

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

BRISBANE

..DATE 05/05/2011

..DAY 15

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.01 A.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Is Madam Commissioner taking a fresh set of appearances?

COMMISSIONER: I better do so I suppose. So we have you and Ms Wilson.

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MR CALLAGHAN: My name is Callaghan, initials P J, of senior counsel with my learned friend Ms Wilson. We appear as counsel assisting.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: For Seqwater, O'Donnell QC instructed by Allens Arthur Robinson.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning I suppose is next.

MR DUNNING: May it please the Commission, my name is Dunning. I appear with my learned friend Mr Porter instructed by Clayton Utz for the Brisbane City Council.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: If the Commission pleases, my name is MacSporran. I appear for the State with my learned friends Mr Rolls and Ms Brasch instructed by Crown Law.

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COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod.

MS McLEOD: If the Commission pleases, I appear with Ms O'Gorman for the Commonwealth.

COMMISSIONER: And Mr Dollar.

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MR DOLLAR: Yes, I appear on behalf of SunWater.

COMMISSIONER: Now, is that the lot? Have I missed someone, I'm sorry.

MS BRIEN: May it please the Commission, Ms Brien, initials J S. I appear for Ipswich City Council instructed by Clayton Utz.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Brien. Yes, Mr Callaghan.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Madam Commissioner, over the past two and a half weeks at hearings in Toowoomba, Dalby, Goondiwindi and St George the Inquiry has borne witness to the devastating effect that can be wrought by unexpected volumes of uncontrolled flood water. Then came the problems associated with the displacement and isolation of entire communities. Difficulties which demanded that these communities help

themselves because there was simply no-one else around. In some, the floods posed challenges of a kind which are well understood by many in regional Queensland. In January of this year, these realities were brought home to metropolitan Brisbane.

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The very concept of disaster management derives from the need to confront such situations and some of the experiences in metropolitan Brisbane provide a prism through which the effectiveness of the state's disaster management system can be examined. That system is prescribed in the Disaster Management Act which was amended even as the clouds were gathering in early December last year.

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By way of overview, the Act establishes a structure which has three levels. The first level and the foundation of the system is local government. Local government is the frontline of disaster management. At the next level there are 23 disaster district areas based loosely on the boundaries which divide police districts. Each district commonly encompasses two or more local governments which means that in some parts of Queensland a district can cover a vast area.

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This district level is the link between local government and State Government. The State Disaster Management Group is the speak policy body. It is responsible under the Act for setting the strategic policy framework and for drafting the State Disaster Management Plan which, as its name suggests, guides disaster management activities and operations for all of Queensland.

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Every local and district group is required to have its own Disaster Management Plan which must comply with the state plan and with the strategic policy framework and operational guidelines produced by Emergency Management Queensland. The state might set such policy but it remains the responsibility for the local group to manage a disaster using local resources. If those resources are insufficient, then a request can be made to the district group and, if that group cannot provide them, the District Disaster Coordinator can forward a request for assistance to the State Disaster Coordination Centre. That at least is the theory. We shall in the days ahead examine how for some parts of metropolitan Brisbane this system worked in practice.

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Such was the magnitude of that which occurred in January, it might be thought unlikely that any system put in place prior to that time could have anticipated perfectly all of the problems which the floods created. If it seems that our focus lingers on perceptions of failure and deficiency, it must always be remembered that the ultimate goal is to improve the system and not to reprove those who were administering it.

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As I foreshadowed on the 11th of April, things which have been explored already in other centres will be revisited in these hearings. One recurring concern is the issue of warning. The form, content and effectiveness of the flood warnings issued in Brisbane is a topic which has been raised by citizens from

Graceville to Glamorgan Vale. In particular, the timeliness and usefulness of the two kinds of SMS alerts, those issued by Emergency Management Queensland and those used by the Brisbane City Council, will be examined.

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Another issue already encountered relates to the problems created by isolation. It might have come as a surprise to some that centres as close to central Brisbane as Moggill, Somerset and Woodford could be cut off from surrounding areas for as long as they were. Once isolated, these communities confronted the sorts of issues associated with isolation anywhere such as the need for evacuation centres and for local to perform services that there was just no-one else there to do.

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In order to assess how such complications are resolved by the application of the state's disaster management system, we will hear from some who were isolated, both by flood water and by lack of communication, and learn how they dealt with their situations. We will also hear from relevant District Disaster Coordinators and Local Disaster Coordinators in the hope that the totality of this evidence reveals a basis for suggestion as to the manner in which the disaster management system itself might be improved. We did, of course, commence an examination of such issues during our hearings in Toowoomba and there remained to be finalised some issues which arose in those hearings. In particular, there is further evidence which will address, by reference to the events in Toowoomba on the 10th of January, systemic issues involved in the receipt and processing of triple 0 calls.

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Another issue which got raised in the Toowoomba hearings related to the Rural Fire Service and the status of that organisation during events such as this. Further exploration of that topic will follow and this will involve evidence from members of that service based in locations such as Dayboro and Wivenhoe. Moreover, attention has been drawn to the operation of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service itself. The Commission has received material which invites inquiry of that organisation as to the adequacy of its preparation, the sufficiency of its resources and the efficiency with which its response to such events can be coordinated.

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One responsibility of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is swift water rescue. On the 11th of January 2011 the life of four-year-old Jesse Wickman was lost in the course of such a rescue. The circumstances of his death are under review and are the subject of ongoing inquiries. Thus whilst we will, in this period of the hearings, commence investigation into the concept of swift water rescue, the inquiry into that particular incident will be dealt with at a later time.

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Another question which has already been the subject of evidence and which is of statewide concern relates to the capacity and availability of helicopters during emergency situations. This part of the Inquiry will include evidence from Mr Brent Hall of the Emergency Services Helicopter Network. Mr Hall has expressed his concern that he and his

helicopter were available on the 10th of January but were not deployed to Grantham in order to perform the sorts of tasks which were so memorably described by Mr Mark Kempton last week. Mr Hall will be called to give voice to these concerns.

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After the issues have been raised by those who lived through these events, the opportunity will be provided for a number of senior figures in the disaster management framework, including government officials, to reflect upon that which has been learnt and to suggest to the Inquiry any manner in which it is thought improvements to the disaster management system might be made. For just as it is certain that future disasters will in many ways be different from the floods we have just endured, it is equally certain that when they occur we will be required to deal with issues of a kind that the Inquiry is about to explore.

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I submit we begin that exploration, Madam Commissioner, after a short adjournment.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you. How long do you think you'll need?

MR CALLAGHAN: Five minutes.

COMMISSIONER: Adjourn.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.12 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.19 A.M.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Callaghan.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Graham Smith.

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GRAHAM RICHARD SMITH, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Smith, could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Yes, my name is Graham Richard Smith.

Mr Smith, you're the author of a four-page statement which you signed on the 21st of April this year; is that correct?-- That is correct.

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And that statement refers to a number of attachments; is that right?-- Yes.

Could you just take a look at what's being shown to you. Is that a copy of your statement with the attachments referred to

therein?-- Yes, it is.

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Yes, Madam Commissioner, I'll tender that as one exhibit.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 276.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 276"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Now, you have a copy of the statement itself there?-- Yes.

Could I just take you down to paragraph 4-----?-- Yes.

-----and pick up there. You describe there the formation of the Pullenvale Ward Disaster Recovery Advisory Group which was being organised by Councillor de Wit?-- Yes.

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Could you just tell us a bit more about that?-- Councillor de Wit, after the major storm in The Gap area in November 2008, I believe, considered a need for communities in her ward, the Pullenvale ward, to be able to withstand a similar disaster should it occur again. The committee was basically set up to focus on assistance that community organisations in her ward could provide the SES in the event of a major disaster. The committee had several meetings. We were - the committee was moving forward to produce a formalised plan of assistance should - should the need arise. Unfortunately, the January flood occurred before that process was completed.

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The Lions Club was one of the community groups that you're talking about?-- Correct. I'm with the SES and I'm also with Lions, Moggill Mt Crosby Lions.

As you say, you had a few meetings but you hadn't actually got to the point of doing anything more formal; is that right?-- That's correct, yes. We had - we had a lot of discussion about what - what might happen and the process but we never actually finalised that process.

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Well, going then to paragraph 8 of your statement, as you say you were also involved in the SES?-- Yes.

And in that paragraph you say that with your SES group leader's authority you were involved in the implementation of the informal-----?-- It was an ad hoc - ad hoc plan it was, yes.

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Can you just elaborate on that for us a little bit. What was involved in that?-- Well, early on Tuesday morning the SES, including myself, was involved in the evacuation of flood - flood-bound residents in Bellbowrie. I spoke to Phil during after that - during and after the evacuation. I said, "Look, Phil, we've" - "we have to have somewhere for the displaced people to go to, firstly, register as flood victims and

possibly a need for billeting should the flood go for more than two or three days." That discussion lead to a phone call to the minister of the Moggill Uniting Church. He had already started a process to set up that community centre in his church.

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Do you know why he had already started? Had he been asked to or-----?-- I think, basically, he realised the community was - had a need for an evacuation centre and he'd sort of started the process, and the SES involvement was basically to - to identify that there is a problem - there was a problem and the centre would need to be setup.

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Did the informal plan that you're talking about, and I realise it was a work in progress?-- Yes, it is - yes.

But did it contemplate activation by the SES of these activities or-----?-- Well, we were already activated, the SES was already activated. We were involved with storm damage repairs on the Monday.

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I see?-- I think five of our members who live in Karana Downs were in Bellbowrie - in the Bellbowrie area with their flood boat and equipment. The ensuing flooding of the Brisbane River identified - well, it prevented those people from going back to their residence. So they were basically billeted in Bellbowrie in the evacuation centre for four days I think. So we were already in field. And at 4.30 on the Tuesday morning the river started to flood, we realised there'd be a problem so we basically activated our flood boat, which was used to transfer people from their homes to above the flood mark.

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So how was it that you were already activated? Through the ordinary-----?-- Through the ordinary process. We were activated by - by the Brisbane Disaster Coordination Centre I guess. To - to - effectively, we were actually repairing damage to houses, flood damage, blocking flood water - well, it wasn't flood water. It was storm - it was water runoff, storm water runoff. It actually wasn't flooding at that time.

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Is there a local controller of the SES who was in charge of operations?-- Yes. He would have been, yes.

All right?-- On the Monday, yes.

Somebody had told him to get things moving at some point in time prior to that?-- Well, we had the emergency number that people ring.

Yes?-- 132 500, if they had problems. Obviously people were ringing the control centre, which in turn activated the Moggill SES on the Monday.

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You mentioned some specific difficulties that the SES had in your area in as much as the group itself was cut in half; is that right?-- Yes, basically, yes. We had some people at Karana Downs - sorry, at our Mt Crosby headquarters and they effectively looked after the Karana Downs area as best they

could do. There was only a few. We are a small group and that's basically one of our problems, we are a small group. We had about eight people in the Bellbowrie area and five or six on the other side, some of whom were actually flooded themselves.

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Yes?-- So, yeah, the group was spit. Fortunately for us we had our flood boat with us which we used. I guess that's a credit to our group leader. He - based on the information he'd received about the potential possibility of flooding, he had the flood boat in the Bellbowrie area because he knew that's where the major flood would be.

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Who is your group leader?-- Phil, Phil McKean. So we were actually in the field with our flood boat on the Monday, although on the Monday we obviously weren't using the flood boat but come Tuesday, Tuesday morning, the flood boat was used, as well - as well as private - private boats.

That small group of you, I think you said eight in the SES?-- Yes.

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Covers what geographical area?-- Well, it goes from Lake Manchester area right through to Pinjarra Hills Road and to the river. So it's a vast area.

