occur, the contact information should be available before the event, not when we're trying to cope with the event. 1

And you suggest that in future a central register be kept by the council with up-to-date information on outlying residents' whereabouts and their contact details so authorities can contact them in a time of crisis?-- I suggested we maintain and continue what we started for this process, yes, and that the council would probably be the easiest agency and the most appropriate to do this work. 10

COMMISSIONER: You'll never overcome the problem, will you, of people being away for the holidays. It's unlikely are going to tell you every time?-- No, it would be more the case of if people knew - say in October a form went out to say, "Could we please have an update of who is on your property?" Because sometimes properties sell and there's nobody living there now, but there's no one for them to notify us of that. But if around October each year there was that quick update which included - and we had, by the end of this process, devised a form that included all the information that the various agencies wanted like the GPS positioning and email, et cetera, we'll never get it 100 per cent, but if people in the area all know the process is there, they will also be more probably aware to notify us if they know their neighbours are away. The local knowledge is there, but the process hasn't had to be in place very often, so people aren't just automatically passing information on. 20

MS WILSON: Can I also take you to paragraphs 15 and 16 of your statement, where you refer to the denial of local knowledge and resources?-- Um hmm. 30

And one of the concerns that occurred at the time of the flooding and the response to it was that locals were helping each other, but by doing so came to the attention of the water police and authorities. Can you explain that?-- Yes. There are two residents in the Surat area. They both individually own - I'm not good on boats. I think they are called positive buoyancy boats or something. They are basically you fill them with water they still won't sink, is how they were described to me. They both have a lower - a low draft, so they can actually get places that the SES boats that are currently in the area can't reach. There's often small flood events in the area. Not a major - not a disaster, nothing of - but people get cut off. And these two gentlemen, who were very sensible and very experienced, are often going out and taking some supplies out to people or checking cattle for people if they can't get to a particular area of their property. They are well known for it. They never take money for it. They are very well respected in the area for this work, and it did cause a lot of anger when they were - anger in the community, I mean by that - when they were getting into strife for doing something which wasn't cutting across what the SES was doing, but in many instances there were many needs that the SES don't meet. For example, they were going out - they kept four quite good high value horses alive because they were going out and 40

checking them every couple of days and making sure they had water and were still safe. They managed to move over 200 head of cattle to a safe area. They - and remembering we're cut off for a month, they were helping families where there were custody issues with children where children had to get from parent A or parent B or back because, for various reasons, the parents weren't prepared to make allowance for what was going on. So they were providing very good support, including keeping the hotel supplied with food. Because, of course, what the hotel really needed was a bit above - I'm not talking about the alcohol; I'm talking about the food - was more than the essential supplies. So the irony of the situation when the water police were sent down to speak to them was that they were staying at the hotel and eating food these chaps had got into town.

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You suggest a process that this could be solved by having a permanent local police liaison deal with the issue of having a simple sign-out-and-return form for people visiting the properties. Can you explain that one?-- Along with recognising the problem and the angst it caused in the community, I also greatly appreciate the need to know what's going on, that you don't want cowboys all over the place - you don't want cowboys full stop, - and if there was - you know, a cut-off small town, it's relatively easy to set up some point which the police either are at or checking regularly so that everybody knows with people are. If they are going out to check the cattle, they say where they are going and when they come back. Something along that line.

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Thank you, I have no further questions.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions, thank you.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

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MR FAVELL: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Betty Mickelbrough.

BETTY JOAN MICKELBROUGH, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Betty Joan Mickelbrough?-- Yes.

And do you presently reside at the town of Surat?-- Yes.

And you own and operate a company Warroo Game Meats?-- Yes.

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And that company is involved in the processing of kangaroo meat for the pet food industry?-- Yes.

Have you made a statement in relation to the flood events?-- Yes.

That you've supplied to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is that your statement that you have made?-- Yes.

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Do you swear that the contents are true and correct?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 265.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 265"

MS WILSON: Now, you state in paragraph 3 that because of your location, the business relies heavily on transport and access to other areas of Queensland. At times of heavy rain, the road between Surat and those other towns is regularly cut off by floodwater?-- Yes.

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When that occurs you can't get product in or out of your processing facility?-- Yes.

Can I then take you to paragraph 11 of your statement. That paragraph and paragraphs 11, 12 and 13 deals with you trying to obtain information in relation to the state of the roads?-- Yes.

Can you tell me about that, please?-- Well, it was quite an - how would you say? A heartbreaking time for us, because we had to be spot on with trying to get our truck out on to the road to get out to pick up the product and try and get it in between roads being cut and open. Because with, say - we've only got a certain amount of time that we can process the product, otherwise it has to be thrown away and it's a great loss to us, which did occur. And we contacted on-line - the girl in the office went on-line every ten minutes of the day when she was around us, or my son did, to get updates on the

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roads and everything. And when we weren't getting through the right information, we went to the police station, like here at St George, all over, whichever direction we might have had to have gone if we had a bit of water droppage or something so we could get in and out, and we just had to sort of had a waiting game really because, you know, sort of - where am I? The roads were just shut and open. As you said, we just got back - we got across here and got back at four o'clock on 1 January, which was our last attempt to come across that bridge. It's the last time we went over the river until February. But we were constantly told different stories. Constantly.

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Do you have any suggestions how you could be better provided information in relation to the roads and whether they are open or not?-- A lot of our - what was happening - I just wrote it down here - is because like the road was - those little roads were named differently. So on the website, the update of these is slow because on the internet it was totally different, they were calling them different names of locations on the road, it was never - when trying to locate a road by their name they were listed under regional names and which the updating of these was slow, not up to the minute, which is important. When we were trying to locate that road, we could never get the road name for that area. So, yes, I do think that it should be, like, whatever name the road is, well, it should go by that road because people in the country, that's what they know, on that, you know, that road they are travelling on is not listed as something else. In the different shires now, it is just confusing because we don't know which one we're going by.

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And I would just like to take you to one other part of your statement where you refer in paragraph 8, if you would like to go there, to the issue of power and power shortages during the flood events?-- Yes.

Now, the issue is that you didn't get any notice about when you would lose power?-- No. Never ever, no.

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You are at the end of the powerline, aren't you?-- Yes.

And by the time that the power got to your place there was no power?-- We had a lot of blackouts, brownouts, blackouts, total cut off, no power for hours on end and we had products in our cold rooms. When we tried to contact - we did contact Ergon at different times because it was an emergency, we had no back up. We're three-phase, so we had no back up to run four or five 20 foot freezers plus our plant. So it was - when we did contact and when it got very bad during the floods, every - every few hours we had to go out and switch the switches, the brownouts and that were blowing our fuses, our phases were getting blown out of the boxes, we had Bensons Electrical had to come down and repair a lot of our equipment because of the brownouts. With the phases actually blowing we couldn't repair them, no-one could repair them unless we had another phase go into it. It was - and it was constantly - just constant. Not once a day, it might have happened 20 times a day.

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And you said that you made contact with Ergon?-- We made contact with Ergon which told us that there was no team - all the teams - all those people that repaired that type of thing, through the flood times, you know, over the few months they either flew to Townsville where the cyclone was or they were down at the other end of Grantham and all through those flood areas there. There was no-one there who was available to come and repair our lines.

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How long did it take until you had power back to full power?--
Oh, well, within hours. We had it within hours but it was
just consistently going out over the period of weeks. Not
just a day or two here, it was just continually for weeks.

Thank you. I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

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MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No, thank you.

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MR FAVELL: No questions, thank you.

MR O'SULLIVAN: May the witness be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MR O'SULLIVAN: I call Kylie Kilroy.

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KYLIE VIVIANNE KILROY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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COMMISSIONER: Take a seat, Ms Kilroy.

MS WILSON: Is your full name Kylie Vivienne Kilroy?-- Yes, it is.

And do you own a 34 acre property on the Balonne River?-- Yes, I do.

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Okay, now, Ms Kilroy, you will have to speak up because everything is being recorded.

COMMISSIONER: It is also noisy here. I am not sure if it is the air conditioning, so do the best you can, thanks.

MS WILSON: And this property is located about six kilometres from St George?-- That's correct.

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

Can you have a look at this document, please? That is the statement that you have made?-- That's correct, yep.

And attached - and that statement, do you swear that that statement is true and correct?-- Yes, I do.

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Now, keep your voice up, Ms Kilroy. Attached to that statement is some photographs?-- That's correct.

And copies of correspondence between local and state governments?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement complete with attachments.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 266.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 266"

MS WILSON: Now, we can get you a copy of your statement - you have got a copy there? Now, the property that you own, you have owned that property for six years?-- That's correct.

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And you run sheep and some cattle on that property?-- We have a construction company there.

And also-----?-- Also run sheep and cattle, yes.

And your primary business is the construction company?-- The construction company.

Now, how far away are the house and yards from the Balonne River?-- Around 100 metres to the river itself.

And the house is on the highest point of land that you own?-- That's correct.

And your property was the original sale yards for the St George district?-- That's correct.

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Now, if I can take you to paragraph 5 of your statement where you talk about the 1990 floods?-- Yes.

Where there was a peak of 12.24 metres?-- That's correct.

And you understand this did not cause inundation to your house or yards?-- There was a small amount of the property underwater but most of it was out.

Now, you weren't there at that point in time?-- No.

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But that's your understanding-----?-- Yes.

-----from what you have been told. If I can take you to the next paragraph which refers to the 1996 floods?-- Yeah.

And where the peak of the flood was recorded at 10.98 metres?-- That's correct.

And, again, you understand this flood did not cover any of the property?-- None of the property.

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Okay. Now, in paragraph 7 you say that the property across the river-----?-- Yes.

-----built levee banks as a result of the 1996 floods?-- After the 1996 floods.

And can you tell me how high these levee banks are?-- They run from four metres, five metres and then seven metres high.

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Okay?-- From town down.

So how long is this levee bank that you are talking about?-- Kilometres.

In your statement you refer to-----?-- 10 kilometres.

That's just about an estimate, is it? Okay. So along this levee bank there are different stages of heights of the levee, is that the case?-- No, the first ring tank is four metres, the next is five metres high, and then it goes to the seven metres high levee bank that runs down below that.

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And across the river from where you are, how high is the levee bank?-- Seven metres.

Now, if I can then take you to your statement where you refer

to the March 2010 floods, which you will see at paragraph 9 of your statement?-- Yes.

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Now, in paragraph 11 you state that the final peak of the Balonne River was at the height of 13.39 metres?-- That's correct.

That's in relation to March 2010?-- That's correct.

Now, in relation to the March 2010 floods, how did this affect your property then?-- The property was totally inundated and the highest point where my house is, it is about 700 mm off the ground, it was half an inch from inundating the floorboards. On the lower parts we had over two metres of water.

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Okay. So it was half an inch from covering up your floorboards?-- From below the floorboards, half an inch below the floorboards.

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Is that at the lowest point of your house?-- Yes.

Then can we go to the January 2011 floods, that is you see in the next paragraph, paragraph 12?-- Yes.

Where you say that - where you state in that paragraph the height of the river was recorded at 13.20 metres?-- That's correct.

And can you tell me what part of your property got flooded in the 2011 floods?-- Everything on my property was flooded again and this time the water inundated my home.

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When you say inundated your home, how far did the water come into-----?-- Seven centimetres water came into my house above floorboards.

So seven centimetres above the floorboards?-- Above the floorboards.

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Okay. Now, after the 2010 floods, was the levee bank across the river, in your view, increased at all?-- They fixed it up and repaired it and made it stronger in the break where it had breached, yes.