Mmm?-- Fortunately, if there are - there are nine - or eight other groups in Brisbane. So if we ever really have a major problem in our area, we can call on those other groups to assist.

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If they can get there?-- If they can get to us.

Yes?-- That's right. Which, unfortunately, they couldn't in Bellbowrie.

No?-- So we're on our own.

And can I just ask if you can tell us the average age of the eight?-- Well, I'm 64 or 63, 64. So I'm probably the oldest. Probably, the average age would probably be 30.

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Is the rural fire brigade active at all in your district?-- No. There is a rural fire brigade at Brookfield, but obviously they couldn't get out to us to provide assistance either.

One thing that appears in the attachments and from the other material is that the advisory group, the disaster advisory group which was being formed, appears to have drawn on the service clubs, the Rotary-----?-- Yes, that was the plan, yes.

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Did that seem to be taking shape as a useful way of identifying relevant contacts in business and service industries?-- It did. And to the credit of Councillor de Wit, it is an initiative that I think maybe other wards should probably consider somewhere down the track. Unfortunately, as I said, the flood beat the timetable.

Mmm?-- If it had have been - if we had have had more time, probably we would have had a better handle on who to call, what - what each individual community group could do. See, we had Lions and we had Rotary. The major problem that I saw was the fact that whilst we had expertise, there was probably a lack of knowledge on what people could do. It all worked out on the day, probably because we had good people running the community centre. But I think if - ideally, it would have been if the Lions could have moved in, said, "Right, this is what we are going to do", or that we had a plan to say that Lions was going to do, Rotary was going to do something else. It worked out, fortunately, because of good control but it would have been better if everybody knew what they were going to do upfront.

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And everybody knew what everybody else was going to do?-- Correct. And that's - the formalised plan would have actually identified that.

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Was there anything else about the informal process that you'd undergone thus far which you found particularly useful?-- I think the real - the real benefit of what we were doing was - was controlling volunteers. We had heaps of volunteers, community volunteers. Obviously they lived in the area. And to their credit, they all turned up at the community centre all willing to help. This is after the flood went down obviously. So our Lions members had that task to coordinate the volunteers, identify places that they could actually go to assist, and I think that was the main benefit of - of the community centre, that control of volunteers. And obviously to provide food, et cetera, for those volunteers. Generally, most of the people evacuated from the flood areas were billeted in other houses in Bellbowrie. I don't know whether you know Bellbowrie. Bellbowrie is unique. In fact, there is only a small portion of it is actually flooded and, obviously, it is traumatic for those people but the bulk of Bellbowrie is not affected by flooding except they're isolated because of Moggill Road.

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So from the point of view of evacuee accommodation that wasn't a critical part of the community centre. Basically as I said it was the volunteer - registration of volunteers - firstly registration of the disaster victims, then registering volunteers allocating volunteers to various jobs to assist those victims

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Was there any particular reasons why the Lions got the job of allocating the volunteers, that's just the way it fell or-----?-- No, not really. I - in my capacity as a Lion member, I spoke to the president of the club to identify the need, he was said, "Yeah, go ahead." He was flooded himself actually. He said, "Call out as many volunteers as you can get from Lions." No, I think the people turned up and the Lions members turned up and the coordinator of the centre at the time, who will be here later, identified the various tasks that each group could do and that's how it worked.

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All right. Thank you, Mr Smith. That's all I have?-- Okay. Thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: Can I just ask you about timing-----?-- Yes.

-----of the flood watering in the Bellbowrie area?-- Yes.

I noticed you said that you had a boat out on - early on the Tuesday morning?-- Yes.

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That will be the 11th of January?-- Yes.

So there was flooding on the Tuesday morning?-- Started early Tuesday morning. We had - we started evacuating people, I can't remember the exact time, but it was some time Tuesday morning, and then that ensued for, you know, a period after that.

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Was there any flooding in the Bellbowrie area on the Monday on the 10th?-- There was - not a level flooding at the time. The river hadn't broken its banks.

Sorry-----?-- The river hadn't broken its banks.

-----can you say that more slowly?-- The - there was localised flooding, yes.

On Monday the 10th?-- On late Monday, yeah. Some of the culverts were actually covered with water, but again the river hadn't broken its banks so major flooding occurred on the Tuesday.

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All right. In your witness statement, you have that there?-- Yes, yes.

Paragraph 9?-- Paragraph 9. Yes.

You mentioned a time of 4.30 a.m. on the Tuesday morning-----?-- Yes.

-----as a time when people were displaced from their homes throughout the flood waters of Bellbowrie?-- Yes.

Had the river broken its banks at that time?-- It was - it was moving into Burkan Road which is the road that runs down onto the river. I think my recollection identifies that the Bellbowrie Shopping Centre was actually starting to be - the underground car park was flooded, but the major flooding occurred later on in the morning of Tuesday.

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But just pausing there-----?-- Yep.

-----can I get this clear? Had the river broken its banks at 4.30 in the morning?-- Not - not - not to an - not to any great depth. It was - it was running parallel with the banks, but if you know the Bellbowrie area there's a culvert that runs down along the Burkan Road into the river. The water had actually started come up there. The shopping centre is below Burkan Road, so whilst the road itself wasn't flooded that early in the morning, the shopping centre and surrounds was.

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But you say that some people were already displaced from their homes by flooding at 4.30?-- I think a lot of the people in the Bellbowrie area knew based on - on information provided by radio, and I think the Premier she identified that the flooding in Brisbane would be similar to '74, and in '74 the people - the people obviously that knew the flooding was coming they probably left the day before or even earlier.

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Sorry, can I be clear on this?-- Yes.

4.30 on the Tuesday morning-----?-- Yes.

-----were people displaced from their homes by flood waters in the Bellbowrie area?-- They were displaced because they knew it was going to flood. The water hadn't reached their houses yet-----

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Yes?-- -----but they knew it would based on advice received via the radio, et cetera, and obviously people who live in the area.

Right?-- Subsequently the water did rise and it did - I don't think it quite reached the '74 peak but it was close. So all the houses that were flooded in '74 were again flooded to varying depths. So from the Tuesday morning through to Tuesday afternoon, the people - well, with - with - we're under the control of the police by then. The police identified - they were actually in our flood boats, they came around with us, and there were people still in their houses.

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All right. One last question?-- Yes.

Can you try and identify for me as best you can when the river

broke its banks in the Bellbowrie area, when it crossed over the banks?-- Yeah, I'm not really sure because I was - there was a siren sounding in - about 4.30 on the Tuesday morning and that I believe was at the shopping centre, and I think that went off because the power had gone off by then, there was no power, no lights. And I assisted my son who lives - who I thought may live in the flood area but, in fact, he wasn't, he was okay, but we moved a lot of his personal equipment - personal items out, and the water hadn't exceeded the banks at that time, but it was pretty close.

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What time was that?-- About - 4.30, 5 o'clock. Well, I went down there about 5 o'clock, 5.30 it would have been.

Five o'clock in the morning?-- Yep.

On Tuesday the 11th?-- Yes.

So was about the cross the banks at that time?-- Yes.

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All right?-- I think. But as I said, the water had actually reached the shopping centre by then as well because the shopping centre is lower than the surrounds.

All right. Thank you?-- So-----

Thank you, Commissioner?-- Thank you.

Thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

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

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

MS BRIEN: I have no questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

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MR MacSPORRAN: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Miss McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Any re-examination.

MR CALLAGHAN: No re-examination. May Mr Smith be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Smith?-- Thank you.

You're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Andrew Solomon.

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ANDREW JAMES SOLOMON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Can you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Andrew James Solomon.

Mr Solomon, you're the author of a five-page statement dated 29 April 2011; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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That's being shown to you now. And there are a number of attachments to that statement too; is that correct?-- That's correct, yes.

They're all contained in the document that's been placed before you?-- They appear to be yes, that's correct.

Yes, all right. I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 277.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 277"

MR CALLAGHAN: Now, you still have a copy there?-- I do, yes.

Can I pick up in your statement at paragraph 3 where you talk about a text message which you describe as "vague and not very useful". Do you recall what was actually contained in that message?-- I did actually search on my phone and seem to have deleted the message, but it basically alluded to the fact there was an impending severe weather event and something about, you know, advice to take measures necessary. It - it wasn't specific to our area it didn't seem anyway.

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All right?-- We did actually receive that message after we had already started making preparations anyway.

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Okay. You make the point in paragraph 14, I think it was, that Moggill - the Moggill/Bellbowrie area has only two roads connecting it to other areas?-- That's right, yeah.

Which means that it can be cut off fairly easily; is that right?-- That's right, yeah, two roads and one ferry.

Yes. And there are obviously issues with the operation of the ferry during that time?-- Yes, the ferry does tend to go out of - it does tend to cease operating more frequently, you know, with minor weather events, yes.

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Right. Do you have a sense of how much water it takes or how much of a weather event there has for the ferry to-----?-- Well, just as an example, the Wivenhoe Dam releases prior to the flood event were enough to put the ferry out of operation. So, yeah, it doesn't necessarily take weather, it can also be dam releases that stop it operating.

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All right. Thank you. And you also make the point there's no emergency services facility other than a small police beat office once the cut-off takes play?-- That's right, yeah, yeah. We only have a house located in one of the suburban streets that functions as a police station. There's no SES, no fire or ambulance in the suburb.

All right. Thank you. Well, you record in your statement a number of things about the - the response to the flood event, and you attach some minutes from the Moggill Community Flood Relief Centre from a sign-off meeting on the 21st of January?-- That's right, yes.

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Yes. Tell us a bit about the Moggill Community Flood Relief Centre, what was it and what was your involvement in it?-- Okay. Well, when the possibility of evacuations arose on the Tuesday - Tuesday, January the 11th - a number of like-minded individuals from the Moggill Uniting Church all simultaneously, it seems, concluded that we might have to open the church up for evacuations. So we - we got together informally, met at the church, and started making preparations for what we didn't really know might happen. Then as - as the crisis unfolded, we functioned in a fairly ad hoc fashion until about the Thursday. Then by that stage, we had taken on so many other jobs in addition to evacuation. We started feeding people, organising supplies, and then the clean up and recovery sort of process. We had so many different actions going at the same time. On the Thursday it was decided to organise it into some sort of structured committee. We then basically put together a lot of the names that you see on the list in attendance at the meeting to work with the police and the SES workers who were already doing their jobs there, and then for the - for the following week, week and a-half, we continued operations in recovery, clean up and counselling, organising food, clothing and stuff like that. It was then decided that we really should have a formal sign-off because everyone had been so involved and we had been advised by one of the church members that as a counselling exercise we should have a formal sign-off. So we called this meeting together to basically recap on everything, and to let everybody who had been involved in a particular part of the operation give a quick summary of what - what happened, what they did and what on-going work would need to be done in order to bring it to a sense of closure.

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Well, just going back to the beginning of the formation of

the - of the group. I think you've addressed this in your statement, but indeed in what you have said already, but there were no instructions from any council or any government agency, there was no formal direction provided during that stage?-- No, there wasn't. It was really a case of myself and my wife Katherine Solomon, the Minister Reverend Costa Stathakis and Graham Barnard, we almost all simultaneously came to the opinion that we had to actually do something. We did seek - my wife did actually call the SES to offer the church as an evacuation point. There was certainly through the course of the event a lot of, sort of, misunderstanding and uncertainty because we weren't ever listed as an official evacuation centre. So we took it upon ourselves to open it up anyway - open the church up anyway, and then on the Tuesday afternoon when we were already into preparation, organising mattresses for people, Matt Gorman from the SES arrived with one other SES worker and said they were looking at possible, you know, available locations for evacuations. We said, "Well, we're already underway with preparations", and so it was really a fait accompli that they would - that they decided to base themselves at the church and use that as a base of operations.

But was that anything that was broadcast by the SES or-----?-- No, the-----

-----publicised by the SES?-- No, the SES - I was advised that there would be difficulties because we weren't an official evacuation centre, that the SES themselves couldn't publicise that we were an evacuation centre and I was advised that perhaps I should get on to the media and so I did make a call to ABC local radio to let them know that we were functioning as an evacuation centre, and from that point on, myself and a few other members of this committee took it upon ourselves to keep the media informed of what we were doing. We also used reconfigurable signboards in the neighbourhood to make sure that we had clear messages around the suburb of where to go in cases of need. So, yeah, it was very much, sort of, self-organised because we - we couldn't be published as an official evacuation centre because we weren't.

All right. Well, again, in your statement you speak to the manner in which the response was coordinated and the manner in which resources were gathered which is, it seems, on a fairly ad hoc and informal sort of a basis, there was no real structure to it, you just did what you could with what you had where you were?-- That's correct, yeah. The police who also established themselves a base of operations at the church started accumulating a very large list of necessary equipment that people were offering. One thing we never had a shortage of was people offering assistance, so we undertook to get details of as many people, what they could do and what equipment they might have had access to so we were able to feed that to the police which meant that we did have a very ready, sort of, stream of knowledge about who to go to for certain items should they be needed.

Did the unofficial status of what you were doing create any

particular difficulties or-----?-- It certainly did in relation to getting supplies, food supplies, and I'll let Graham Barnard talk to that because he was the one coordinating supply drops, but I did witness his frustration in dealing with authorities in that regard.

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All right. In the - I think it's in the sign-off or in the minutes of the group's sign-off meeting, one thing which is acknowledged as something which would have been useful would have been an access to a formal disaster recovery plan; would you endorse that?-- That's right, and we did, in fact, only learn during the course of that sign-off meeting that there was one in process which hadn't been completed at the time of the event.

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Is this the one that Councillor de Wit was-----?-- That's correct, yes.

-----forming? All right. And, look, the document that's at the back of those minutes points "for further consideration", that's something that you have authored yourself; is that correct?-- That's right. Following the sign-off meeting, the - well, the nucleus of the committee, which was myself, Rev Stathakis and Graham Barnard, met with Councillor de Wit and Bruce Flegg, the local State member, and we just sought to put on the table a list of things that came out of that sign-off meeting that probably would help, you know, should be considered for future events.

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And do those three bullet points in the second paragraph of that document represent the most important things from your point of view?-- They probably do. They also, we understand, represents some difficulties because of privacy issues. We - because of the crisis, we sort of learnt a lot of this information in terms of key community contacts and who had valuable experience and equipment all at once. We recognised in our - in the meeting that we had subsequently, with Councillor de Wit and Bruce Flegg, that the importance of keeping those records is only part of the issue, it's that they need to be kept up-to-date because obviously people come and go, and without people being given official titles and responsibilities, it would then be somebody's responsibility to maintain that information up-to-date.

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All right. One thing you have mentioned there, and you mentioned the use of reconfigurable signboards, and I think you have referred to signage in the documentation as well. Is this so that people in the district can learn about where to go and that sort of thing?-- That's right. Our biggest on-going difficulty during the whole crisis was getting information to the public. We were finding even a weekend when people were well into recovery and clean up, people were still turning up at the church not having been aware that we were functioning as an evacuation or recovery centre. We had three reconfigurable signboards scattered along Moggill Road through the suburb and decided that was probably the best way to get information very quickly to people, but with the combination of intermittent mobile coverage, power outages,

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meaning people couldn't get on-line, it really just boiled down to radio. And the other thing that we suggested was the need for the police or SES to have the ability to use loud speaker technology just to actually drive street by street. The most success we had in contacting people was when we sent groups of people out into the suburb to literally door-knock to find people who might be needing assistance.

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Where did you get those signboards from?-- Our church has one. The Bellbowrie Community Church has another signboard, and third one I think is the Bellbowrie Sports and Rec Club sign outside the service station on Moggill Road. So they're all privately-owned signs.

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What do you say then about the need that you had for information? You lost power at some stage?-- We lost power in most of the suburb from around about early Wednesday morning through till sometime on Friday. The church itself lost power around about the same time but it came back slightly earlier, I think it was Thursday night that power was restored. The - Matt Gorman from the SES, he gave the best bit of advice to us when we were setting up on the Tuesday, he said, "Make sure" - "Have a think about how you might do this without power the next day." So we basically made sure we had fixed landline that didn't require power. It meant that we always had phone contact at the church. Most of us had mobile coverage, and then it was only a case of sourcing generators for that sort of thing, but, yeah, we always had landline communications at the church.

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Presumably in terms of communication, though, lack of power made it difficult to get information from sources such as television and Internet?-- That's right. We were entirely relying on radio and we did have a back - we made sure we had battery-powered radios at the church. The other thing, though, was a invaluable was the cellar data network. We were all online as often as possible to look for updates on-line.

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All right. You still have to be able to recharge your batteries, of course?-- That's right.

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So you did that with generators?-- Part of the system that we had going at the church was a noticeboard where people who could offer anything that we didn't have an immediate need for would place their details on the noticeboard, and one of those was someone who was offering to recharge phones because they still had power. So, yeah, anyone who needed to recharge a phone had access to it courtesy of someone who just volunteered their power sockets.

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All right. Getting back to my question: what did you want to know or what would you have found advantageous to know that you weren't able to find out?-- We didn't seem to struggle for - for general information because we had direct contact with police and SES. Because the emergency services personal were right there at the church. Nine times out of 10 we could simply turn around and ask them and get a direct answer to questions. Things like when would the roads re-open, when

would power be restored. We already knew that no-one else -
no-one could give us more information than we had on that
because there was no way that people could predict how quickly
the water might go down. So the big questions about - like
that, we didn't necessarily ask those questions because we
knew that the answers were unobtainable. It was more knowing
generally what was going on outside the suburb. But again
with Internet access through cellular data networks we were
always able to find stuff out should we need it.

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Okay. All right. Thank you. That's all I have.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Can I just briefly take
up with you the question of the evacuation centres. As I
understand your statement, the approach that was taken in
these suburbs is consistent with the public warnings, the
public recommendations, the approach taken elsewhere in
Brisbane; that is, if you could find somewhere else for a
displaced person to stay, you'd send them there, so be it
friend or family, it would be more comfortable; correct?--
That's correct.

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And that's the approach you took mere?-- Correct.

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Now, the consequence was that there were relatively few people
who actually had a need for a bed; correct?-- That's right,
yeah.

So when we - when you use the expression "evacuation centre",
which seems to be an expression that's commonly used-----?--
That's right.

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-----it really covers a broad range of facilities, doesn't
it?-- That's right.

You speak of an evacuation centre as really one that provides
services for community support and information?-- That's
right, yeah.

Rather than really one that has its focus on the mass housing
of people?-- That's right. We did find ourselves rebranding
ourselves as the days went on. We noticed that there was an
evolutionary, sort of, process that one day we would be
focusing on relocating people, the next day we're focusing on
supplies and food, and the next day we're focussing on
clean-up. So we did periodically change what we referred to
ourselves as during the course of the crisis.

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Yes. So we're right, aren't we, when we read your statement
and read the references to evacuation centres, not really

understanding that as referring to the sorts of large-scale evacuation centres that were set up in the densely populated part of Brisbane to house people, but rather a facility that was designed to coordinate at the local level, those-----?-- That's right.

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-----aspects? All right, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask how many people did you actually sleep in there at any one time? What is the most it got to?-- The first - when the floodwaters started to rise on the Wednesday morning, we had a large influx of people, like, it was well over a hundred people, I think there might have been 200 people arrived at the centre because at that stage people were not sure whether they would be flooded or not. We had realised the night before, because the SES I think started moving some residents out of low-lying areas on the Tuesday, we realised that we only had limited space in the church and so we undertook to try to billet people out to other people's houses as quickly as we could. So the first night I think we had about 20 people staying at the church, but some others had been reaccommodated. The next morning when the hundreds of people arrived, we spent most of that day simply rehousing people because at the same time we had just - well, more people arriving offering accommodation. So we decided straight off the bat that we would reaccommodate people rather than have them at the church. So on the Wednesday night I think we only had maybe five, five or six people at the church, and for the next night or two there was that number or less. So we - we had the ability to accommodate people in the adjacent school hall that was just completed, and Graham Barnard had the keys to that, but we kept that on standby and never actually had to use it. We exclusively focused on reaccommodating people rather than having them at the church.

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Thank you, Mr Solomon. Yes, Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Just taking up from those couple of questions the Commissioner asked you. So it would be fair to say that your practical experience married with the public warnings that were being given by the authorities, and that is, it is generally better to house people in somebody else's house than-----?-- Absolutely. We also had, you know, through the church network we had counselling, people who were capable counsellors, simply advising us that it was also better for people psychologically to be accommodated in a house rather than in a shed.

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Indeed, the couple you had had a particular desire not to go into someone's house it appears; is that correct?-- That's right. I mean, by about the Thursday or the Friday night, the only people we still had staying at the church were people who actually wanted to be at the church even though there were other options open to them.

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Thank you. When we talk about displaced persons in these particular suburbs we're focused with now, we're generally speaking of people who weren't necessarily inundated but people who heeded warning and, in effect, decided they would evacuate well in advance whether they did or didn't get flooded?-- That's right. And on - and on the Tuesday night there were a small number of people who weren't necessarily flooded. They were actually stranded in the suburb and couldn't return home.

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Yes. Thanks, Mr Solomon. Thank you, your Honour.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien.

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MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have no questions.

MS McLEOD: I have no questions, thank you.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: May Mr Solomon be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks very much, Mr Solomon, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Graham Barnard.

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GRAHAM EDWARD BARNARD, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Sorry.

Could you tell the Commission your full name?-- Graham Edward Barnard.

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Mr Barnard, you're the author of a seven-page statement dated 18 April 2011; is that correct?-- That's correct.

That's being shown to you now?-- That's correct.

Yes, I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 278.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 278"

WITNESS: My wife took great delight in pointing out that I made an error in my age. It should be 64 not 63. I do apologise.

MR CALLAGHAN: All right. The statement details your military service record, your management experience?-- Correct.

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That's all contained in your statement?-- Correct.

Indeed, records the fact that you have some disaster management experience?-- Oh, mainly related through the military.

For all of that, you hold no official position within any existing disaster management framework?-- That's correct.

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Indeed, I think you say you weren't even aware of any disaster management plan?-- That's correct.

But you are chairman of the Property Council for the Uniting Church at Moggill?-- Yes.

In your statement you describe the process by which the church was opened and used as a recovery/evacuation centre?-- That's correct.

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Now, you took initial control of this centre in conjunction with Mr Solomon; is that correct?-- Yes, it was a bit of a team effort I guess. There were two or three of us on the ground at the time to first appreciate what was happening and just get things running.

One of the things you described is hundreds of people being

housed by ringing around the local community?-- We had a process in place, a register set up for people offering accommodation, food, services equipment and we had a - or a similar register but others who were needing assistance. So as people came to us looking for accommodation, we tried to marry up, you know, people - the size of a family with a family who had offered their house for people. So we tried to accommodate in that respect, yes.

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Well, that was what I was going to ask you about, whether you had a register and how that register came into existence?-- Well, that - that was I'm not quite sure who, but right from the outset we had a pencil and paper register. But I think about day 2 that was quickly converted - we had a federal police lady who was there, a very, very reliable, competent lady and she transcribed that onto a computer. So from thereon in we were using a computer-based database to capture all that information and we transcribed afterwards all of the loose paper information onto that electronic database.