And it is your view that your house was flooded in January 2011 because of the impact of levee banks?-- Yes.

And you believe the issue of regulation of levee banks should be considered?-- Yes.

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By local government?-- Yes, that's correct.

Thank you, Ms Kilroy. I have no further questions.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: Just one point, if I may.

MR ROLLS: It is true, is it not, that you have made numerous representations to State politicians, Federal politicians and your local council?-- That's correct.

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To implore them to do something about regulating the levee banks?-- That's right.

And it has been a matter of some concern to you for some considerable period of time?-- That's correct.

Could I suggest to you it has also been a source of unending frustration for you?-- Very much so.

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So that you see these banks as contributing or putting your property in danger?-- They have diverted the water on to my property.

And no-one is doing anything about it?-- Nobody is doing anything about it.

So you feel that you have to take things fairly aggressive about advocating your cause, would that be right?-- Not necessarily. I have gone about it the correct way.

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Yes. It is true on about - you say in your statement at paragraph 17 you attended a Local Disaster Management Group meeting on the 3rd?-- No, I didn't attend the meeting. I attended the council offices.

Was Mr Bundy there on that occasion?-- No, not that I know of. I wasn't introduced to anybody.

Did you meet or attend a meeting with Mr Bundy?-- I spoke to Mr Bundy on the phone.

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Did you attend a meeting when he was there?-- I was not invited to attend any meetings.

Did he - could I suggest to you that - at that meeting you went to council you became quite agitated about your cause?-- The meeting that went to council was in regards to building a levee bank on the channel irrigation, which is the other side of me and this was to stop the water flooding them, which in turn increased - because the water couldn't go out there, it increased the height of my property. We were not consulted.

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I understand that, but you were quite angry about that, weren't you?-- I imagine everybody would be.

And you went to the council and you were quite agitated about it, quite vocal about expressing your concerns?-- Yes, I was.

And subsequently you were removed from the meeting by the police?-- Yes, I was.

And then subsequently you had a telephone conversation with Mr Bundy, is that right? You rang him?-- Yes, I rang him.

And you - he commented upon to you that Mr Bundy, being someone from Emergency Management Queensland, that it wasn't a matter for him, it was totally a matter for local government and the Local Disaster Management Group?-- He said he did not deal with the building of that levee bank.

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And it wasn't a matter for him?-- He said that emergency management south-west region was not involved in that, it was local disaster management.

I have nothing further, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Dollar?

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MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell?

MR FAVELL: No questions, thank you.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Ms Kilroy.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Inspector Stiles.

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MARK LEONARD STILES, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Thank you. Is your full name Mark Leonard Stiles?-- Correct.

And you are an Inspector of Police?-- That's correct.

And you are currently performing duty at the Counterterrorism Strategic Policy Branch?-- Correct.

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And you commenced this position in February of this year?-- Correct.

Prior to that you were appointed District Officer between February 2008 and January 2011 for the Roma District?-- Yes, that's correct.

And you were also performing the role of the District Disaster Coordinator for the Roma District?-- Yes, that's correct.

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Now, you made a statement detailing the role that you performed as the District Disaster Coordinator, DDC-----?-- Yes.

-----during the flood events. Can you have a look at this document, please?-- Thank you. Yes, that's my statement and my signature.

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Okay. You swear that that statement is true and correct?-- Yes, that's correct.

I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 267.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 267"

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MS WILSON: Now, the District Disaster Management Group, can you explain the role that that performs?-- Yes, I can. In simple terms, the District Disaster Group is an avenue to support local government disaster management groups. When an issue arises or necessity arises at a local government level and the local government level aren't able to deal with that situation with the resources and the assets they have at hand, that matter is then referred to the District Disaster Group, the DMG, for reference and support, and we locate and supply other resources necessary for a local government level, and at DMG level if we can't supply those resources or we can't fill the need, the local government come to us with, we then refer that to the State Management Disaster Group.

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And the District Disaster Management Group had meetings where

minutes were taken?-- Correct.

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And can you have a look at this document, please?-- They appear to be the minutes that were taken throughout the flood event over December/January of this year.

It goes from 2nd of January to the 12th of January?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 268.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 268"

MS WILSON: Now, the District Disaster Coordinator for Roma covers local government areas of Balonne Shire Council and also the Maranoa Shire Council?-- Can you rephrase that again, please, I am sorry?

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Your area-----?-- Yes, as a DDC.

As the DDC?-- That's correct. The Maranoa Regional Council and the Balonne Shire Council.

Now, in terms of St George?-- Yes.

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There was a major flood peak of 13.2 metres?-- Yes.

And that was the second highest peak on record?-- That is correct.

Now, there were Bureau of Meteorology forecasts on around the 4th of January before the peak suggesting a peak in excess of 14 metres?-- Yes, that's correct.

Now, were you aware that an evacuation trigger point was set at 14.25?-- That did come to my knowledge through the event, yes.

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And the flood level was considered at 14.5 with the levee banks?-- That's correct.

Did you have any consultation in relation to the trigger point of 14.25?-- Throughout the flood event of December and January of this year, I had extensive consultation with Scott Norman, the CEO of the Balonne Shire, and also the Mayor, Donna Stewart, of the Balonne Shire Squad undertook the role of the Local Disaster Coordinator. I had many conversations with Scott and Donna throughout the event. I recall we discussed the trigger point extensively over a number of days, but my involvement in the identification of 14.25 as the exact trigger point, was I involved in that decision to nominate that point, I can't say yes or no.

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During the time leading up to the peak-----?-- Yes.

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-----the roads around St George, were they being cut off?--
Progressively, yes.

So it would make it to the stage, would it, that when the trigger point was reached, St George could have been isolated?-- It was isolated over a number of days throughout the events, that did occur, yes.

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And that, in turn, makes evacuation more difficult?-- Yes, that's correct.

Was that - was that discussed with the LDMG?-- I know there were discussions regarding evacuation of St George and alternative evacuation centres. I knew that following a conversation I had at a State level, I then referred the matter of an evacuation plan, a contingency plan to State level for them to review their actions to support the DDMG.

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You said that there was a conversation at State level?-- Correct.

Who was that conversation with?-- I spoke to Mr Mike Shapland. He was the Chair of the meeting. There were a number of personnel present at that meeting which I can't recall or didn't have knowledge of - I was on a speaker phone - but he was the principal person I spoke with.

When did this conversation take place?-- I can't give you an exact date, I apologise.

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Okay, but you know when the peak occurred. Can you use that as a benchmark and then work backwards to when that conversation would have taken place?-- I guess in my statement - if I could refer to my statement?

Yes, certainly?-- I raise the issue of a flood height of 15.5 metres being identified and a large amount of time, resources and consideration went into considering 15.5. It was about that time when there was a significant amount of interest in St George prior to the Toowoomba event and Lockyer events where there was a firm belief of a - that a peak of 15.5 would come through St George. I was quite comfortable, as was the Mayor and the CEO, that we weren't seeing the necessity of rainfall and water movement that we would ever reach that level. However, from my discussions with my Deputy Commissioner, Mr Stewart, Premier Mr Lucas attended St George, and following that meeting I believe I then went back to State and asked State to formulate an evacuation plan because there was a belief that 15.5 metres was going to come through St George. I believe that was made - that was not accurate and proved not to be accurate.

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So when - perhaps if we can go to your statement where you refer to this?-- If you bear with me I will take some time to find it, that's all.

Page 16. That's where you talk - that you attended a meeting on the 6th of January when Deputy Premier Paul Lucas and Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart attended?-- There were telephone calls leading up to that meeting.

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They attended a meeting with the DDC, Mayor and CEO?-- Correct.

We can go from your statement. I am reading from your statement. This stemmed from a suggestion of flood height of 15.5 entering St George?-- Correct.

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You say that this was incorrect information?-- Correct.

That originated somewhere at the Brisbane end of operations?-- Yes, that's correct.

And you say that, "It is worth noting that this misunderstanding had a less than desired impact on DDC and the Balonne Shire Council LDMG in terms of time resources and distraction from other tasks at hand."?-- Yes, that's correct.

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Can you explain that?-- Simply we were preparing for an event which others believe may or would occur, which, I guess, history showed us, being on the ground, having gone through a significant flood event in March of 2010, we knew by the amount of water, the rainfall and the levels we were seeing that it was highly unlikely that we would see a 15.5 metre level come to St George. A 15.5 metre level coming through to St George would have had a - quite a significant impact on this community. Mr Norman and the Mayor and I discussed that and between the three of us we were unanimous in our position that we were quite confident that this would not occur in this community. In terms of distraction, in preparation for Mr Lucas's visit and the Deputy Commissioner's visit, resources had to go into showing and supporting our position to show that that would not occur. When Mr Lucas and Mr Stewart arrived, there was a meeting between the parties mentioned and we discussed it, outlined our position and gave the reasons why we were quite firm in our belief that 15.5 metres wouldn't occur. That followed an inspection of the community and both Mr Lucas and the Deputy Commissioner were both satisfied then that there had been some - and it is my words - miscommunication or a misunderstanding of figures that were discussed somewhere, that 15.5 was not going to occur.

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Did you ever see any documentation that supported a 15.5?-- No.

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Now, in terms - if I can just ask you your opinion of evacuation plans and trigger points. Do you believe the trigger points should be trigger points are met on predictions or actual?-- That's an incredibly difficult question to answer.

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We will break it down more slowly. For example, we will go on the 14.25 trigger point that occurred in St George

in January?-- Mmm.

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Now, was that based on 14.25 metres being the actual level, or when you got a prediction that it would reach 14.25?-- Without trying to - appearing to afford the answer, a combination of both. I think - I go back to the 15.5. A prediction was given where 15.5 metres was going to inundate St George. Being on the ground and seeing it physically, and having the ability to look back into history of what we saw in March of 2010, I was comfortable, as was the LDC, Mr Norman, and the Mayor, to say that that wasn't going to happen. So a combination of both.

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When you were confident in saying that that wasn't going to happen, what did you base that confidence on?-- History.

Okay. Let's just stop there. The history, what do you mean by that?-- What we saw in 2010.

Yes?-- In March of 2010, which was one in 100 year or one in 1,000 year, it has been published as both, a flood event which occurred across the Maranoa and the Balonne areas. This flood and this event was different in terms of scope, in rainfall and the manner and where and how the water arrived to the community.

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And where were you getting that information from? The scope?-- I will just refer to the document. The Bureau of Meteorology, after the flood event of last year, published a document, which is available on the web which is called South-west Flood Event, which examined history going back before 2010 and the whole flood event of 2010 leading up to the one in 1,000 year flood.

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So that provided me background and history on - and reliable information published by the Bureau of Meteorology.

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So are you using that document during the flood event of January 2011?-- Absolutely.

Is that your only copy of that document?-- Unfortunately, it is at the moment, but it's available on the web. It's published on the web, the Bureau of Meteorology site, so you're more than welcome to a further one.

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I wish to tender it. I can just print another one up. It might have my highlighting through it, but-----

That was the document you used during the flood event where you looked at it?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 269.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 269"

MS WILSON: We talked about history. What other information did you have that you were confident to base your decisions on?-- The information supplied by the mayor and the CEO, people who are long-standing residents of the community, people who have knowledge and experience much more than I have. I'm quite happy to accept their advice and recommendations.

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And what type of information was that?-- What history had - where floods have gone before; where floods happen and don't happen - I'm talking into loose terms - where floods historically happened; what mitigation the Balonne Shire council has undertaken to reduce the impact of flooding to the community. Issues like that in broad terms.