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But it was all information that you'd just received from the time you set it up?-- Blank sheet of paper when we started correct, yes.

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Similarly, you speak to beds, blankets, food, that sort of thing, being donated. How did people come to know of the need to donate such things?-- We - we appreciated - well, on the Tuesday afternoon as things started to unfold and we started to get ourselves organised, we realised there were going to be a lot of people that were going to be evacuated and we'll need accommodation based on the '74 floods and the news reports that there's going to be a similar - similar level of flooding. So we were quite aware that there were going to be a lot of houses flooded. And the church doesn't have supplies of that nature - beds, blankets, et cetera - so using, I guess initially, the membership base from the church, we had people phoning around asking people if they had any spare pillows, blankets, bedding, what have you, could they bring them up to the church and we used that to set up the church that evening for people to sleep there that night that needed to. Those that couldn't be accommodated elsewhere.

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And you make the point in paragraph 14 that there was no assistance or guidance provided by anyone else for this process. This was just something that you were doing on your own initiative if you like?-- That's - that's pretty much correct, yes.

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Yes, okay. On the basis of that experience, of setting something like that up in the short space of time that you did, what do you - or what advice would you give as to the type of information that might be useful in such a circumstance in the future?-- I suppose having had some experience in the military and having had access to disaster management plans, a disaster management plan of some form would have been great as a starting point rather than a blank sheet of paper.

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Could I show you a document that I'm told you prepared. It's titled "Moggill Uniting Church Food Evacuation/Relief Centre Lessons Learned"?-- Correct, yes.

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Is this something that you-----?-- That was my work. I prepared that - towards the end of the process I was aware that we were going to have a meeting to discuss, you know, the outcomes, things that worked well and things that didn't. So I produced that lessons learnt document to table at the meeting. A lot of the content of that has actually been - was also included in the minutes, I believe, of the meeting.

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Yes?-- But that was my work, correct.

All right. I might tender that, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 279.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 279"

MR CALLAGHAN: Can I just take you to a couple of points in it?-- Yes.

One relates to the need to clearly understand the role and responsibilities of the SES. Your comment being, "They were very resourceful. Sometimes SES responsiveness appeared hampered by lack of resources/equipment". Can you elaborate on that for us?-- I have to say at the outset the SES did a brilliant out there.

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Sure?-- An absolutely wonderful job. I just think that, and I was probably instrumental in - along with others, in giving lots of sort of spurious tasks. For example, there was a very large, huge fridge down at the local service station which was flooded which they keep ice in. It is a very large - very large thing. We needed that up - up at the centre to locate to an area where there was power, which was actually over at the Catholic church, who still had power. So there were a lot of people that had supplies that they wanted to keep. The power was off. And also, we had lot of food that was donated and we were looking for a place that we could store this food; we didn't know how long this was going to last. So I said to the SES, "Hey, guys, can you get that fridge and bring it up here." I mean, we don't have cranes, they don't have - so it was lots of jobs like that where - and I wouldn't expect the SES in Bellbowrie to necessarily have a crane.

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No?-- But I have to say that there wasn't a task that I gave the SES that they didn't do, complete, one way - by physical strength or what have you. They did a sterling job. But they are - they do seem to be - their effort was hamstrung by numbers. I think they only had one vehicle. They were all using their own private vehicles. They had one trailer. We were - badly needed more generators. The ones we got were

ones from the local public. Just to provide an emergency service, if you like, yeah.

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Okay. You speak, I think, in your statement about a medical triage surgery operating within the church; is that right?-- That's correct.

How was that organised?-- Well, we - I think there was a gentleman Ray Crompton, who's I think with Rotary - I'll just check that, Ray Crompton, Rotary - who had had some previous experience in that area. But it started off again very slowly and people came in with, you know, a cut finger or something. But we did - we were very fortunate in - included in the people trapped in Bellbowrie were quite a number of midwives, nurses, a couple of doctors and so very quickly - and they made their services available. So we were able to actually set up quite a - quite a large medical service there with - with qualified doctors. We even had a pharmacy set up. There was approval given to the - the police actually managed that process for us, to get the supplies - the pharmaceutical supplies out of a local chemist that was under water at Bellbowrie, the stuff that hadn't been damaged, and also supplies out of the Coles store that was above water. So we actually set up a pharmacy. We set up the tennis shed as sort of a minor operating room for stitches and those sorts of things. We had a triage centre operating where people as they came into the evacuation centre, we met them and asked them, you know, what their need was. If it was medical, we directed them to the medical area and so forth. So I'm not sure that answers your question.

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No, that's fine. Can I take you in your statement to paragraphs 19 and 20 and you make the point that there was no external support of a logistic nature until the flood waters had receded. Is that correct?-- Yes, that would be correct, yes.

It would seem that-----?-- I think - sorry, just let me qualify that. I think on the - we were still flooded on the Wednesday evening. I'll check my notes there. I'm fairly certain. Perhaps it was the - yeah, no, on the Thursday evening I think we were still - yes, the roads were still cut but we did get one Unimog that was organised through the police and through the - I think through the Brisbane City Council Disaster Control Centre, or whatever they call themselves. A Unimog arrived late one evening with a limited quantity of supplies. Apart from that, you know, there was no - and they didn't actually come via road. They came round through the hills across country to get there.

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That's a U-N-I-M-O-G?-- Unimog, yeah, it is an army vehicle.

But in any case, it seems by reference to paragraph 20 that you were still having difficulties even after the waters had receded dealing with government or council disaster coordination staff; is that right?-- I think the problem was we were using the police command post as a channel to request be it medical supplies, be it whatever supplies we wanted. So

based on requests for supplies, be it whatever, I would put in a list through the police channels and I guess what was happening was - and my name and mobile number was attached to that. So I was getting quite a few calls through the day and I'm not - I can't give you names but I think they all came from the council, the disaster recovery centre, querying why we wanted the supplies, the fact that we weren't an official evacuation centre and just confirming that we still did need them, et cetera. So it got very frustrating every couple of hours - sorry, at the end of each call I would then get a reassurance, "Right. They're on the way." But as the day progressed, nothing was happening and I was not at all confident that they would arrive. So by the end of the - I believe it was the Thursday, I believe it was the Thursday I went - actually went to Councillor de Wit's private residence in Bellbowrie and through her husband made contact to see whether she could unclear the log jam, which she did very well and that evening we had a very large - a very, very large - sorry, that would have been the Friday evening. A very large shipment of three semitrailer loads of supplies arrived.

Did you get the sense that your requests were being scrutinised because of your lack of official status?-- I think there was - very much so and we kept on being asked to confirm that we needed them and confirm the quantities of why we needed them. I think it was a big - a misunderstanding. I think - I don't think people really understood that we were cut off, we had no way of getting - because at times a lot of people coming in through the centre to get supplies would say, well, they've been on to whoever, the various organisations, they say, "Well, drop it in Indooroopilly or Kenmore or Ipswich", or something. People hadn't appreciated that we were literally stranded, we were an island out there.

Just finally, I think in paragraph 32 you make the point that the shopping centre was closed for some considerable time?-- It still is.

Still is?-- It still is.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

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MR DOLLAR: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: You wish Mr Barnard excused?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, please, Commissioner.

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

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Reverend Dave Baker.

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DAVID VINCENT BAKER, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Can you tell the Court your full name and occupation, please?-- David Vincent Baker. I'm a minister of religion.

Mr Baker, you are the author of a six-page statement sworn on the 20th of April 2011; is that correct?-- That's right.

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I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 280.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 280"

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MR CALLAGHAN: You are, as you say, the minister at the Karana Downs Uniting Church. Is that correct?-- I was until the end of 2006. I finished there then and then - but I still lived in the area after that time.

You make the point right at the end of your statement that "there is no flood proof Brisbane River crossing between the Centenary Bridge at Jindalee and Fernvale"; is that right?-- That's my thinking on it, yes.

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We've also observed this morning that there is really only - or this very limited road access in the area that we're talking about and when roads are cut, the area becomes completely isolated?-- That's right.

You assisted with the establishment and operation of a response centre at the Mt Crosby State School; is that correct?-- Yep.

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And this was just because a friend asked you to assist in that, was it?-- Yeah, I was - Ray Crompton from the - who was involved in the Moggill centre, phoned me on the Tuesday and said they needed some help and could I go down and give some assistance.

There was no official plan or no authority that was involved in this?-- Not that I'm aware of.

You speak in your statement about six volunteers. Where did they come from?-- The local area. Steena and Barry Bartlett were members of the P & C and active in the life of the school and the community, and I think my memory or my knowledge is that they were the first to start thinking about, "What do we do here?" and then a couple of other folk got involved and then I got involved.

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So just word of mouth, local knowledge?-- Essentially.

You speak about some donated generators. Do you know where they came from?-- They came through the word of worth network that we'd started to establish and to say we needed - we were looking for resources and people were offering all sorts of things.

You talk about the obtaining of food from - a big food drop organised by Dr Flegg. We will hear from Dr Flegg soon, but what was the background to that?-- The background to that was some concern that as the days were moving through, there were more food requests coming and there was some anxiety that we weren't being able to provide through the resources we had what was needed. And so, there was some communication with Dr Flegg about that and I understand he started flagging the issue.

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You also speak in paragraph 4 of your statement, which is basically all of page 2, about the centre being in contact with the police, SES and the State Disaster Centre?-- Yep.

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Can we just take those in turn. What was the contact with the police?-- Well, the police station is right beside the school so we established relationships pretty quickly there. And the SES had, my memory, dropped in to the centre on the Tuesday and the Wednesday just to say, "G'day", and make some connections.

No specific function required?-- No, we - probably more with the police, we were keeping in closer contact with the police than with the SES.

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What about the State Disaster Centre, what were the nature of communications there?-- My memory was, and it must have been the Wednesday, I got a couple of phone calls from them about - about the food need and also there was some liaison about medical needs, prescription drugs.

So they actually got in contact with you?-- Yes.

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It wasn't something you initiated?-- That's right.

And do you have any sense of how they came to-----?-- I inferred that it was Dr Flegg.

I see?-- Because I'd had some contact. I think there's some relationships between my wife, who is a cousin of the wife of the CEO of the Brisbane City Council, and I think there might have been some communications that way or something.

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Can I take you to paragraph 8 of your statement. Can you just elaborate on the points you make there?-- When we - the first time that I saw the SES in the - in our response centre was, from memory, either the Tuesday afternoon or the Wednesday afternoon and they talked about their difficulty of being at the Mt Crosby Weir at their centre and having - and the difficulty of communication could come to there, I think, but they were then having to manage communication back to

Bellbowrie, where there was a much greater need and where most of their people had been located. So they were talking a lot about having to manage this communication difficulty.

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Can I take you to paragraph 12 where you say you think you would have benefited from a more coordinated response. Can you just elaborate on that?-- Well, I think it was - we gathered together and we - we planned as we - as we moved along and as needs were responding and as opportunities and offers for help were coming in. I think - and it was - it was the spirit of the day, you know. We were trying to manage - anticipate what needs were going to happen and to look to - for me there was a sense that we would have liked a better cohesion in the sense of who's the boss, who's in charge and how do we - how do we go forward in a more organised sense.

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Do you get the sense that the resources were there?-- Yes.

Within the community?-- Yes.

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They just had to be coordinated?-- Yes. And in some senses, it is a bit like Moggill, we sort of - we grew - the organisation grew as the hours and days went by.

Obviously it would have been helpful if the structure or the plan had been in place before-----?-- Yes.

-----before it happened?-- Yes.

So that you didn't have to make it up on the run?-- Yep.