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And was there any other information that you based your decision with confidence on?-- I guess that's from a local level. I certainly hear what - the LDMG and the representatives from the LDMG at a local level. I also had the benefit of hearing people speak at the DDMG level, representatives from various government agencies and departments who represent the area from the districts. They also bring knowledge, experience, and information to the table also.

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If I can take you to your statement and just take you through a couple of matters that you've raised in your statement. At page 4 you talk about - at the bottom of page 4 you talk about police districts?-- Yes.

The issue that you raise there is the overlap of some

districts within the police district?-- What I'm referring to is the local government divisional boundaries don't marry up to the police district boundaries. I've highlighted that whilst I, as the district officer, am responsible for a number of communities, which are outlined in my statement, including Tarome, Wandoan, Miles, for example. They are within my police district of Roma, however, are not within my disaster district in terms of disaster management. Miles - and particularly the relevance of Miles is the community of Condamine is within the Miles division, but not within my sphere of control from a DDC's perspective. Miles and Condamine, Dulacca fall within the Western Downs boundary and therefore come under the DDC control of the district officer at Dalby. Likewise Tarome and Wandoan, they fall under the Banana Shire which comes under the DDC located at Gladstone in the Gladstone Police District; therefore, in terms of emergency response from an LDMG level, they answer to a different district officer some distance away. It's workable, and we make it work because I think and other district officers and the local communities are driven to serve their communities and make sure we're protecting those communities. So we make it work on the ground. That's, I guess, how we do business. We make it work. It would be just much easier to deal with the areas when they were under my sphere of control apart from being under my control from policing, but from the DDC's perspective. It's just an observation I make.

Would the solution be changing the police districts to come within the same district of the local government areas?-- That would be worthy of consideration, I would feel, yes.

If I could take you to page 7 of your statement. At page 7 you'll see on the second-to-last paragraph the consultation that you had with the owner/operator of ME-----?-- MI.

MI Helicopters, Mr Kevin Clarke, this is in terms of planning and preparation?-- Correct.

In relation to the flooding events?-- Correct.

And occurred, by looking at your statement, around the December mark 2010?-- Correct.

So you consulted with Mr Kevin Clarke in relation to the possible use of numbers and availability of the aircraft at his disposal. Obviously, he is a private organisation. What were you seeking for him to be able to supply?-- Again I'll go back to the March event of 2010. Mr Clarke and MI Helicopters provided a service across the Maranoa Shire and the Balonne Shire in addition to other suppliers. I knew with the water and the rain that was occurring in December of this year that there may be a probability that we would need to utilise aircraft for a number of reasons: resupply of isolated communities; rescue and recovery of persons from residences if they are isolated and unable to be moved; and subsequent resupply to broader communities across the district. So I was trying to look ahead to prepare for the worst to make sure we had resources on the ground should we require those resources.

What resources were available?-- He replied back to me that he believed he could access up to 13 helicopters.

And did you have use for 13 helicopters over this event?-- Gee, I think we used eleven - we, from a DDC perspective, we used 11 of those helicopters, and he also supplied his service to Toowoomba District and also the Dalby District.

I'm just interested in the planning of this?-- Yes.

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Is the arrangement between yourself and Mr Clarke: Look, a wet season is coming. I need to be prepared. How many helicopters have you got?-- It's as simple as that; correct.

Not saying I'll need 13 helicopters?-- No.

But I need to know how many helicopters I will have access to?-- I saw it as being sound preparation.

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And also that's providing information to him of well, look, these helicopters might be in use and for them to be able to be ready to be in use?-- Yes, that's correct.

Now, to use those helicopters, what process do you have to go through?-- From a DDC's perspective, I advise my superiors that we have exhausted our assets and we would be now moving to aerial assets. I did that from a DDC's perspective to Brisbane. I also did that to my superiors in Toowoomba from a policing perspective, from a regional perspective. I guess the authority to have those aircraft undertake their business falls within my sphere as a DDC to approve that and approve the expense associated with that.

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At page 8 of your statement you raise an issue in relation to the Nindigully Hotel?-- Yes.

And that was a matter where you exercised your powers?-- Correct.

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Can you explain that to us?-- In the lead-up to the Nindigully event they held for New Year's Eve, I had serious concerns as to the overall well-being of that community and the persons who attended that event. I knew - I had been briefed that probably up to 700 to 800 people would be camping along the riverbanks at that location. I was particularly concerned that with the combination of alcohol, the location, should those persons become isolated and in trouble and needed assistance, we would not be able to do that by road or by water. I had a conversation with the mayor and the CEO at LDMG level and we discussed those concerns. They, the LDMG, were supportive of my thoughts. I discussed my thoughts with the LDMG - or the mayor and the CEO in relation to using my powers under the Disaster Management Act to not have that event occur. To ensure that I was speaking from an informed position and a position of appropriateness, I reported the matter to SDMG at State level as to what my thoughts were, what my concerns were, and I outlined the procedure which I

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intended to take in exercising my powers as the DDC to restrict that event and say to Mr Burns that the event could not go ahead. I did that. I received information back from SDMG, and also I had a legal opinion drafted on my actions, which supported my activities being appropriate, lawful, and the right action to be taken under the circumstances, and I contacted Mr Burns and the event was - I advised him that he could not trade.

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Paragraph 12 of your statement - page 12 of your statement, if I can take you to there. You raise in that first substantive paragraph of a resupply issue and direction given to Emergency Management Queensland; do you see that?-- Yes.

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"On 11 January the DDMG considered similar matters as previously mentioned in this statement. In particular, attention was focused on the issue of resupply, with firm direction given to EMQ representative that resupply was EMQ issue and DDMG wanted support in this area"?-- Yes.

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Can you explain what you are referring to?-- With the modifications to the Act on 1 November 2010, EMQ no longer took the role of executive officer to the DDC and the DDMG. They now undertook a role of being the executive officer in support to local government; however, in my discussions with EMQ, my area director - his name is Scott Walsh - Mr Scott Walsh, I just reminded him of his responsibility in line with the EMQ resupply policy that he should be attending the DDMG meetings as the chair at the table, as opposed to being the executive officer at the table. So when resupply issues come up in line with EMQ resupply policy, as a group we can say to EMQ there's this issue of resupply. Can you please attend to that?

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And were you being frustrated in any way in relation to the resupply?-- In what way do you mean?

Well, the issues that you've raised in relation to EMQ not being at the table in that capacity?-- I found it problematic for persons who are charged with the responsibility of resupply and draft the policy and procedures to be adopted in relation to resupply, don't attend meetings concerning resupply. Hence my comment that Mr Walsh had to be reminded to please attend the meetings of the Roma District DDMG. Having said that, I must add - and I think it's very important that I say this - Scott Walsh did a magnificent job. He's a person who discharges his responsibilities quite well, and this was out of character that he had to be reminded. I support Mr Walsh.

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Perhaps if then we can go to page 17 of your statement?-- Yes.

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And in this statement at this page you talk about that there was limited support from Emergency Management Queensland Southwest Region touring this event. Can you see that?-- Yes, I do.

You talk about following the modifications to the DMA, the

Disaster Management Act, in November 2010, the appointed XO, executive officer, from EMQ change roles and responsibilities?-- Yes.

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The shift, in essence, changed the role of support and training to LDMG as opposed to XO to the DDC/DDMG. Why did this create problems for you and provide limited support from EMQ?-- I guess because as of 1 November, it was my impression that they - EMQ had the position of they no longer support the DDC or the DD - this is my opinion - they now work with local government and the DMG to sort themselves out. That was my opinion. That's why I wrote that.

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You say - and we're picking up from your evidence just - that you just stated in relation to reminding of duties, that during the current arrangements, the local EMQ area director was reminded of his responsibilities to the DDMG in that EMQ were now tasked to have the chair the DDMG. He had to be reminded to attend meetings and be more firm and robust with his duties, particularly with respect to resupply?-- That's correct.

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Is this occurring within the flood event, or dealing with the planning and preparation leading up to the flood event?-- During the flood event.

You also say that you observe a marked difference in the level of support, provisions of advice and activity by EMQ between the current flood event?-- Yes.

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That is the one that we've dealt with this year?-- Yes.

And the event of March 2010?-- Yes, that's correct.

Can you explain the differences that you observed in relation to support?-- Certainly in relation to the incident - the floods which occurred in March 2010, EMQ were supplying - oversupplying staff to the DDMG.

Which one are we talking about? March 2010?-- Yes, where they were supplying upwards of four or five staff to be on the Disaster District Coordination Centre where the DDMG operates on an ongoing basis. To the extent we had to ask EMQ not to put so many people in the room because there wasn't enough resources to cover them being there in terms of what they needed to do. Their time could have been better spent elsewhere. In terms of where staff are located, they were also located into the LDMG at Roma, which is the Maranoa, and also into the Balonne Shire, which is down here at St George. You know, there was a flood of resources, if I can use that word. After the change on 1 November there was none. Certainly to the DDMG, we had it ask for them - EMQ to come to be a party at the table at the Roma DDMG.

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Is that because of the flood events that were occurring across the State, or was this a problem to deal with the processes particular to this district? The question I'm really asking is is it because EMQ were stretched with having to provide

support across the State, or was it the case that it just was not up to scratch in this area?-- It could well be both.

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Now, in terms of you saw a marked difference - you've got there, "Support, provision of advice and activity"?-- Yes.

What was the marked different in the provisions of advice?-- Not being there to give advice.

And where was this person when they were not there giving it? Where were they?-- I don't know. I believe that Mr Walsh spent a considerable time with the Maranoa Regional Council Group at a local level.

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Now, in the second - the last paragraph you talk about "Additional support. Now more functions responses to be given to by EMQ to the six regional counsels that exist in the Roma and Charleville Police Districts". I'm not too sure how that sits - what statement you are trying to say there?-- It may have been said not very clearly. What I'm trying to say is the area director Scott Walsh, from an EMQ perspective, it's my observation that he provides an executive officer role prior to November 2010, and post November 2010, as it is now, he carries the responsibility of being the executive officer to six local councils across the southwest. I think it would be fair to say and reasonable to say that may well be very problematic when we have flooding in the southwest, that one person is expected to service six local councils as an executive officer. If I said that, I haven't made that clear, that's what I'm trying to say.

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So what is a suggestion that can move forward and make it more efficient in the entire relationship with EMQ and DDMG?-- I think the step forward has been the way the Queensland Police Service has undertaken to advertise and appoint executive officers on a full-time basis to various locations. That's right across the State. I think that's a wonderful step forward.

What can you see in relation to EMQ; more people on the ground?-- Well, no. I still see one person on the ground at Roma supplying support and advice across six district - six shire councils which range from here to the border.

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COMMISSIONER: That's what you see as actually happening, but not as desirable, presumably?-- Yes, that's correct.

So what do you think would be adequate?-- I think a step forward has been the appointment of executive officers as at - undertaken by the police service at district level to giving that support to the DDC, and that's going to be a full-time role. I believe that full-time role may alleviate some of that responsibility and some of those issues that EMQ have at the moment.

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You think that neutralises the EMQ problem that you saw?-- I see it goes towards reducing the impact of one person servicing six shires.

But doesn't sound like neutralising though; that just sounds like it makes it a bit better?-- I bit better, that's correct.

MS WILSON: Also you state that there's an observation that EMQ staff rotates frequently on and off duties, managers and fatigue?-- Mmm.

Is that an observation of criticism, or just a neutral observation?-- It's a comment that I found, that where having a rotation of staff through an event is difficult sometimes for continuity in terms of a person may work for two or three or four days, and then you don't see that person again for three or four days, and there just seems to be no continuity. From a policing perspective, fatigue is managed differently and we seem to have that continuity that we don't see from EMQ.