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All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

MR DUNNING: We have no questions of Reverend Baker.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

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MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: No questions, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Reverend Baker, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Margaret de Wit.

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MARGARET ANNE DE WIT, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- My name is Margaret Anne de Wit. I'm the councillor for the Pullenvale ward in Brisbane City Council.

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You're the author of a statement which is being shown to you now. Is that correct?-- Sorry, yes, that's correct.

And there are a number of attachments-----?-- Yes.

-----to which you refer in the statement itself?-- Yes.

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Yes, I tender that as one exhibit.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 281.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 281"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Now, you make the point in your statement, in effect, that your constituency presents with an obvious need for proactive planning because it suffers from the readily identifiable vulnerability that its access roads are limited and can be easily cut?-- Yes.

And proactive is what you were being when you called the first meeting of the Pullenvale Ward Disaster Advisory Group; is that correct?-- Yes.

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You make the point at paragraph 13 of your statement that there was no involvement of the Brisbane City Council of the formation of the group; is that correct?-- That's correct.

Does it follow that there was no formal involvement at least with the Local Disaster Management Group or, indeed, with anything involved in the State Disaster Management Plan?-- That's correct.

This was just entirely a local initiative?-- That's correct.

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If we move over to paragraph 29 we see that on about the 13th of January, during the flood events, you made contact with the Local Disaster Coordination Centre, which is part of the state disaster management process if you like?-- Yes.

What was the first interaction, so far as you know anyway,

between what was going on locally and what was happening at a state or local government as far as you're concerned?-- As far as I was concerned, that was my first contact, yes.

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Yes. Can you just tell us a bit more about that while we're there, the contact to which you refer in paragraph 29?-- I was I aware when I - even at the stage where I could not get back to Bellbowrie and I was actually residing in the ward office, I was aware that there was becoming a need for supplies in the Moggill/Bellbowrie area and Mt Crosby and I was in contact regularly with the people who were running those relief centres and getting updates. I became aware that there was some difficulty in getting the food supplies that were needed at Moggill in particular, and this was heightened - I had - I had had some informal conversations with council contacts but it was after Graham Barnard actually visited my residence, which was on the Friday afternoon. I wasn't home, my husband was, and he immediately rang me and explained the difficulty that Graham was experiencing and at that stage I contacted the LDCC formally.

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To get to the point, I suppose, looking to the future - I'll start that again. It seems even though it was a work in process, there were some obvious benefits to the process that you had started in terms of creating local contacts to deal with a disaster?-- Yes.

Without pre-empting anything, it might seem that there are some obvious benefits to completing the process which you'd started and having a local group, especially for your area, develop its own plan and its own system of coping with something like a flood. How then do you see such a group integrating with the wider state disaster management plan?-- Yes.

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Is that something you've given some thought to?-- It certainly - the group that I have established, the aim of that is to be complementary to every other process that exists. And as happened in January and as happens every time there is flooding, the people in that area are physically isolated. So regardless of, you know, how the process is being conducted at a statewide level, there will always be a need for people who are - I suppose have the ability to be able to organise on the ground locally when that happens, and we saw that work very effectively in January.

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But there is more than can be done in that process to also have people a little bit more informed and how to go about that process. So it works in really well, and with the SES, with whatever groups are running things at a higher level, it's not - it will never cross over in any way whatsoever. It's not there to - to take the lead or give directions in terms of what should be done. It is there to be a support mechanism to those other organisations.

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And I think, as I say, we can see the obvious benefit in that. Does it need, in your opinion, to be formally acknowledged? A group like yours does it need to be formally acknowledged in the legislation? Does it - can it-----?-- I haven't thought about the legislation side of things but certainly it was the intention when we got the process a little more developed that it would be, I suppose - certainly I would be working more with the senior management of Council in relation to this group. Unfortunately because of the informality of the structure and the time constraints of myself and the other members, it's been very difficult to get it right to where we - we realise it needs to go. But there is another meeting being convened, we are about to ramp it up again, to get - with the learnings from the January floods, we realise there is even more that a group like that can do. For example, in providing further information - trying to have the community better informed perhaps as to what they can do to be prepared for - better prepared for a flood situation or an isolation situation.

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Well, I think you make that point at paragraph 34 about a public information campaign-----?-- Yes.

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-----and the need for that, and as you say that may well be a work-in-progress but have you given thought to the sort of information that ought to be included in the type of campaign you envisage?-- Not-----

Sorry?-- Sorry.

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No, I was just going to offer as an example the publication of the whereabouts of intended recovery/evacuation centres?-- That's right. When we - it's going to be quite a bit of work because to keep contacts and details up-to-date, we'll need on-going resources, but it is certainly the intention that we would have, whether it be a leaflet or something like that, that we would get to every household, and we look at how else we might be able to publish that information. So, for example, any newsletters I might be putting out myself, but as a constant reminder because people are coming and going all the time as well, so it is an on-going process. But to have certainly all the emergency contacts that could be used in the case of a - a situation like this, and also to make people perhaps, you know, some suggestions of what they can do, for example, make sure you have a battery-operated radio, make sure you are listening to the radio stations, I think the ABC is the one that is the designated disaster radio station. A lot of those practical things that people might be able to do,

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make sure if you - if there is a wet season coming, have a few extra supplies in the cupboard, just quite basic things but little things like that that I think would help people, and from our experience of January those sorts of things would have helped quite a few people.

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And who should - who should conduct this campaign? Should that be left to your own local group or is that something that should involve the wider State Disaster Management frameworks? Are the needs specific such that it is better done by your group or what's the story?-- Not necessarily. It would depend on whether resources are available. I mean, any assistance at the local level we could get from, you know, other groups that might be better resourced, we would certainly be looking to them. In terms of the information, I mean, we're not going to do it from ourselves, we will make sure we collect the best advice we can get from every source to come up with whatever this information document might be. So it will be working in with the others. It really is a case of developing our structure and our direction a little bit more before we're at that stage. That really is the reason why the process is where it's at at the moment.

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COMMISSIONER: But would it be better for the State Government to run an education campaign across the State with you kicking in at a local level with anything you can add or-----?-- Oh, definitely, Commissioner, I believe that would be the ideal situation. And then at the local level because of the nature, the geographical nature, of the Pullenvale ward to be supplementing that with anything local that we can.

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MR CALLAGHAN: Now, that sort of brings me back to a point I made before, and I don't mean to catch you off guard, but I am interested in your opinion as to how your local group should interact with the next level up with the actual Brisbane - the Local Disaster Coordination Centre during an event. I mean, if it's formalised under the legislation, you can see difficulties with bureaucracy and reporting and so on. If it's left informal, it doesn't have the status that might get it prompter action, we've just heard one witness say the unofficial evacuation centres mightn't have been getting the direct direction that an official one would, and it might be something that you want to give some thought to, but do you have an opinion?-- No, it's not something that that I have thought about at this stage, but I can see the point you're making, that wherever we get to we need to make sure that there is some - and I know within Brisbane City Council, for example, there is fairly wide knowledge of the group having been formed, and certainly I think there is value in making sure that at all levels, the group is known about because we're there to be the hands-on assistants on the ground. So I would think when we do get to our, you know, at the end of the process we would certainly be looking to see how - what is the best way to have the group acknowledged without necessarily getting tied down or bogged down in bureaucracy.

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And going the other way, I suppose, I think you make you point in your statement that your ward isn't really one community,

it's six I think you say?-- Yes, it is six. And they're geographically isolated, you know, starting from Kenmore/Chapel Hill which is the most eastern part going right out to Kholo, Lake Manchester, parts of Chuwar which is way out on the Ipswich border and, you know, a lot of people, awful lot of people, still don't know after 11 years that those suburbs are part of Brisbane and not part of Ipswich.

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And so for the purposes of what we're talking about, does that in turn, do you think, perhaps create a need for not one plan but six subplans within your-----?-- Well, absolutely and, in fact, the way we were structuring it was the representatives, for example, the Rotary clubs cover the Karana Downs/Mt Crosby area as well as Kenmore; the Lions Club is Moggill/Mt Crosby so it takes in those two areas; and some of the other people we've got representatives who live in Pullenvale. So I have tried to include people where I could from as many of those - those communities as possible, yes. And the next stage is to go to the level where, when we have ourselves better organised, more briefings of, for example, school principals, all levels of community leaders so that we are covering the whole of the ward.

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But we've heard, for example, that the SES was cut off from itself?-- That's right.

And does that perhaps suggest the need for one plan for Karana Downs and another for Moggill?-- Oh, definitely, and actually in the manual you will note that we have gone through the ward looking for right across-the-board where we could have - well, evacuation centres, using that word, which, you know, whatever you call them, recovery centres, where could people go whether it be a flood or - and we're looking at the whole range of disasters because there have been some quite bad bushfires there over the years as well. So we are in the process of trying to identify because a location - a hall, for example, that might have been fine during the flood might be totally the wrong place when there's bushfire on. So we're going down to that level to try to identify, and you can only try, because there's not a lot of community facilities in some of those areas. But to try to get it to that point where immediately if there is an event, someone can look in this manual and say, "Oh, this is where we probably should go", so that's the way we're trying to structure it. So whilst it's, sort of, run centrally I guess by myself, the intention is certainly that we are encompassing every area of the ward should they be isolated.

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All right. And there are some quite - well, I'll start that again. There is a need to consider, we understand, when you're looking at any of this sort of thing specific demographic issues such as, for example, aged-persons homes-----?-- Yes.

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-----that sort of thing. That's an issue-----?-- Yes.

-----in your electorate I believe?-- It certainly is. There are three aged-people's facilities. They are all out in the

acreage, the rural areas of the ward, and they - they present their own particular difficulties in terms of an emergency.

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Can you just elaborate on that for us?-- Okay. Brookfield, for example, Brookfield Village very quickly gets cut off by floodwater, and so that - that is a difficulty. There was a - there have been bushfires through that area. So in terms of evacuation, we have had discussions of how you would go about assisting the community to evacuate those sorts of villages when by then you have got, for example, the road out on Brookfield Road probably cut. So it's not an easy task to bring out other vehicles so it's got to be able to be managed locally so that's why you have people involved in this group who live in that area. And, you know, the police representation on the group has been really helpful in explaining how you go about doing that type of evacuation. And so that is one example. And all three of the villages are in a - the other two aren't - aren't quite as concerning, they're not - they won't as quickly get cut off as Brookfield Village, but it is the most difficulty of them.

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There's another aspect to the demographic in your constituency. I'd suggest there'd probably be a high percentage of households with pets?-- Yes, that's true, yes.

And that of itself creates an issues in this sort of situation, doesn't it?-- Yes, yes. I'd have to say not something that we had really given consideration to, but certainly with the January floods, for example, we have got also the McIntyre Centre, pony-riding for the disabled, and they amazingly managed to safely evacuate all of their horses which was quite a feat, but there are a lot of pets and a lot of animals such as horses throughout the ward.

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As you say, that must have been quite a logistical exercise, horse evacuation. Again was there any plan in place for that or was that just a scramble?-- No, the fortunately the some of the manager - well, the managers of the McIntyre Centre live local and I am told, because it happened a couple of days before I could get back, they rounded up everyone that could handle a horse and got them down there and they actually had to walk the horses, it had to be at least five or six kilometres to get them to properties where they could be housed until they could return to the McIntyre Centre. It was - they deserve commendation for what they did.

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And again looking forward, perhaps that's something, lists of people that can handle certain of types of animals-----?-- Yes.

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-----be useful?-- Yes.

All right. Is there anything that you feel that has been learnt from this event which your group will take forward?-- I think the communication issue is one that we will look at how we can develop further. It is a very hard one. I honestly don't know the answer at this stage, but the need for communities that perhaps are not - you know, residents who

aren't necessarily flooded, but there is no electricity, they're isolated because the roads are cut off, how do we get some information to them about what is happening? It's very difficult in, you know, the isolated suburbs as to how we deal with that, but it was evident there is a need for some way of getting them information.

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All right. Thank you. That's all I have.

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Mr O'Donnell.

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MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Your Honour, given Councillor de Wit is a member of the Brisbane City Council, may I go towards the end?

COMMISSIONER: I'm sorry?

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MR DUNNING: Given Councillor de Wit is a member of Brisbane City Council-----

COMMISSIONER: Oh, you want to go last.

MR DUNNING: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Councillor, you say in your statement one of the main difficulties experienced was in sourcing supplies?-- Yes, that was the - the issue that was certainly brought to my attention, yes.

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And you had returned to Brisbane on the 12th of January?-- yes.

And you first become aware of this difficulty on the 13th, the following day?-- Yes.

You contacted the LDCC on that day?-- I think it was the 13th - well, there was certainly - I had contact - verbal contact with Council on the 13th, and it was the 14th that I think I had - sorry, let me go back. I'm just trying to recall. I think it was the 13th that I spoke with the LDCC and on the 14th I then took it a step further and spoke with the CEO of Council and also the Lord Mayor's Chief of Staff in relation to this issue, and the lord mayor.

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Right. And when you spoke with the LDCC, did they indicate that they were aware for the request for supplies?-- Yes.

And did they tell you that there were plans in place to resupply the area?-- I believe so, yes. I was certainly told that they would be getting supplies out to that area as quickly as possible. Bearing in mind that it was still physically isolated so it was a case of trying to work out how to get the supplies there.

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Yes. And in fact, as you say in your statement, you were aware that the following day, the 14th, supplies did arrive?-- Yes, and I - I think they received some - 13th or 14th and I'm honestly not clear on that because again the difficulty of not being able to get out there myself until the Friday afternoon, but certainly the bulk - there was a lot of supplies arrived very late on the Friday night I think it was. We had been waiting because we were given times when they expected to get them through, but it took longer than expected but certainly by late Friday night they had received a lot of pallets of goods.

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Yes. And that Friday night was the 14th, wasn't it?-- Yes.

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And you also were informed, I think, that there was an army resupply to the Karana Downs/Mt Crosby community at about the same time?-- Yes, that was the helicopter drop, yes.

And there had been some resupplies on the day you arrived back in Brisbane on the 12th, you found out later?-- I'm just trying to recall. Have I - on the Wednesday?

I think you go to paragraph 30 of your statement. You say, "To the best of my recollection"-----?-- Yes, yes, at the - yep. Or shortly thereafter, and so I couldn't be really clear because I had only just arrived back in Brisbane that day.

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All right. Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Dollar?

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MR DOLLAR: I don't have any questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Yes, thank you, Commissioner. Councillor de Wit, only one short topic. You said an answer to a question from my learned friend Mr Callaghan that the purpose of the group that you've organised locally is to complement the established disaster relief facilities. In one of the ways in which the - your group achieved that during this period was in providing local information and lines of communication?-- Yes, I - I have been told, and - by some of the residents that they found the process they had been working on very useful. It helps you to, I think, sort of, think clearly about what needs to be done and how you need to go about it, and the feedback, I was rather pleased to get the feedback, that those people who were

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out in Moggill and Mt Crosby able to help with at that stage had found value from the process as far as we had gone.

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All right. And in terms of providing those lines of communication, is that an issue that's more acute in your area because of the relative isolation of the individual communities?-- Yes. It certainly is. The difficulty being that from either end of the ward, you've only got one road in and one road out and, you know, the far western end it's Colleges Crossing which everyone knows goes under very quickly, and the eastern side you have got Brookfield Road and Moggill Road that just cut very quickly in a number of places where there are creeks.

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All right. And would it be fair to say that because of those considerations, communications and accessing information will also require local knowledge and necessarily will always have to be conducted on a somewhat ad hoc basis?-- I think so. It - the area is different to most of Brisbane and because of the likelihood of that physical isolation, they're really - I think very locally is by far the best way to be able to actually make things happen. But as I have said before, ideally, you know, we would be working in with whichever - whatever other mechanisms are in place to assist on a wider scale.

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Yes. Yes. So in complementing it-----?-- Yes.

-----or in giving effect to your purpose, there's got to be a degree of informality in it, it seems?-- Yes.

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All right. Thank you. The other thing that I wanted to briefly touch with you is there is another means of communication - line of communication in all of this we saw operating here, and that is the elected members at all three levels; correct?-- Yes.

All right. And that is, if you like, a standard means of communication and where necessary ramping up priorities as they become aware?-- Yes, definitely, and certainly during the flood all three members or representatives of the area, Federal, State and myself, were readily accessible via mobile phone the whole way through.

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And you've given some evidence, it's already had fairly robust and direct lines of communication with people in a position to give effect to needs?-- Yes.

Yes, thank you. Nothing further. Thanks, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: I have no further questions. May the witness be excused.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks Councillor de Wit?-- Thanks, Commissioner.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: Our next witness is due to arrive at 12.
It might be an opportunity-----

COMMISSIONER: Well, we haven't had a morning break so should
we just adjourn for quarter of an hour?

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.50 A.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 12.13 P.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Bruce Flegg.

BRUCE STEVEN FLEGG, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Bruce Steven Flegg.

Relevantly, for the purposes of the Commission, Dr Flegg, you're the Member for Moggill?-- That's correct.

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You prepared a submission dated 11 March 2011 which you forwarded to the Commission; is that correct?-- That's correct.

And that submission contains two attachments?-- That's correct.

That document is being shown to you now?-- Yes.

Yes, I tender that.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 282.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 282"

MR CALLAGHAN: Is it correct, in effect, that that submission represents the evidence which you wish to place before the Commission?-- Yes, that's correct.

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You make the point that as well as the effects of inundation, the floods caused the isolation of significant areas within your electorate?-- Correct.

And in your submission you draw attention to some of the issues associated, firstly, with the inundation itself and the first of those that I thought we'd address is referred to on page 3, if you have the document there, and that is in relation to the Riverview nursing home?-- Yes.

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We are going to hear later from Mr Goebel of the Red Cross and speak to the need when planning for disasters to consider the demographic of particular areas and the Riverview situation seems to illustrate that point. Could you tell us a bit more about that?-- In the early stage of the flood emergency a

substantial number of elderly, high-care nursing home residents were evacuated from a facility in Riverview, around about 180, 200, I think in two different tranches. And they were taken to a new Salvation Army facility which had been constructed on Moggill Road at Chapel Hill but was not yet in use, so it was a vacant facility there fortuitously. Because it wasn't in operation, it had neither supplies nor staff. So a relief effort was swung into action with the Kenmore Rotary Club, the Salvation Army and they provided people to assist the nursing home patients, and they needed some assistance obtaining supplies because even the basics were not currently in place, things like toilet paper, milk, you know, things that you would normally have a stock of if you were already open and operating. And the Rotary Club contacted me in relation to help with this and I was able to help them. The supermarket at Kenmore, which had been closed by police because of panic buying and some loss of law and order in the checkout queues, allowed me some access and we were able to get the supplies that they needed from Coles.

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And how were the residents actually evacuated, do you know?-- No, I'm not sure.

What about supplies above and beyond supermarket supplies, because presumably people in that demographic sometimes have some special medical needs and that sort of thing. Was there-----?-- I'm not the best person to ask for that.

No?-- The Rotary Club did a - did a fabulous job there and they wanted assistance with really getting up and running. I think they attended to those needs as time went on but, you know, they were - they basically had water to start off.

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That probably leads us to consider the question of evacuation centres generally. I think on page 9 of your submission you suggest that there were at least three in operation, at least three unofficial centres. Is that right?-- Yeah. Yeah, we had no official centre in the area. When the flood waters cut Moggill Road, which happens very early on in the event, a lot of people were trapped away from their homes and a large number of vehicles gathered around the intersection of Rafting Ground Road and Moggill Road. The local shopping centre contacted me. I went down and just went from window to window of the cars and - because it was in the evening, it was dark and said that we'd made arrangements to keep the shopping centre open. And then that subsequently, with the assistance of the council and Councillor Julian Simmonds, we kept the library open, simply so that those people who were cut off would actually have somewhere to go and a roof over their head and a point of contact at which, you know, any needs that they might have could be addressed.

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Well, the first issue that we seem to confront with evacuation centres or recovery centres, whatever you want to call them, is where they should be located. What would you say is the learning of this event in terms of where such centres are located and whether these locations are publicised?-- They were essentially opened in locations as a response to the

local community because given the nature of this emergency, we were cut off into three separate communities. So we needed three. There was no use having one in a location where half the population can't access it because of, you know, whatever the particular disaster is. So the local community chose the sites for the three evacuation centres. In the case of Kenmore, I sort of organised that one; in the case of the Moggill Uniting Church, the minister there organised that; and the Reverend Baker organised the one in Karana Downs in the after school care building, and they were just completely spontaneous community initiatives. There was no - to my knowledge there was no prior planning of those sites as an evacuation centre. Of particular note in relation to evacuation centres, apart from the need to be very flexible, because every disaster is going to be different and access will vary - bushfires for example, which is - I have identified as the most likely disaster to result in loss of life in our area, would require a different response. But there - yes, there was no sort of prior planning of those.

Well, that leads, I suppose, to the question of the provisioning of these centres or centres like this and, in particular, I think, to the events that you record at pages 6 and 7 of your submission and you speak to your experience of trying to obtain a food drop?-- Yes.

And describe it as one of the most frustrating experiences you can recall?-- Yes, there were - as the disaster proceeded, the needs evolved and, of course, the initial need related to the inundation of people's homes and evacuation, the dealing with nursing home evacuees, the setting up of evacuation centres. But very quickly, when word got around as to where an evacuation centre might be found in a given community, people came expecting to be able to receive assistance. You know, if women had babies they wanted nappies and baby formula. Milk and bread came up regularly. And so the people that were operating these impromptu relief centres were looking to be supplied. For reasons I explained in my submission, I was fairly available to them, which isn't maybe what people would expect for a state MP but that was just the circumstances that arose, and so, you know, it fell to me as the advocate for that community to try and obtain those sort of basic supplies. And in my view in a city like Brisbane in a state like Queensland, relief centres should be able to get those supplies pretty quick and fast. It's true that nobody is going to starve to death but there was certainly a lot of fear and uncertainty and anxiety in the phone calls that I was taking and I think that we should be able to source those supplies.

When you speak about the fact that you were able to source a helicopter and then - I'm on page 7 of your submission now, that's the third paragraph. And then in the following paragraph, about Mr McArdle sourcing a helicopter. Is that the same helicopter we're talking about or-----?-- Yes, yes.

So was it through Mr McArdle that a helicopter was sourced and provisions were obtained from someone or from a supermarket in

his electorate?-- Yeah, a supermarket up in Caloundra offered to supply what we needed and a local business person offered the use of their helicopter.

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Then you attempted to coordinate things such that that load or that helicopter could bring that load to your electorate?-- Yes, and we did coordinate that. The owner of the helicopter requested that we have a specific police clearance. Now, I was aware that a number of helicopters went in and out during the emergency and I'm not sure - I suspect that most of them didn't bother with any sort of clearance. However, I think that's right and proper that an owner sort of helping out in that situation would want to have a clearance through an official channel. So it was a pretty surprising event because I would have thought it would be simply a matter of course. In fact, I still find it fairly unimaginable. But I went through an array of police sources and I wasn't able to obtain that clearance for him.