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If I could take you back now to page 12 of your statement. And there you raise the time that is taken to prepare for and participate in the State-wide teleconference with the SPCC?-- Yes.

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You found that time-consuming and onerous?-- It certainly time-consuming that you - at times you spend over three hours in a teleconference where your input may be five minutes, and you have to sit through three hours of reports from across the State.

And so what's your suggestion? That you only sit in for the time that you are responsible for and where you are addressing those issues?-- In essence.

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Now, at page 13, if I could take you to that. You start that first substantive paragraph on that page where you say, "It is important to highlight that there may have been some overlapping with roles and responsibilities at a more strategic level." Then you go on to say you are not privy to the strategic arrangements and make comment that there was impact at the operational and tactical levels. Can you explain that, please?-- Yes. What I'm attempting to outline to you there is that in line with my opening from your initial question, the flow of information usually knows from a local government level to district level to State level. I refer to the requests for assistance as RFIs. Simply, that's how the process operates and it's been my experience and practice. It becomes problematic when resources are placed or given to you when they are not requested, and then being told from a State level that you need to make sure you put a request to assistance in. My question is well, I'm putting the request for assistance in for something I've not asked for. I don't see the logic in that.

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Then perhaps it's now a convenient time to go to page 16 of your statement where you particularise that concern in terms of helicopters?-- Yes.

Can you talk us through that, please?-- Only what my statement

says, is that we - I was advised one evening that we were getting the Emergency Management Queensland helicopter from Townsville with two full crews. That's ten staff. They were coming town from Townsville to St George to support the community, and I posed the question: why were we getting that? And we had that resource thrust on us. It was flown down from Townsville. It was here one day and was called away the next day without being used by anyone or requested by anyone.

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At page 16 we're referring to a DDC impact was felt from SDCC when top-down RFA was driven centrally to push down to DDC level. This was particularly when ADF and all support services were sent to Roma and St George without consultation. Can you explain that, please?-- Simply as what it says. I received - I can remember, I think, speaking to certainly Maranoa Council and the Balonne Council, and we were told you're getting Blackhawk helicopters arriving tomorrow. And I had asked both mayors and CEOs, Do you know anything about this? And no one knew anything about that until we saw two Sea King helicopters arrive at Roma. Again I certainly am not trying to undermine the strategic level of the organisation of disaster relief. I'm not saying that. It's just problematic when we have resources arrive unrequested, unplanned for, and we're then trying to fit them into a community which has very limited resources in terms of accommodation and so on. And particularly aviation fuel. Aviation fuel throughout this flood event was quite a problematic issue to address. The good nature of an operator here in St George allowed various companies and the military to fly by making his fuel available, but we ended up sourcing fuel from throughout Queensland and New South Wales to keep these machines in the air. It's just problematic when things arrive unexpectedly and we can't discharge our responsibility in terms of planning and preparation fully.

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And on some occasions not required?-- Unfortunately, yes.

You say there that large amounts of data are requested by SDCC without technical ability to send same electronically. What do you mean by that?-- A prime example was in the lead-up to the visit of Mr Lucas - Deputy Premier Lucas and Deputy Commissioner Stewart. A large amount of material was requested in relation to geospatial mapping and flood mapping, and the Balonne Shire was fortunate enough to have a large amount of material on hand which was both meaningful and useful. But, excuse my technical incompetence, it was a large volume of material that just simply cannot be sent down the line in terms of fax, email, or other mediums. There was no interconnection between departments to drop it into a folder some way to give the information over to those who needed it. And we ended up doing that, and data was copied and printed on to discs and known back to Brisbane to have them - have that material.

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You say - the final sentence of that paragraph is, "All of which was based on an incorrect premise"?-- That's the 15.5-metre flood level.

So that's what you were referring to?-- Yes. I apologise, yes.

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At page 17 - we've already discussed the issues about EMQ. But you say that the flood of March 2010 was more widespread, had more impact and community impact, than the present situation under review. "The outcome of this was rigorous review and modification to work practice"?-- That's correct.

Can you tell me what work practices were modified with practical outcomes for the 2011 floods?-- I think that's a combination speaking from a DDC level and also from a district officer level from a police perspective. I believe rigorous reviews were undertaken by - certainly I've had lengthy conversations with both mayors which covered a wide range of issues. It would be fair to say that both the mayors and I have learnings from those issues. We then have a debrief where that was conducted from an LDMG perspective and then from a district perspective at both Maranoa and also Balonne. In terms of work practices, I think the work practices at LDMG level or local government level either modified and reaffirmed practices they had adopted. At a DDMG level our practices were - our communication network was tested. We had communications which was - we could talk to anyone at any time across the district. I knew that I could speak to the mayor, the CEOs of either shires at any time. The LDMGs could speak to us at any time. There was clear communication. In terms of work practices, I guess that was about us modifying from a police perspective about we have the right amount of resources at the right place, at the right time, to support our communities, and that means we fly in a lot of external resources to support our communities.

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Are the issues that you are discussing in terms of the modification of work practices and procedures, are they relevant to the local issues pertaining to St George or could they have wider application across the State?-- I think it was equally applicable to both. I think what we did and implemented at local level would be no different to what was done across the State.

But what I am interested in is that you say there was demodification from March 2010?-- Oh, local level, I apologise.

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That's at the local level?-- Yes.

You made systems run more efficiently?-- Absolutely, yes.

You allowed to open up more channels of communication?-- Definitely.

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That's something you learned from March 2010 which had great effect with assistance into 2011?-- Yes, absolutely.

If I can then take you to page 19 which picks up that "Following the March 2010 floods, additional flood equipment was supplied to the Roma District for use at SES and LDC level."?-- Yes.

So because that additional flood equipment was supplied to the Roma District, did that assist in the response to the flood events that occurred in 2011?-- I would believe so, absolutely.

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And what additional flood equipment was supplied?-- Flood boats.

How many?-- Oh, I would say three off the top of my head, but that's all that is, off the top of my head.

You - what about flood - additional flood studies that were completed that resulted accurate flood mapping being generated by the BSEN utilised during the current floods?-- Yes, that's correct.

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They were done between March 2010-----?-- Yes, that's correct.

-----and 2011. And did that assist in decision making in relation to the 2011 floods?-- Absolutely.

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If we can continue on page 19, you state that, "The amount of equipment that was owned by EMQ and appeared during the flood emergency of March 2010 was not sighted during the 2010/2011 floods."?-- No, that's correct.

We have already discussed that at some level. You particularise it at this point by saying, "The flyaway Pelican kits of phone, computers and associated peripherals did not

appear to support the DDMG on this occasion ."?-- Yes, that's correct.

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Can you tell me what a Pelican kit is?-- My apologies. I guess if you could imagine a suitcase size parcel with very hard plastic lining outer with foam on the inside, and it is a secure way to transport sensitive and, I guess, electronic equipment over distance. During the March of 2010 event, as I indicated, EMQ at times had, you know, three to five people in the DDMG and each of those persons brought along a Pelican case full of equipment with satellite phones, computers, printers, that sort of equipment, and portable trailers, communications trailer with satellite phone and other various forms of communication associated with it, and I never saw any of that in the December/January floods of this year.

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But in the March 2010 flood, to be fair, the focus was more on - on this flood at St George where EMQ had to deal with issues across the State during January?-- Oh, absolutely.

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Yeah. Is it essential for you to have these Pelican kits?-- It - in the transition that took place in November - on November 1, the responsibilities of being an executive officer shifted from EMQ to QPS in legislation. What didn't change and what didn't alter was the equipment and resources that EMQ have and utilise in their role as executive officers to the DDMG and the DDC. None of those resources equipment are transferred over, so the responsibility of the activity transferred over to the QPS, but the equipment and resources that EMQ had to carry out that role remained EMQ's property. So the tools to do the job as executive officer should have been required, were never, ever transitioned over, if that makes sense.

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But in terms of the flood disaster management, are they an essential tool for you to have?-- At times it could be. Simply we utilise resources which we take from other people and other police stations. In terms of activating a DDCC requires computers, communication and other equipment to be utilised. Before November, that was supplied by EMQ in their role and the executive officer made those arrangements. Following that transition from November and onwards, that equipment didn't come with them. We then had to find that equipment from within other police stations and take that equipment from other stations to make the DDCC work.

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In terms of communication as well, on page 19 you refer to the inability of the QPS, DDC and LDMG members to communicate effectively as other government agencies who utilised hand-held devices, such as Blackberries?-- Correct.

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You are just saying Blackberries are not issued to police officers?-- Correct, that's right.

And in terms of disaster management-----?-- Yes.

-----and your role in disaster management-----?-- Yes.

-----that would be an effective tool to be able to communicate effectively with other government agencies?-- That's exactly right.

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If I can take you to page 20 of your statement? Now, this refers to resupplying again, the issue of resupplying. I just want to ask you a couple of questions in general terms. In the preparation for a wet season, is there a responsibility for any agency to ensure that resupply lines are open and will be managed?-- The responsibility of resupply and the policy associated with resupply I believe rests with EMQ. As part of preparation do EMQ or in fact DDC publicly go out and say prep, storm season is coming? No. What I can say is - I am fortunate to say is that particularly in the Balonne Shire's case, Mayor Stewart is extremely proactive in terms of the media and her communication with the community. I make note particularly of the ability for this shire to use the internet, the web, local radio, local television and getting out there and visiting the communities to talk to the community. I would think that the Mayor and CEO in this instance do a wonderful job about what's coming and letting the community know what is coming and in terms of what they need to do to prepare.

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I am interested in the issue of resupply and what planning and preparation can be done to ensure resupply is managed during disaster event. Can anything be done?-- I think that's a very difficult question to answer. The problem I see, and it arose during the March 2010 flood, and arose again in this flood, and I have referred to it as the Dirranbandi shop, a change of shopkeeper at a time of or immediately before a crisis event presents problems, that they do not understand what resupply means. I know that people are warned to stock up and, generically speaking, I would say that people across this community are well prepared. In terms of the shop being well prepared, I think at times there could be a case where an opportunity may exist to make short term gain at the expense of the community, and that's adopted-----

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I am looking at the planning and preparation. Is it - would it be advantageous to discuss the resupply issues that occur in a disaster management - disaster like flooding with shopkeepers to say, "Listen, when you get isolated, these are the matters that will arise or could arise and this is how we will deal with those issues." Just in terms of information out to shopkeepers and also to the consumers?-- I think - I think that occurs at the moment. All that information is distributed by council. I know that already in terms of preparation. I know all of that information is currently available on the web and is available for the people. I am not sure - and I don't want to - you know, we can't - we can recommend, we can give advice but we can't pack their pantries. The people have to do that themselves.

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But - and if I can take you to page 21 of your statement, "The local planning groups are aware of our floods along the Balonne are slow to abate due to the open flat land. An example is often quoted that Dirranbandi remains isolated for

up to four to five weeks and this is planned for and managed at both DDMG and LDMG level. We are aware of this and plan for same." So in terms of residents stocking up, they really have to be aware that when they are stocking up it may be for four to five weeks?-- Absolutely. I think the community know that because they have lived here and they know when the water comes, they know what to expect and they actually plan for what they are going to get.

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In terms of the planning that the DDMG and the LDMG do in relation to a long, slow flood that may last four to five weeks-----?-- Yes.