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Can you just tell us about that, what you actually did and the responses you met with?-- Yes. When - when the owner of the helicopter asked that we have a formal clearance from police for the movement, for the flight movement, we had basically everything in place. It was all ready to go. I rang - I rang Ian Stewart, because I had his number, and Ian put me on to Mr Martin, and Mr Martin declined permission. I still don't exactly understand why. And I got a bit hot under the collar about that because, you know, I was getting the calls from the ground from this very big and there's 12,000 people in that community alone. So I spoke to the Police Commissioner, who repeated the advice that clearance of the flight would not be given.

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And you say you still don't understand why?-- I still do not and I was asked why.

Yes?-- The reason I was given and I think I can almost quote it word for word is, "We have a process. We cannot have people going off doing their own thing", quote unquote. Everything that was done in this relief effort, everything up to a certain point in time was done because people went off and did their own thing. We wouldn't have had evacuation centres, we wouldn't have had volunteer doctors and all the other things that were put in place. We had, you know, almost everything you could imagine, a very good community-based response. It was all because people went off and did their own thing.

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And accepting the truth of what might have been put to you that there was a process, a state disaster management process in place, it was never explained to you why what had been organised didn't or couldn't fit into that process?-- It certainly was never explained to me.

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And so, I suppose in fairness we should complete the story. What happened?-- I had to advise the owner of the helicopter I couldn't get the clearance and we advised the donor of the goods that they wouldn't be required, cancelled it. I - I

attempted then to get supplies on behalf of my - my two communities - two big communities that were cut off and I rang an array of other people, including our federal Member, who arranged a telephone discussion between myself and Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan, because accessibility there is very limited. I mean, it is pretty rough terrain. So to actually get something in, if you're not prepared to use the helicopter, really required an army effort. And in the end, some supplies did come in via that route. It was a bit chaotic, nobody knew what was coming, nobody knew when to expect it. The torches turned up at one evacuation centre, the batteries at another one and that sort of thing. But at least some supplies came through and a lot of - as I say, nobody was ever going to starve to death but there was a lot of anxiety about what was being done to help us as a community and there were many phone calls in relation to that. And I think people took a lot of comfort from the fact that at least an effort was in place to try and make sure that people were being looked after.

I suppose on the topic of anxiety, you have also made some observations in your submission about the concept of panic buying?-- Yes, I did and I think it's quite an important concept and it occurred probably at both ends of the disaster. When word came through the Brisbane River was going to flood, most of our local people would have known they were going to be cut off. I don't think they were aware they were going to be cut off for so long without power, but people ducked into places like Kenmore, principally Kenmore, to buy groceries. In the circumstance, reasonable people sometimes act unreasonably and, you know, try to buy too much and as a result the checkouts couldn't cope at the supermarket, there were fights at the checkout queue because of the delays. Police were called. The supermarket was closed. We also had, after the flood when fuel was extremely scarce, a not dissimilar situation in relation to fuel. So I did make a recommendation that in circumstances where supply is seriously disrupted as it was, for both fuel and supermarket supplies, that a limit on the amount that people could buy to avoid panic buying and ensure the supermarket supplies and fuel are available to as many people in the community as possible would be something the Commission might like to consider. I suggested the amount of \$50 which, you know, would get most vehicles back on the road for fuel. Would get you a basket of milk and bread and other essentials. And people need to recognise that when supply is disrupted in this manner, then there isn't enough for people to buy the normal amounts that they would. It is a matter of looking after the community and making sure they're available to as many people as possible.

If such a system capping the amount of expenditure were to be introduced, do you have a view as to who would be responsible for initiating it or enforcing it?-- Look, I think it can only be the retailer but they certainly need the support of police. We had the situation where the supermarket for the Mt Crosby community of some 12,000 people is in Karalee, so they were cut off for weeks. The supermarket in Bellbowrie was totally destroyed. The nearest supermarket in Kenmore was stripped bare

and there was no fuel. One of the only two petrol stations in the area was flooded. We had no fuel for quite a long time. People had to drive around Brisbane looking for the things that they needed to buy. So the local petrol station in Karana Downs in my view did a fabulous job: imposed a 10-dollar limit which was considered to be enough fuel to get into Brisbane and find a supermarket and get back again. Had they just allowed unrestricted buying, their tanks would have been empty in an hour or two and the community would have had no petrol. Police were present though because - and were present throughout the sale of fuel on that occasion because some people don't like to be told what to do even though it may have been in the community interests that they are.

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You just mentioned one issue which clearly won't be resolved before the next wet season but which I'll ask you about anyway while you're here and that is the location of the central shopping district in Bellbowrie. That's clearly an issue. Do you have a view as to anything that might be done about that?-- Well, I think it is a serious issue. The Bellbowrie Shopping Centre is essentially the only facility between Ipswich, between Karalee and between Kenmore. It is a very big area, very long distance and it is on a flood plain, and it was severely inundated. It is still not functioning. It was, in essence, completely destroyed all bar the frame and it meant that a bad situation was much worse because all local supplies were lost. That included the only local petrol station in the area; is part of that same complex. It was lost as well. And I think we have to take that into consideration when you're essentially servicing a community that's a long way from any other sort of services.

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And the two options really are to encourage the ownership to rebuild in a, you know, higher or to rebuild in a way that's better protected from natural disasters so that at least it can be returned to operation quickly; or to ensure that the local authority zones some retail commercial property in a less flood prone area, and I think most people in that area would be of that view that it is not a good situation that the only services that are available are in an area that's going to be taken out immediately with any flood

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COMMISSIONER: The trouble with that though is it's presumably a commercial decision for Coles where they rebuild, that they planning permission where they are?-- I think Coles are quite keen to - I have spoken to Coles, they're quite keen to rebuild. The centre was so badly damaged that it a very slow, lengthy process with no end date currently. It's probably fair - fairer to say, Commissioner, that it's a commercial decision for the owner of the centre. I think Coles would actually be very keen to be in a less flood prone centre.

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So what is the proposal, do you know? Are they rebuilding on that site?-- The proposal at the moment is simply to renovate the shell that's left and try to get open again.

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All right. Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: Can we just go back when you're talking about the problems of provisioning the evacuation centres and the efforts that you made, and you told us that you spoke with Mr Martin and you understood him to be the responsible person effectively for the - the implementation of the State Disaster Management Plan relevantly-----?-- My understanding.

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-----for those purposes, yeah. Did you have any other interaction with Mr Martin?-- We spoke a couple of times. Be fair to say - I mean, I see my role very much as an advocate for my community in a setting where very few people were in a position to do that advocacy. Would be fair to say I was getting pretty annoyed because I couldn't see good reason why we, you know, when we had the ability to bring those supplies in why we couldn't do so. We had couple of conversations, but I wasn't getting anywhere.

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I suppose what I'm getting at is accepting what you say that you were an advocate for your community, you're also a member of Parliament and obviously aware of the State Disaster Management framework, we'd be interested in just your perspective in the way that framework operated, if at all, relevantly to your electorate. I mean, I think, for example, if we go to the last page of your submission, point 10 on that page, you speak to a confusing array of bureaucracies and you're still not sure who was doing what. This is the perspective that we'd be interested to hear from you?-- Look, I would absolutely stick by that. If we flooded again tomorrow I'm not sure I would be any better off. Local police who obviously can't, sort of, really speak out but they were very confused about who to go to or who was in a position to make decisions. There's two distinct things: there's people

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with the physical on-the-ground capability of delivering the necessary assistance; and people who have the authority to make a decision that a certain course of action would be followed, and I think they are distinct things, and I think that that is a very confused array of bureaucracies. At no point was I ever clear who could make a decision or who could ensure that what was needed happened. I spoke to - I spoke to virtually every type of person you could imagine over this time, including people who were running our evacuation centres, and nobody was really sure how you made particularly supply happen. I think it was - I don't want to make it sound like I'm being, sort of, overly critical. You know, I think it's just very important that we learn the lessons because, as I say, I think if it happened again tomorrow I don't think we would be any better off. I think we did much better, for example, if we had a medical emergency and we needed to evacuate somebody, then I think that type of thing was - it was much clearer what to do, and we had at least two instances of medical emergencies where people were evacuated and my understanding was that that was done pretty well, but in terms of supporting these very large communities, around 25,000 people in total, and having people understand that their need was understood that something was happening, because that's, you know, very important to the psyche of the community, then I don't think we were as well prepared.

Well, in terms of who was doing what, do you know - just to pick an example from your testimony earlier, do you know, for example, where the torches came from? You spoke about, I think of the torches-----?-- I have no idea. I have no idea, and I'd be surprised if anybody else locally knew where. They turned up on an army vehicle-----

All right?-- -----but I would have no idea where they were sourced. Whether there's any sort of strategic supply of these things or whether simply officialdom does what I did and that is go to supermarkets and ask if they could help. Now, I'm certainly not an expert in any of these areas. I think circumstances arising, you do the best you can.

You've spoken about your interaction with Mr Martin, the District Disaster Coordinator. What about the Local Disaster Coordinator and the Local Disaster Management Group run by the Council or-----?-- Well, I wasn't-----

Did you have-----?-- -----really very familiar with what was happening there, but I'm very fortunate that I have got two first rate councillors, and in particular for the areas that we're talking about at the moment, Margaret de Wit who I understand has been in to give some evidence, and my interaction with the Council was principally through Margaret and I have worked very, very closely with her and, you know, she worked tirelessly. So I have no problem with - with what I saw happening from a local Government point of view.

All right. You're aware of Councillor de Wit's own proactive measures to devise a plan specific to the area. Were you aware of those before these events?-- I don't think I was

aware of them beforehand. If I was, it was very peripheral-----

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All right?-- -----but I think it supports to a significant extent what I have been saying is that the response to these things needs to be local and on-the-ground because you simply don't know who's going to be in a position to be able to lead a response locally and every disaster is different. If you try to do it to a predetermined blueprint, then I think you're asking for trouble because no disaster is going to follow a predetermined plan.

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No.

COMMISSIONER: The trouble, though, Dr Flegg, is that you need some acknowledgment of the local group so that they do get responses when they want resupply, for example. Have you got any ideas about how that might be done if you have a, not necessarily a formal group, but a group which had continuity over a time which has its own plan, how that might be acknowledged further up the chain in the Emergency Management System?-- Well, I think's an excellent point that you make because it's all very well to have the group but if nobody acknowledges that it has any authority to act, it's not going to get the support that it needs. I think formalising the fact that there is some sort of local group that is - not sure of the right terminology - that is known about and has been established and given some thought to particular local circumstances, I think, appreciating that such a group exists further up the chain is probably the - the start. We had instances where our evacuation centre, particularly one at Moggill Uniting Church was ringing up being - seeking assistance and being told, "Well, you're not on the list of official evacuation centres", and, I mean, it was a very, very impressive operation up there. It had a police command post, it had a medical centre, it had a minor ops set-up, it operated 24 hours a day, it was a very impressive operation, and seems to me that, you know, it's a bit - a bit unacceptable that somebody on the end, you know, in a bureaucracy then tells them, "Well, we can't help you because you're not on a list of official evacuation centres." So there needs to be some acknowledgment further up the line that these groups which operate locally have some standing.

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Then you get the difficulty too, I suppose, what if you have competing group, what if some are credible, some are not. It's a difficulty area?-- Mmm. Well, I think it is, and I've made the point, sort of, over and over again that flexibility is very important because every circumstance that we get involved in is going to be quite different, and the needs, for example, might - on this occasion we had cut-off communities with no power, we didn't have a lot of threat to life. In a bushfire situation we might have very little time to react to quite significant risk to life and I know and Margaret knows our area very well, and there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people in very isolated bush locations whose lives will be at risk in a bushfire event if we're ever, you know, tragically be exposed to one, and you'll presumably have a lot

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less time than you had to organise here, and I would hate to think that somebody at the end of the phone in a bureaucracy was saying, "Well, you know, you're not on our list." It's a very real risk.