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-----what do those organisations do that is different to more flash flooding?-- We're talking about more long-term supply that I know - and we will talk about Dirranbandi and Hebel are the best examples - they are isolated for a long time. So we talk about supply to those communities being for four and five weeks. I know that at Balonne level, they organise, using innovative means, to make sure they have deliveries, even though the roads are shut, again local knowledge allows the delivery of essential goods into those communities relatively on a frequent basis, perhaps on a daily or second daily basis when they are able to.

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Can I stop you there? When you say the roads may be shut but local knowledge allows that, how does that-----?-- Shortcutting through other properties and using extremely large equipment and high clearance vehicles to deliver resupply goods.

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Are you aware that this is occurring so you know when these communities are being resupplied?-- Yes.

Thank you, Inspector, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: I have no questions.

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COMMISSIONER: I might come to you last, Mr Rolls. Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

MR FAVELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

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MR ROLLS: Just a couple of points, if I may, Inspector. Some of the matters I wanted to cover have been confidently covered by my learned friend, Counsel Assisting. But you helpfully identify in your statement a number of criticisms you make of Emergency Management Queensland. If I could ask you to turn the spotlight on yourself and the DDMG. Are there things that you feel that you, as the DDC and the DDMG, could have done differently or better arising out of this particular flood

event having regard to a period of reflection you have had since these events?-- Look, I have reviewed my own performance and the performance of the DDMG. Realistically what could we have done better? At the risk of sounding conceited, I am not sure there was a lot more we could do to support either the Maranoa or Balonne Shire. In terms of getting giving them support, as I have previously indicated, we wait for the local governments to come to us to make those requests for assistance. In terms of myself as the DDC and our DDMG being proactive, I certainly take the opportunity when the rain comes and I know that we will get water in our community, to speak to my DDMG members proactively and say, "We have an event coming to us. We need to be prepared in terms of where your resources are, your staffing, your ability to respond should a request be made to us as the DDMG." I take the opportunity to speak to the CEOs of both councils saying, "We have flooding events coming to us." I spoke to both of the Mayors in relation to about what may be coming to us. I also highlight, too, that I speak to EMQ, Scott Walsh, my area director, who was the XO and is now the XO to the LDMGs, I also talk to him about what's coming. About what we could do better? Again, I reluctantly say, and I don't want to sound - I am not sure we could do things better. I don't know.

So the upshot is that you don't feel that you could have done anything better, nor the DDMG could have worked more efficiently. Is that the thrust of your answer?-- I think it would be fair to say yes, that's correct. I think myself, as the DDC, my responsibility is to service the community and support my community. In my role as the district officer in the DDC and my role is to support the community and support the LDMGs, my mayors and my CEOs to make sure should they require assistance from the district level or a greater sphere than they can do, that I actively discharge that responsibility. Now, that means that I am available to them at any time of the day or the night to respond to calls for assistance from them as the LDMG or them as the local disaster controllers, or whatever. Equally, I am available and responsible or able to respond to the Emergency Management Queensland representatives no matter who they are, whether they are the local area director, a regional director, or Brisbane through its DCC. I think, you know, our job is to look after and protect our community in terms of life and property and I think we do that well.

All right. Dealing with a couple of points that have been raised generally, there were two - one theme that runs through this suggestion about the selection of 15.5 metre flood level at St George?-- Yes.

And the helicopter being transferred from Townsville to St George?-- Yes.

Is that you weren't aware of the reasons why that figure or that helicopter was sent here?-- That's correct.

You simply do not know what motivated the people who made that

decision or selected that figure, what motivated them at the time?-- No. 1

And that is a criticism you make that you weren't told or privy to that reason, is that the case?-- I have no criticism of the senior executive of the government or my organisation about not being privy to their decision-making. I have no issue with that and am respectful of their position and the authority of those positions. However----- 10

Go on?-- A misunderstanding of the 15.5 metres of water coming through St George was quite a significant issue for myself, Scott Norman and Donna Stewart in terms of distracting us from our job of looking after our community to plan and prepare for something that-----

All right. We will talk about the misunderstanding as you call it. What's the basis for your statement that it was a misunderstanding?-- I understand there was a briefing given by the Bureau of Meteorology----- 20

Were you present?-- No, I was not. It is all hearsay. And the figure of 15.5 may have been discussed in relation to-----

Why do you say may?-- I am saying I believe it was discussed.

So that's - so you think it came from the bureau?-- I think - no, I - I believe it come from a briefing which may have occurred to the government. 30

From the bureau?-- Bureau mentioned 15.5, absolutely.

Is it in the document there that you refer to or tendered before?-- No. 15.5, no.

That the bureau issued a warning of 15 and a half metres for the Balonne River?-- From my recollection it was certainly discussed at length but I don't believe I saw a warning coming out of 15 - I may be mistaken but I don't believe so. 40

So I am trying to ascertain, Inspector, where you got this - why you say it was a mistake or a misunderstanding. If it came from the bureau, that's not necessarily a mistake, is it?-- No, my understanding, the circumstances it may have been the case - it is only secondhand knowledge, of course - that the level of 15.5 metres may have been referred to at a flood station or an automatic measuring station and that was misinterpreted as being - occurring in St George.

Or is it-----?-- May have been. 50

Sorry?-- May have been.

Or is it the case that you didn't believe 15 and a half metres so you thought those people were mistaken?-- I don't think so.

All right. Because you would be aware, wouldn't you, that one

of the needs for disaster - one of the essentials of disaster management is to prepare and plan for the unexpected?-- Absolutely.

1

And 15 and a half metres might seem fantastic to you and members of the LDMG here in St George, but, as what subsequently happened in Queensland, especially in Townsville and Grantham, the fantastic can occur, can't it?-- Yes, absolutely. If there is the associated climatic conditions and events to support that.

10

Well, on what you have said, apparently someone at the bureau may have thought so and was giving briefings about that, so presumably there was some basis for that. So that's an essential of disaster management, to prepare for the unexpected and plan for it, especially when the consequences of such a height would mean that the entire township of St George would require evacuation at some pace?-- That's correct.

20

So in that context, a selection of such a figure might be simple prudence to prepare for the worst possible scenario to enable that all eventualities are catered for in a situation which is ongoing, when no-one knows what's likely to occur. Do you agree with that?-- Absolutely. That's why I referred it back to SDCC because it was outside of our control and it was referred back to them to support us with an evacuation plan.

And in that context, whether you believe 15.5 metres is fine or not, it is more unhelpful than relevant, isn't it?-- It may well not be but what I am saying is we did anticipate when we were told that, and we understood the levity or the gravity of what was occurring, that we had the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the-----

30

Deputy Premier?-- Deputy Premier Mr Lucas out here talking to us about it. That's why we looked at alternate sites for evacuation centres and referred the matter to an evacuation plan. My belief is - my belief is as I have indicated, but it certainly was taken seriously and it was examined with due prudence in my mind.

40

So - and similarly, you don't know what motivated people to move the helicopter from Townsville to St George, or what contingency was being prepared for in those circumstances, do you?-- No.

It is simply a case that you didn't know about that particular piece of information?-- No.

50

Now, can I just take you through to another criticism you make, and - which has been partly picked up by Counsel Assisting and that is the time taken that you spent at the State Disaster Coordination meetings. You say that you spent three hours-----?-- Up to three hours.

Up to three hours listening to reports. Now, I take it they

were reports from other districts?-- From across government and districts, yes.

1

Didn't you find, at least in relation to neighbouring districts, reports from DDCs of some assistance in those circumstances possibly identifying what might be coming your way?-- Well, I was speaking to them on a daily basis anyway.

You didn't find the discussion of the allocation of resources of assistance to you?-- I was speaking to them on a daily basis anyway about-----

10

Are you saying these meetings were a duplication of what you were already talking about?-- I believe there was some duplication.

Well, were they totally duplicated?-- There was some duplication.

Will you answer the question? Were they total duplication?-- No, they weren't totally duplicated.

20

So did you find out of the matters that were duplicated any benefit at all in attending those particular meetings?-- There may have been.

You don't see it - at a State Disaster Coordination meeting it is necessary to coordinate resources throughout the State which means participation of all relevant districts in the State, including this one or Roma's? Do you agree with that?-- That it is relevant to participate?

30

Yes?-- Yes, that's what we did on a daily basis.

And you didn't gain any benefit of attending those particular meetings and finding out what was happening in the rest of the State, what other resources were available and being deployed?-- Of course it was of benefit.

So it wasn't necessarily then a waste of two hours and 55 minutes sitting on the phone, up to that time, after you prepared five minute call? There was still some benefit in attending those particular meetings?-- A five minute report?

40

You said your report was five minutes and then you had to listen to three hours - up to three hours. Did you find any benefit in that, or not?-- What, of participating?

Mmm?-- Absolutely. All I said the impact on my day and what was going on was quite onerous.

50

Should someone else have done it then?-- At times someone did.

So you did delegate from time to time?-- Absolutely.

So it wasn't a total impost that you had to be there; you could delegate your responsibility?-- Between myself and the

deputy DCC, yes.

1

Now, I just want to deal with one thing. You have mentioned Mr - was it Walsh?-- Yes.

Scott Walsh. He was the - was he area director?-- Yes.

Yeah. You left the district on about the 22nd of January 2010, is that the case?-- Yeah, about that time.

10

You sent an email around to a number of people; the mayors, CEOs of the Balonne, Roma Shire Council?-- Yes.

Included Scott Walsh in that? You refer to as Wal?-- Yes, that's right.

You thanked him for his support and unflappable resolve to work for our communities?-- Absolutely.

You also thanked him for protecting your organisation and bearing unimaginable pressure in difficult times?-- That's right.

20

You also said that "You have shown me friendship, professionalism, support and a deep understanding of disaster management."?-- Yes, that's correct, yes.

You also said that, "Although not often said enough, Wal, thank you for your help, advice and support for the last 12 months. It is the cornerstone of the very success of our tremendous DDMG. Thanks, Wal." Is that the text of the email that you sent him?-- Yes.

30

And that was on the 22nd of January this year?-- Mmm.

Now, you have also been made aware of comments that were made on the 29th of April this year while this Commission was sitting in Toowoomba by the area director, Mr Robert Bundy, is that the case?-- Yes, that's correct.

40

You have read the transcript of Mr Bundy's evidence appearing at day 12, pages 1006 to 1036?-- Oh, I have read the section which is relevant where Mr Bundy has mentioned my name, yes.

All right. That - I think that starts at page 1,012 and goes through to - I think about 1,015?-- That sounds about right.

So it is a couple of pages?-- That's correct.

Where he speaks about a number of things. You have read that? You recall what was said by Mr Bundy?-- Yes, yes.

50

Do you have any comments to make about that?-- Oh, I guess issue for Mr Bundy to raise I was uncontactable.

This was in the March 2010 flood?-- Yeah, I don't see that as a reasonable comment. I - I think that - I don't - I can't think of a time when I was not contactable, but I was having

some down time during that flood event. My phone and that phone number of the DDC was diverted to my deputy DDC, Senior Sergeant Fenton.

1

He does say when asked by Mr Callaghan, "Mr Stiles couldn't be contacted?", and the response was, "On some occasions". So he is not saying absolutely, but not always, just on some occasions?-- I am still of the same opinion, that I find that very difficult to believe that I wasn't contactable.

10

All right. Any other comments to make about those passages of evidence that Mr Bundy gave at the Toowoomba hearing?-- A general comment would simply be he refers to a personality clash, which I assume he is referring between himself and myself. I don't agree with that. Mr Bundy and I had a difference of an opinion during the March of 2010 event, which was dealt with at that time, and both he and I have moved on from that. I don't see that there is any personality issue. I'm - yeah, I don't see that there is an issue. I don't consider there is a personality issue with Mr Bundy.

20

You were unaware - it was described that Mr Bundy subsequently submitted official complaint to Mr Bruce Grady, the Acting Chief Officer of EMQ about you in March of 2010?-- I know nothing about that.

Tell me, as the - do you want to say something else?-- Can you perhaps - can I ask you a question, if I may?

Well, I will-----?-- Mr Bundy made a complaint about me concerning what?

30

Abuse and harassment?-- I am not sure where that would come from. I had a conversation with Mr Bundy in relation to a particular issue where he intimated he had spoken to certain persons and those persons had been purported to give me certain instructions. I clarified that issue and those issues were identified as being untrue, and I believe other parties spoke to Mr Bundy about that.

40

All right?-- In terms of complaint about me, I don't know anything about it.

You don't know anything about it. This goes back to the March 2010 events?-- Yes, that's correct.

Perhaps on something a bit more relevant, the questions of resupply, do you see it as your role as the DDC to approve requests for resupply to remote townships and communities?-- When resupply issues are in line with the EMQ policies, yes, that's what the EMQ policy says.

50

So if someone - if an LDMG wishes to resupply a community, your view is they must go to the DDC for approval?-- No. The practicality of the matter is that a mayor and the CEO signs off at resupply to a local community, and it's done on a - many, many, many times per day. Frequently that occurred during March 2010 and certainly occurred during this latest event of December and January 2011. The issues with which I was concerned about were the large-volume issues and movement across the district, not across shires.

10

So large resupply would be a matter that you would require particulars of?-- Absolutely, yes. A prime example was the supply of the Dirranbandi store in January of this year, where the resupply included a full 14 tonnes of goods which were approved somewhere, were transported to St George Airport, and of that, I think, 14 tonnes, 8 tonnes of cargo was left here on the ground because the EMQ guidelines about resupply are quite explicit that we don't supply alcohol, and there was a number of pallets of alcohol which had been signed off on by someone to resupply Dirranbandi, but didn't fall within the guidelines. So I would not sign that resupply matter.

20

You used the phrase "leaning forward" on page 22 of your statement. What does leaning forward mean? "At this stage the MRC," Maranoa Regional Council, "and the LDMG was leaning forward, and the Balonne Shire Council LDMG was not activated or leaning forward..."?-- They are EMQ terms. Leaning forwards means people are advised but not perhaps sitting in their capacity of the LDMG. A phone call from myself to the LDC or the CEO of the council or a phone call to the mayor, in my capacity as DDC to the mayor, is keeping them informed. I think that's part of my responsibility about preparation and preparedness. In terms of leaning forward, that may be at a stage at an LDMG level where the council may go about moving resources, soil, graders and equipment, to various locations where they know history tells them this area may be affected by floodwaters; therefore, we should have a grader at this location or a truck at this location or soil at this location. They are undertaking their normal business as a Shire Council, but really they are actually undertaking some duties as an LDMG. They call that activity as leaning forward.

30

40

All right. Now, you agree with me that the March 2010 flood events largely involve the Maranoa region?-- Both the Maranoa and Balonne.

I wasn't talking about the regional council areas, but Maranoa and Balonne Shire Councils?-- Yes.

50

The flood events of December and January 2010 and 2011 affected a far wider area of the State floods in Rockhampton and west and south as well - southeast as well, and you agree that Emergency Services Queensland, as did the police, had to respond to those different emergencies with the resources that they then had available?-- Absolutely.

And so therefore, March 2010, where there might have been a

more isolated flooding event, Emergency Services Queensland
may have been able to devote more resources to that particular
event than what was subsequently the case earlier this year?--
Absolutely.

1

You talk about - this was partially dealt with by my learned
friend - palleting kits and phones, computers and peripherals.
Did you make any request of EMQ for such equipment?-- No, I
did not.

10

I have no further questions, Commissioner.

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

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

WITNESS EXCUSED

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COMMISSIONER: Do you want to start on this witness or take a
break?

MS WILSON: The next witness will be some time, so perhaps it
might be convenient to take a break now and resume at 2.15.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Adjourn until 2.15.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 12.50 P.M. UNTIL 2.15 P.M.

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.15 P.M.

MS WILSON: I recall Scott Norman.

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SCOTT LESLIE DANIEL NORMAN, RECALLED, FURTHER EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: You're under your former oath from your previous - when we called you before. In your role as chief executive officer of Balonne Shire Council and also the local disaster coordinator for Balonne Local Disaster Management Group, you provided information to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry pursuant to a requirement?-- I did, yes.

10

Perhaps if you can have a look at this document, please. That's the statement that you provided to Queensland flood Commission of Inquiry?-- That is correct.

The contents of that do you swear are true and correct?-- I do.

I tender that statement.

20

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 270.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 270"

MS WILSON: Mr Norman, in your role with the LDMG, are you aware that situation reports, which are called sit reps, are passed from the LDMG to the DDC?-- I am.

30

Can you have a look at this bundle of documents, please. Are they situation reports that have been completed by the Balonne Shire Council and directed to the DDC?-- Yes. Without going through every one individually but I would accept that, yes.

Is the first one there on 4 January 2011?-- The first one is dated the 3rd.

40

So 3 January 2011. If you look at the last one, is that dated 22 January?-- That's correct.

Madam Commissioner, I tender those documents.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 271.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 271"

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MS WILSON: The Local Disaster Management Group has meetings, and those meetings are minuted; is that the case?-- That's correct.

Can you have a look at these documents, please. Are these the

LDMG meeting minutes?-- Yes, they are.

1

And is that - you see the first one is 31 December 2010?--
Yes.

If you have a look at the last one, that is 24 February
2011?-- That is correct.

Madam Commissioner, I tender those documents.

10

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 272.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 272"

MS WILSON: The Balonne Shire did a disaster management study.
Are you aware of that document?-- Yes.

20

And that is dated May 2004?-- Yes.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Can you tell -
is that the study that was done?-- Yes, it is.

Can you tell me the purpose of that document?-- To identify
the natural disaster risks within the Shire and identify
courses of action to address those risks.

30

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 273.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 273"

MS WILSON: Balonne Shire has a disaster management plan?--
That's correct.

40

Has that been formalised in any way?-- It has been formalised,
and it was in a state of review when the floods commencing
December came upon us. A pen amended version was used in that
flood event.

I'm sorry?-- A pen amended version of the plan was used in
that event.

50

Perhaps if I can show you this document here. This is a
document that we've got with writing on it?-- Yes.

Can you tell is this the document that was used in the flood
events of January 2011?-- Yes, it certainly was.

Was it also used in March 2010?-- Yes. Back in March it

didn't have writing on it, and the writing increased over time, and it was halfway through being typed up when the last flood event hit us.

1

So the writing is information that was acquired after the 2010 floods?-- During and after, yes.

And that was going to be updated. But it didn't quite get there, and that document with the writing was used as a disaster management plan for the January 2011 floods; is that right case?-- That's correct.

10

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 274.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 274"

20

MS WILSON: The Balonne Shire Council has made application for update of the disaster management study?-- That is correct.

Can you tell me what you are seeking?-- We're seeking to take the 2004 document to be reviewed and updated, and from that we will review our disaster management plan.

Can you have a look at this document, please. With this application for update of disaster management study, who are you making the application to?-- The Natural Disaster Resilience Program. Funding has been approved.

30

And can you tell me the progress of the update of the study?-- Quote documents will be put together, and we're seeking appropriate people to send it to.

So that was just the application for funding, and funding has been approved?-- Yes, it has.

40

No need to tender that document. Has the Balonne Shire Council also undertaken a Balonne Recovery Group implementation plan?-- Yes. It was based initially on the Hinchinbrook plan and was developed in the March 10 event and was subsequently used in the December/January 2011 event.

Can you have a look at this document. You say it's based on the Hinchinbrook plan?-- Yes.

50

What do you mean by that?-- The Hinchinbrook Shire put together a recovery plan that worked well, and it was subsequently promoted by EMQ as an example for others. We took that plan and condensed it on the basis that we're a much smaller Shire with less participants at the meetings and used it for our own purposes.

And is that plan being undertaken?-- That plan is being

undertaken. It is the responsibility of the recovery group.

1

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 275.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 275"

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MS WILSON: If I can take you to your statement that you provided to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry. If I can take you to various matters in that statement. If I can take you to point 2?-- Yes.

You say, "During the event, a temporary levy was in place designed to protect the majority of the town to a flood height of 14.5 metres, being the agreed preparation height"?-- That's correct.

20

Now, that's in relation to the January floods?-- Yes, it is.

The temporary levy we saw on your map this morning. When was the temporary levy put up?-- The temporary levy was commenced - I'm sorry, but I don't have dates. But it was commenced early on when we knew the water was coming, because we needed access to appropriate type of soil and we needed time to physically construct the levy. So we started on the areas of town that caused the least disruption and we didn't have to cross private property. We then finished at a point where we had to construct a levy that would have excluded some houses - they would have been on the wrong side of the levy - and just waited to see where the peak would come to. Once it was obvious the peak couldn't endanger the entire town, construction was finished, yes.

30

So you say construction began when you knew the water was coming?-- Yes.

40

Are we talking about days' preparation or weeks?-- Probably talking ten days. Because we're aware of water coming from Condamine and water coming from Mitchell.

At the height of this levy that goes through the town, what is the peak height of the levy that has been brought to?-- 14.5 it was confirmed by a surveyor when we finished, and it is referenced to the March 2010 floods. At the peak of the March 2010 floods a bolt was driven into the road where the water reached, so at any point the levy is referenced off those.

50

How high did the levy have to be built in the town to cater for the 14.5-metre flood?-- At a rough guess, I would say about 1.6, 1.7 metres at its highest and virtually imperceptible at its lowest. And at times it met the natural lay of the land and the levy bank both sides.

You say it was checked by the ADF?-- The ADF passed an eye over it, and it was also checked by local contractors and council's surveyor.

1

The major flood peak was 13.2 metres?-- That's correct, yes.

And that was the second highest peak on record?-- That's correct.

Of course, March 2010 was the highest peak?-- Highest, 13.4.

10

Were you in Court this morning when the level of 15.5 metres was discussed?-- Yes, I was.

Were you aware that there was any prediction for 15.5 metres?-- I was aware of a prediction for 15 metres.

Of 15?-- Yes.

And who informed you of that?-- I was informed by Bureau of Meteorology after a State briefing session to say that they had run some of their existing models, and they had some scenarios where the height reached 15 metres. They were very definite in that they weren't predictions, but they were scenarios. And the problem was that the volume of water exceeded their current modelling, and they are in uncharted waters and trying to refine modelling.

20

You said this was in meeting with the DDC?-- No, outside a meeting. A telephone call to the Bureau of Meteorology made to myself.

30

You telephoned the Bureau of Meteorology?-- They phoned me.

Sorry, they phoned you?-- Yes.

Can you recall when this was?-- No, I can't. If it helps, look, I had a diary of events that I could probably go back and-----

40

That would assist?-- Yes.

Can you provide those to the Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

Would that diary point out the conversation that you had?-- Look, I am unsure of how clear it will make that, but I have a good recollection of the conversation.

The next thing you refer to was it was a scenario, not a forecast?-- They were the exact words used by-----

50

What was the exact difference between those two terms, between scenario and forecast?-- My understanding was that the forecast was the number they were prepared to make public; the scenario was on the upper range of their models they didn't feel comfortable to make public, because they were not that confident in the number.

Warned by that information that you said you got?-- Yes.

1

You, the Balonne Shire Council, had a trigger point of 1.25?--
Yes.

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When we're talking about a trigger point that is when evacuations would commence-----?-- Yes.

-----of the town. First of all, when we're talking about a trigger point of 14.25, is that a prediction of 14.25 or an actual recording of a level of 14.25?-- That is when we are confident it will reach 14.25. So in that sense it would be a prediction. However, the 14.25 is to give us adequate time to evacuate the time prior to 14.25 metres.

10

One of the issues is, is it not, that St George could get isolated and it would be difficult to evacuate if the flood level had reached 14.25, is that correct?-- St George was isolated for a total of about three days. There is normally road access to the east or to the south. Our evacuation plan - and I will run through it - was in two stages. The first evacuation centre was based at the State school and that was used for evacuees for those people who were flooded. The second evacuation point was on higher ground at the Wattleglen kangaroo processing factory, which is a little way out of town, and if we had to move the population of St George that's where they were going to.

20

And could that evacuation centre cater for a population of St George?-- Yes, it could. The recovery committee went and inspected it and made arrangements.

So you had this conversation, you say, with the Bureau of Meteorology where you were informed that there - there was a scenario of 15 metres?-- Yes.

30

Bearing in mind the distinction between forecast. What did the LDMG do in relation to being armed with that information of a scenario of 15 metres?-- My recollection is it coincided with the Deputy Premier's visit, who was concerned and it was - our planning had been to 14 and a half metres. We confirmed that planning height. And the really only number that was confirmed and made definite after that information was at 14.25, the town would be evacuated.

40

Excuse me. There was a change in circumstance, wasn't there, of the forecast that the Bureau of Meteorology supplied you some time after the - there was a higher peak that was expected by the Bureau of Meteorology where they talked about in excess of 14 metres?-- Yes.

And then there was a downgrade from that, less than 14 metres?-- Yes.

50

Now, in terms of the 15 metres, you heard the questions that were - the questions and answers that were put to Inspector Stiles this morning?-- Yes, I did.

And about erring on the side of caution about evacuating the town so they are not put in danger?-- Yes.

What is your response to that in relation to the scenario that

you were provided?-- I will take it that it is in relation to his confidence in the amount of water that was coming.

1

Yes?-- Look, it was one of the many things that we considered. We have got a community full of very knowledgeable people of flows in the river because it makes their life difficult from it; each of them are watching all the websites, they know the volumes of water that are coming; we ourselves had a history of knowing the previous peaks of the river as it passed the various places upstream from us. So I am not saying we disregarded that scenario, we certainly went and made preparation to evacuate the town after we heard that scenario. However, it would be reasonable to say that - I think we accepted the comment in the same context it was given; there is a scenario, if - and it relates to Barrackdale Choke overflows, that you might see an overflow of water, and nobody was prepared to commit to that as a prediction, it was just "be warned", and we considered ourselves warned.

10

Were you prepared to take a risk?-- There was no risk. There is a lead time of at least two to three days and I don't see it as a risk. If we were going to breach that, we would evacuate to the Wattle Glen factory and we're out of town.

20

How long did that evacuation process take?-- Look, I would be comfortable it would be completed within a day. We had resources come to the LDMG meeting that we would offer door knock. When we did evacuate the lower lying areas it was done via door knock.

30

Can I take you to another matter in your statement? Can I take you to item 7? If I can take you to subsection (b) in relation to that?-- Yes.

That's where you refer to, "The council was also responsible for the establishment and operation of the SES control centre."?-- That's correct.

And then the task of the control centre you have set out there?-- Yes.

40

Now, can you assist me: did the council direct the operations of the SES?-- The council chairs the Local Disaster Coordination Committee. The SES had a response role and there is a coordinator SES controller that sits and directs the operations of the SES. The SES attend the disaster coordination meetings and bring information to it and act upon some of the recommendations.

And can you assist me in providing the numbers of the local SES that you have here in St George?-- Look, not precisely but I would say 15 is probably the upper limit. We also have another unit at Thallon that was activated and there was other SES brought in from other areas to supplement our numbers.

50

And one of the greater risks that St George faces is flooding. Does the SES have the appropriate training in relation to flood boats and dealing with flooding?-- Yes, we have quite a

few people qualified to operate those flood boats.

1

And what about the resources in relation to flood boats being available during flood events?-- Appropriate. There was other flood boats brought in to assist. We did move a boat from the town of Barwon across the Dirranbandi prior to the water arriving to make sure they were in a position to help themselves. I should add from the previous comment, too, that the SES do have people who train other people in the use of flood boats based out of St George.

10

Does the training come to St George or are you aware whether the members have to go elsewhere for their training?-- A combination. Previously there has been training in St George, previously we have sent people away to train others.

Okay?-- Can I-----

Go on?-- Can I add to the adequacy of the boats?

20

I will just take you to that. Is that something you have addressed in item 17E?-- Yes.

And that is in relation to - where you state that another difficulty with flood boats was only one outboard engine?-- That's correct.

Can you explain?-- In two circumstances there was a failure of the only engine, and both times, luckily, the boat drifted back to the edge of the river. Had there been an auxiliary engine, that would have been a much safer operation. Our other difficulty was we had a hand-me-down engine from the Gold Coast that had a lot of hours on it. In the end, it did require a major service. It didn't let anybody down terribly. The bottom of the motor broke off at some stage where it had been previously welded but it sufficed.

30

It sufficed when the bottom of the motor broke off?-- Yes, there is a little alloy fit, about that long, that had broke off previously and been welded, yes.

40

So in relation to those resources have you got any suggestions about the appropriateness of the flood boats in the area?-- I would suggest that those boats need an auxiliary motor to get them out of trouble.

That's just a little outboard engine that's also included on the boat?-- Yes. Another alternative would be to use twin engines instead of a single, yes.

50

Can I now take you back to item 10? And you say at B there are three particular issues that you wish to bring to the attention of the Commission?-- Mmm.

The first one is in relation to the information that the Bureau of Meteorology was supplying, vis-à-vis the information the Department of Environment and Resource Management was supplying on their website?-- Yes.

And your suggestion is that there should be greater compatibility?-- There should - my comment arises from a situation during the floods where we had local irrigators watching the volume of water coming down the river and the two websites were out by 100,000 megalitres a day, which is significant, and to put it in perspective, about 300,000 megalitres a day is the most the Beardmore Dam has ever flowed. I brought that to the attention of BOM, Bureau of Meteorology. They met with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, DERM. They resolved who was right and who was wrong and they were corrected in favour of the greater volume.

10

Who was corrected?-- I - look, this is one - it is really a bit hazy in my mind. I think DERM had the higher numbers and BOM corrected themselves.

You say in your - in 10B, "DERM later amended its rating tables to better reflect the BOM figure."?-- Yes. The rating tables within - now, this is where it is hazy in my mind. Two were reconciled. That's definite. Who admitted fault, I can't remember.

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Okay. And when did that occur in relation to the flooding events of St George?-- Prior to the peak.

And did you have any other issues with that information throughout the rest of January?-- No, we were constantly reminded that the flow was outside the flow curves of the gauging stations, and they were relying on what they could physically measure on the ground with boats out there, and educated estimations.

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Number 2 is an issue that you raise in relation to the Barrackdale Choke?-- Yes.

You say there, "The choke was tested beyond its previous limits and BOM produced a range of what-if scenarios"-----?-- Yes.

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-----"in the event the capacity of the choke was exceeded."?-- Yes.

Can you assist me in telling me what you mean in relation to that?-- They were the scenarios we've previously spoken about. The people doing the predictions, BOM, had a view of the capacity of that choke. It acted as a natural dam, and at some point that dam would spill and the consequences of which they were unsure of, that's why they produced the range of scenarios.

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And that's where you say that, for instance, one scenario put the height of the Balonne River at 15.5 metres?-- 15.5, yeah.

And that was something that you worked through and determined that it wouldn't reach?-- No, look, it is something we took on notice because BOM themselves were not sure. They said it

is outside the range of their models, but they wanted the heads-up that it is a possibility and they would get back to us with more accurate information. 1

You say that, "The range of possible flood heights was considered and useful when establishing the evacuation at 14.25 metres."?-- Yes.

Can you explain what you mean by that?-- That obviously we had to be prepared to leave the town and it was appropriate at the time to set a height at which we would leave the town. 10

When you are talking about - how was the evacuation trigger point of 14.25 metres established with reference to the range of possible flood heights?-- It was discussed - I think it was actually in the presence of the Deputy Premier and agreed upon within the LDMG.

Can I now take you to item 19? These are matters that you raise for future planning?-- Yes. 20

And perhaps if we can go through them. The first one you state is, "In Thallon it is proposed to augment the current levee from its current alignment and the Natural Disaster Resilience Program funding for this augmentation has been approved."?-- That is correct. That resulted from the March '10 floods and prior to the January flood reaching Thallon, we moved heavy equipment in there, raised the level and prevented the town from flooding. We have now confirmed that that is the correct alignment of that levee. 30

Okay. That process is also occurring for Dirranbandi?-- Dirranbandi again came from the March '10 floods. Again, we had heavy equipment in place during this flood. It was to patch leaks. The Dirranbandi levee has now been substantially completed.

You also say that, "In St George, the council proposes to engage consultants to carry out a hydrological study of the floodplain below St George. Funding is currently being sought for this project."?-- That is correct, yes. 40

What is the purpose of this hydrological study in relation to flood preparedness?-- It is to address community concerns such as Mrs Kilroy suggested this morning, as to the development of the floodplain below St George.

Is that in relation to the building of - by private property owners of levee banks?-- Not only private property owners, the development of that floodplain dates back to the 50s and there has been no big flood tested in that time, so----- 50

So now might be a convenient time to discuss the issue of levee banks-----?-- Yes.

-----around St George. You heard the issues raised by Ms Kilroy this morning?-- Yes.

And she has a view that the levee banks should be regulated or that process should be begun?-- Yes. 1

Now, has that process begun to - for the Balonne Shire Council to consider regulating levee banks?-- The process is certainly being considered and that seeking funding for that study is the starting point. It is a big issue beyond the resources of the shire, or very close to, and it is going to need other levels of government to assist. 10

What information are you hoping to get out of the hydrological study to assist you with the process of considering to regulate levee banks?-- To assist as to whether or not to regulate levee banks? The hydrological study is more in regard to flood preparedness, as first port of call. The second port of call in - to whether or not to regulate levee banks is a broader conversation because how you would regulate levee banks has to be further discussed.

So you are stating that the conversation is being started?-- The conversation has been started, yes. 20

And the first part of that conversation is to get this hydrological study?-- Is to get it, and it forms two parts. There is a proposal for a levee within St George. That is a study of a much more confined area and it would place a permanent levee to protect the town of St George. That is the small part of the study. Below that, it addresses community concerns because they have been raised and we really don't know the validity of what has been raised and I think we need to establish it. 30

Have community consultations been proposed late last year? Were they proposed to be undertaken?-- I would say that is a reference to the beginning to prepare a new planning scheme for the shire.

Well, tell us about the beginning of a new planning scheme for the shire?-- There is money in the current budget for council to scope a new planning scheme in line with the SPA, the Sustainable Planning Act, to replace the old planning scheme which was done under the Integrated Planning Act. 40

Why does that have relevance in relation to the building of levee banks in this area?-- We sought advice from Department of Local Government as to the appropriate way if you were wishing to regulate levee banks, and that was suggested as one possibility. It is - it is the start of a process.

But the community consultations didn't occur?-- No, as late as last month there was a resolution of council to commence the planning scheme. There was broader issues with the planning scheme as to the appropriateness of the timing of the new scheme. 50

Madam Commissioner, I understand that we are going to be supplied - the Commission is going to be supplied a report prepared by the Balonne Shire Council, and I understand

written submissions are going to be given to the Commission in relation to this issue of levee banks, and any possible regulation of the levee banks, and perhaps that could be better addressed in that written form.

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COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MS WILSON: If I can just continue through the item 19, there is also a proposal to design and construct a levee for the western end of St George?-- Yes. That's the one I just referred to that would require a hydrological study. Part of the town, it looks like it is impracticable to contend with the levee and the exact alignment of any levee is going to be controversial.

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You say, "For areas of St George where a levee is not practical, such as Albert Street and Terrace Street, there is a proposal to raise houses to provide flood immunity. Funding is being sought for this proposal."?-- That's correct. There is a selection of houses that you are going to have to build a levee 10 metres high that just blocks all view of the river, and those houses - the only practical solution appears to be to raise them, looking for assistance for those people.

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Who are you seeking funding from?-- Actually the Mayor raised the question and it was suggested to include it in this submission of the Commission.

Sorry, I am not too sure what you are seeking?-- Sorry, no, look, the - there was a discussion, the Mayor attended a meeting of Mayors of flood affected shires with the Premier, and the suggestion was raised that we were seeking this funding. The Premier responded that it would well be a matter for the Commission, so it was included in a submission.

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And where you had put it in item 19 that is where it is included?-- No, it is also included to a submission to the Commission by myself.

"Council proposes to retain the emergency levels along the riverfront in St George where they do not interfere with roadways and private property. A Green Army project (a program to provide work experience and training to unemployed people) has been applied for to blend these levees into the landscape."?-- That's correct.

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Is that underway?-- No, I got - the project funding has been applied for. It is imminent. We have got a partner who will employ the people. Look, there is emails going backwards and forwards at the moment. Look, that is a beautification and restoration project rather than a project to protect the town.

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Okay. "The Balonne Shire Disaster Risk Management Study is to be updated." That's a document that we saw before, is it?-- Correct.

The one with the writing on it?-- Yes - oh, sorry, no, the risk management study is the one without the writing on it,

the 2004 document.

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And then that will be - however that is updated, that will be implemented into the Disaster Management Plan, is that the case?-- That's correct, yes.

Thank you. I have no further questions?-- Okay.

MS McLEOD: I have no questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls, are you-----

MR ROLLS: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: Yes, thank you, Commissioner.

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MR DOLLAR: Mr Norman, I act on behalf of SunWater. They are the owners and operators of Beardmore Dam which is one of the dams within this region. Now, that's a dam located 21 kilometres approximately north of this location. Through your time as the CEO of this Shire Council, have you become familiar or obtained some knowledge in relation to the way in which that dam is operated?-- Yes, I have.

Now, are you aware that it is a dam that has no flood storage capacity?-- Yes, I am.

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And by that I mean that as floodwater comes into the dam, it must be passed through the dam and released to protect the safety of the dam?-- In layman terms they explained to me that their job is to keep the water flat, so, yes.

To keep a constant level of the dam?-- Yes.

Once it is full?-- Mmm.

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Now, in your presentation to the Commission this morning you provided some information in relation to flood volumes passing through the town of St George. Now, have you read the statement of Mr Keogh from SunWater where he talks about that approximately 82 times the total storage volume of the dam passed through Beardmore dam from 1 December until the 7th of February?-- No, I haven't read that but I would accept that that would be the case.

I think you said this morning that it was approximately double the flood volume of the March 2010-----?-- Yes.

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-----flood?-- Yes.

Now, you mentioned earlier you have some knowledge as to how the dam is operated?-- Yes.

Now, are you issued, as the Chief Executive Officer of this

Shire Council, with an emergency action plan prepared by SunWater?-- Yes, I am.

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And is that a controlled copy of a document that you receive?-- Yes, it is.

Does that set out the way in which the dam is operated and the conditions under which the releases from the dam are made?-- Yes, it does.

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And it provides the council with information that is useful for the council in understanding the precise mechanisms by which the dam is operated?-- Yes, it does.

In terms of contact between SunWater and the council, is that something that you have some experience in?-- Yes, on many levels outside of flood and during the flood, yes.

We might start, first of all, then, with the Emergency Action Plan contact. Are you aware of the contact list in the Emergency Action Plan whereby reference can be made to various and central personnel at SunWater where their contact details are provided?-- Yes. I am aware there is a list in there. For practical purposes, I normally deal with the local people.

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Just dealing with this list and then we will deal with the local people?-- Yes.

But this list lists out - I won't go through them all, but from the CEO down to the dam operators as well as the engineers and anyone you might need to contact?-- Yes.

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And it includes their mobile numbers, after hours, work numbers?-- And was recently updated.

Now, in terms of your local contact, you found that a very effective means of contacting people at SunWater, a local contact, is that right?-- That's correct. They had a representative on our Local Disaster Coordination Group, and when I needed information, I would ring - well, in particular William Bennett, local operator. He would tell me what he knew was happening, yes.

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And how did you find the quality of the information that was received or given to you by Mr Bennett?-- Oh, invaluable.

Invaluable?-- Invaluable.

What was the type of information that would be provided by Mr Bennett on behalf of SunWater?-- For example, that the dam was nearing maximum capacity, as to the amount of water they could flow; how many more lifts they had on the gates to pass water through; that water was backing up around the dam, back of the dam where they had never soon it before. He was - helped form a picture of what was happening locally.

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So this information was provided to you in a number of means?-- Yes.

First of all, you have mentioned telephone calls with Mr Stephens?-- Mr Bennett, yes.

Mr Bennett, I am sorry?-- Yes.

And you have also mentioned the Local Disaster Management Group meetings?-- Yes.

Did SunWater attend those meetings, did they?-- They did. Look, they might have missed one or two but they were there at the vast majority of them. 10

And they contributed information to these Local Disaster Management Group meetings?-- They did. At the end of the meeting we always went around the room for people to raise issues, and if there was something happening of particular interest, Bill Bennett would normally tell me and I would invite him to speak earlier in the meeting. 20

Now, there was a Local Disaster Management Group meeting debriefing session, so to speak, on the 24th of February-----?-- Yes.

-----this year. Was it that meeting that addressed some of the issues to be learned out of the flood event?-- Yes, it did.

Was that also a meeting that was attended by SunWater?-- Yes, it was. 30

In general terms, then, how would you describe the adequacy of the communications between SunWater and your council over the term of this flood event?-- Oh, wonderful. There was one criticism raised - I don't even know how practical it was - we had a brief window of about 36 hours when we had use of the bridge across the Balonne, and it was very hard to predict when that access would close again. Perhaps more information may have been fed about the rising or the lowering of gates. But it is a very minor - very minor criticism. 40

Now, there were some difficulties that you're aware of in predicting the river flows or the peak heights of the river in St George?-- Yes.

To your understanding, does that have something to do with the Barrackdale choke you spoke to council assisting about in your evidence earlier?-- It certainly did. I was led to that conclusion by the Bureau of Meteorology.

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There's been some attention paid this morning and this afternoon to some of the uncertainties that were evident in the prediction regarding the peak height of the flood here in St George, whether it be 15.5 metres or 15 metres?-- Yes.

You've spoken about a range of forecasts scenarios that were provided?-- Yes.

Not necessarily as forecast, but as a range of scenarios. And is it your understanding that the difficulty in determining at an early stage a precise forecast for the peak has something to do with the volume of water coming through the Barrackdale choke?-- It certainly did on this occasion, yes.

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And those range of forecasts - to be clear, the higher range of 15.5 metres, that would have been a higher peak than in March 2010?-- Yes, March 2010 was 14 - sorry, no. 13.4, sorry.

And that forecast was subsequently revised and updated by the Bureau of Meteorology?-- The forecast was continually revised. There is a pattern as the water moves down the river, that the Bureau of Meteorology refines their forecasts. They tend to err on the side of caution. As the peak gets closer, they tend to-----

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And is it your understanding that this revision of the forecast is due to the fact that the certainty of a flood peak height - or the level of certainty increases as there's more knowledge gained about the type of flood it is and the way in which the matter is moving through the system?-- Certainly. They would revise after a peak passed a gauging station.

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You're aware that senior engineers from SunWater worked and collaborated with the Bureau of Meteorology on a daily basis to ensure that the predictions for the community in St George for the flood height were continually refined?-- No, I was not particularly aware of that. But like I said, we had very good cooperation with SunWater in every direction.

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But you're aware that the rating tables coming out of the Barrackdale choke were continually revised?-- Yes. I didn't know by whom.

And you were also aware that there was constant review of the modelling being done by someone in any event?-- Yes, and a lot of it done overnight too. I don't think anybody got a lot of sleep, yes.

So a lot of work behind the scenes?-- Yes.

Now, SunWater is one of the listed entities within the disaster management plan of your local council?-- Yes.

They are one of the people who is issued with a copy of the disaster management plan?-- Yes.

You've also spoken this morning about - there's been some comments about the lessons learned out of the 2010 floods here in March. Do you recall whether SunWater sent a number of senior staff to St George in March 2010 as a precaution in those flood events?-- Yes, I particularly remember Steve Gaudie was there and some other gentlemen whose names I can't recall.

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If I was to suggest the other gentleman was Graham Hargreaves?-- Yes, rings a bell, yes.

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Did these gentlemen from SunWater have any involvement in the council of the Local Disaster Management Group meetings in the March 2010 floods?-- They attended the meetings. They contributed to the comment. That was a more tense time, because we didn't have the benefit of this experience we have now.

And did you find that assistance or input from SunWater in March 2010 of a similar standard?-- Absolutely. We had two to three meetings a day at times as that critical peak approached because we just didn't know what to expect.

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Thank you. Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell.

MR FAVELL: If the Commission pleases, I don't have any questions of this witness. May I provide some information in respect of what we propose to do in respect of the question of levies south from the township.

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We have commissioned - the Local Government Association of Queensland has commissioned a technical report on the January 2011 flooding within the Shire of Balonne. It is all but complete, and we would seek to provide that to the Commission.

It raises a number of matters that should be considered when considering the effects of the agricultural levy bank south of St George, and they include that there needs to be a comprehensive total floodplain - floodplain flood investigation to assess the effects of levy banks and formulate appropriate management strategy. It also recognises that most of the levy banks are unregulated by the government or council. There was a proposal in a previous floodplain management plan to recommend amendments to be included in the Water Act. That hasn't occurred.

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We would seek to make submissions about the appropriate entity

to undertake any regulation of levy banks. There are considerations because of the locality to be taken into account. This is not just a local government matter. Perhaps it's not just a State matter. But it requires cooperation of States and perhaps the Commonwealth. We see that may involve some submissions with respect to law and the practicality of it, and we would seek to make a submission along those lines.

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That's as far as I can take it at the moment.

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COMMISSIONER: How far off do you think your study is, Mr Favell?

MR FAVELL: It's almost finished. It's about really requires just some proofreading.

COMMISSIONER: All right.

MR FAVELL: So I expect it will be available relatively quickly.

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Favell.

MR FAVELL: Thank you.

MS WILSON: I have no additional questions. May the witness be excused.

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

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, they are all the witnesses proposed to be called today. I have no further witness to be called. May the Commission of Inquiry be adjourned.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes. Do you know the starting time tomorrow?

MS WILSON: 10 a.m.

COMMISSIONER: All right. Adjourn to Brisbane at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 3.07 P.M. UNTIL 10.00 A.M.
THURSDAY, 5 MAY 2011, IN BRISBANE

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