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Can I ask you this too: did you actually get any help from the Local Disaster Management Group?-- It probably a question better - I let most of the local issue in relation to council matters to Margaret. Margaret and I spoke, you know, multiple times everyday, so probably better to direct that - most of my - without being an expert on disaster response, I essentially approached agencies that I felt might have the ability to do something which is like the police, the military, if supplies were needed, I went to try to source supplies. I don't think at that local level anybody really had a lot of capability. It's not - it wasn't a simple matter of just putting a boat and going across a river, for example, because Moggill Road was cut in three or four places so it wasn't a practical route to bring in supplies. You either needed an all-terrain vehicle over some incredibly rugged country in the back of Pullenvale which is what happened in the end, or you needed to come by air. Pretty much wasn't any other - there wasn't any ground or water access for a period of time.

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Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: I have nothing further, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

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MR O'DONNELL: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Thanks, Commissioner. Dr Flegg, just a couple of questions. You've spoken of the isolation of the members of the community within your constituency. The last event like this, as we all know, was in 1974. It would be fair to say, wouldn't it, that the composition of those areas has changed in as much as whereas in 1974 they were largely effectively small farms, they now are individual communities but within them small residential communities?-- Yeah, I think that's fair comment. I mean, these communities are 10 times the size they would have been, and they are largely - although there are still a lot of acreage and so forth, they are largely residential communities and I think people living in residential communities probably react a little differently to what people in farming-type communities react.

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Yes. And leading on from that that whereas perhaps in 1974 you had a group of residents for whom being isolated wasn't as surprising. By 2011 it was a very jarring experience for your constituents to be isolated as they are?-- Well, I think people in our area do still expect a little isolation because Moggill Road has been cut at least three times that I can think of, maybe four, in recent years but it is a different

community and people were - the anxiety was quite significant. We took the phone calls from people and really what many people need to do is just sit back and keep out of trouble, there was considerable anxiety in among the community which I think - I think maybe just communities in general their expectations have changed. You know, back in '74 you didn't have the Internet and you didn't have mobile phones and, you know, if your landline was down you didn't have communications. I think people's expectations probably - probably have changed.

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All right. And that - that sense of isolation and that sense of anxiety that you have talked about was undoubtedly real to people who were calling you; you'd agree with that?-- Yes.

Yet on the other hand as you pointed out very few people were actually at risk of flooding and no people were going to starve; agree?-- Oh, absolutely.

So no matter how real their anxiety was seen in that - seen in that perspective, what we really stand to learn about this is how you better inform a community such as that to assuage that anxiety?-- I think you're right. The anxiety was very real. A lot of people were cut off from their families. Colleges Crossing went under long before Brisbane, people were cut off on the other side there. People were cut off by Moggill Road, and I think it's fair to say if we had better system of providing information, and particularly information not just about flood peaks, although that's pretty important, and we did have people that didn't know there was a flood, most of them did know there was a flood, but information about road closures and when roads would re-open and information about power cuts, and just simply information that people could be aware that somebody was aware of the circumstances. People were fearful that nobody knew that they were under these circumstances. And it seems, sitting back here, it seems a bit of an odd thought but many people thought that maybe they'd been forgotten, people weren't aware. Just that comfort of people knowing.

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And does that then really lead to the fact that perhaps more than anything else when it comes to these suburbs we need one way or another to communicate to these areas that even though typically you participate in Brisbane as people - as if you lived in densely populated areas, you are not - you will experience some isolation but it will pass in couple of days; you'd agree with that?-- Look, I think the community education and community's understanding that they will be isolated during a disaster, I think that's - that's quite important. I think also very importantly the communities - information was as important as food pretty much, and communities need a basic understanding that they should have a radio because they're not going to have power, power was virtually cut off every event we've experience and has been in multiple occasions, you know the storms in 2003, four, I think it was. People need to know which radio stations they should listen to. And I think it's useful if each community is aware of a particular place they could go to for information and

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this point was raised over and over again by different people that whilst you might set up an evacuation centre, people didn't automatically know where it was or that they could go there. So I think those bits of information would probably make people less fearful.

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And would it be fair to say that one of the lessons learnt in this particular part of Brisbane was that when we talking about an evacuation centre we talk of many different things really under that one banner. In reality the need was for an information centre more than an evacuation centre?-- That's correct. Information was really what people needed. You know, they lost everything in their freezers because there was no power so they were - you know, their calls probably - the most common thing to get a call about was power. Road outages. You know, people came and sat by floodwaters not knowing when a road might be able to re-open so people could be reunited with their families, that sort of information was - was pretty vital, yeah.

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And finally, Dr Flegg, in light of those matters we have just discussed and the matters raised in your report, I take it from that you offer no criticism of how the Brisbane City Council gave effect to its flood relief efforts in that part as well?-- No, I haven't made any criticism of the Council. I worked, as I say, through Margaret who worked absolutely tirelessly, and I think the thing that was in my mind throughout was really just very practical stuff about who had the ability to render the assistance that people were telling me that they needed and, you know, I just attempted to go to those bodies even if that meant going to the Federal Treasurer to see if the Army could help.

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Yes. Dr Flegg, thank you for your attention to my questions. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien.

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: Thank you, Commissioner. Dr Flegg, on the - just deal with the issue of resupply you have spoken about in your statement. You had sourced a quantity of supplies from a supermarket to Caloundra via Mr McGargill?-- Yes.

And you'd also sourced a helicopter to collect those supplies and deliver them to the electorate?-- Yes.

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The owner of the helicopter, I think you have agreed quite sensibly, wanted you to seek a police clearance for that resupply?-- Correct.

You understood, I take it, that that was a sensible request, you couldn't have private individuals making their own

arrangements all over the area without the disaster relief arrangements being in place knowing about all of those efforts?-- I - you know, I mean the more information about what's happening that those central agencies have, the better.

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And the helicopter was proposed to supply in, if clearance was granted, on the following day, Friday the 14th; is that so?-- Yes, 8 a.m.

Now, you then made a call to the Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart, and he put you onto Assistant Commissioner Peter Martin?-- Mmm.

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And is it - you agree that you spoke to him, that is Mr Martin, on the first occasion at about 20 past 5 in the afternoon on Thursday, the 13th, I wouldn't be certain of the time now. It was-----

It was Thursday afternoon, you think?-- It would have been in the afternoon I think, yeah.

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Would was it fair to say he was sympathetic to your request firstly?-- Look, I think all of the people I dealt with were doing the best that they could to help us. I'm not seeking to level criticism at any individual, and I'm sure they made the decisions as they saw them to be, you know, appropriate at the time.

Yes. He told you that he would need to make some inquiries but he would get back to you?-- Yes, yes.

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I suggest he got back to you at about 6 o'clock, about 40 minutes later after you've made the first contact with him?-- I can't say to the time, yeah.

And he told you a couple of things. Firstly, he told you that the - he couldn't give the - he couldn't give permission-----?-- Yes.

-----for the flight?-- Yes.

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Secondly, he told you one of the reasons for that was that plans were well advanced to make a resupply as early as the following morning, being the Friday the 14th; do you recall him saying that to you?-- There was some plans to bring a vehicle, an all-terrain vehicle, over the hills at the back of Pullenvale.

Yeah?-- That's right.

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He told you, secondly, that one of the reasons he couldn't approve the request was that the powers granted to him under the Disaster Management Act were extraordinary special powers?-- No, I don't recall that and it doesn't sound like something that I've heard before, but it may be correct.

And that under - because the plans were in place for a reprovision the following day, he simply couldn't under those

powers approve the sort of request that you'd made?-- I don't remember any of that.

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Were you familiar with the Disaster Management act provisions?-- Not intimately, no. It's not part of the portfolios I've been involved with.

You would be aware, I'd imagine, that they are extraordinary powers given under the Act?-- As I say I wouldn't be an expert on that area of legislation.

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In any event, the other thing he told you in that call at about 6 o'clock on the Thursday evening was that he - he made the offer that he would have those supplies from Caloundra collected and delivered under the then existing arrangements the following day?-- I don't recall that at all.

And you refused that offer, you declined the offer?-- I don't think I would have refused any offer of assistance.

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I think you'd agree from what you have told us already that your response to his refusal was that you were angry, frustrated by the refusal?-- I was certainly frustrated by it, yes.

And you told him in this call at about 6 o'clock that you didn't agree with his response and it would be his fault that the food, medicines and other supplies would not be delivered?-- That was certainly refusing permission for them to be flown in, yeah.

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And then that was the extent of the conversation essentially?-- Mmm.

You've told us about the fact that it wasn't a life-threatening situation, but it was certainly a one - a situation of generating anxiety and a degree of fear in the community?-- Mmm, correct, yeah.

Did you relay the refusal to members of your electorate? Did you tell them that their request had been refused?-- Look, I don't remember those details at the moment. I think it's quite possible that I did.

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Did you explain to them the reasons given to you for the refusal?-- Look, I don't remember those details. I mean, we had very limited communications as it was. I mean, it wasn't really feasible to communicate with large numbers of people in any case.

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All right. Did you contact the media immediately after the refusal by Mr Martin?-- I didn't really contact media at any point, but at various points media contacted me and I did have opportunity to do some information - provide some information over radio.

Did you explain to the media who contacted you the reasons given by Assistant Commissioner Martin for his refusal?-- I

don't remember that - that detail. I mean, the focus is to assist these communities, not on the politics of it-----

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No?-- -----and I wanted to get assistance into them as soon and as practically as possible and that's the only interest I have in the matter and the only interest I had in the matter at the time.

But I assume you'd agree that one of the main ways to allay the fears of the community would be to have told them that, "We can't take this helicopter load in tomorrow at 8 o'clock but the Assisting Commissioner ensures us that there is a resupply on the way and it will be tomorrow, so you can wait perhaps a few hours more but you'll get it tomorrow"?--

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Yes, certainly. When - when we had information that supplies were being brought overland when I had the opportunity - and they were very limited opportunities, when I did have the opportunity to go on radio I certainly put that information out. That's what we were seeking to do, is actually provide people a bit of information so that they could have some reassurance.

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I should just formally suggest to you that that information about there being a resupply on the way for Friday the 14th was given to you by Assistant Commissioner Martin in that phone call at 6 o'clock on the Thursday evening when he refused your request for a helicopter?-- It's possible.

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All right. Thank you Commissioner.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

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MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, anything further?

MR CALLAGHAN: No. May Dr Flegg be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Dr Flegg, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

COMMISSIONER: Lunch break till went?

MR CALLAGHAN: 2.30.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We'll adjourn until 2.30.

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THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 1.02 P.M. TILL 2.30 P.M.

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.31 P.M.

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COMMISSIONER: We have got a witness on the line, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, I believe we have a Beryl Sutcliffe on the line.

BERYL LEONA SUTCLIFFE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Mrs Sutcliffe, could you tell the Commission your full name?-- Beryl Leona Sutcliffe.

You are the author of a two-page statement dated the 7th of April 2011; is that correct?-- Yes, it is.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that statement along with a copy of a submission, some photographs, a Floodwise Report and a map, all referred to and as part of one exhibit.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 283.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 283"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Now, Mrs Sutcliffe, do you have a copy of your statement with you?-- Yes, I do.

You speak in it about checking the flood map?-- Yes, I do, yes.

How did you do that?-- Well, the flood map was on the website of the Brisbane City Council, which we printed off, and that's what we went by.

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As you interpreted it, you felt confident that your street in Rocklea would not flood; is that correct?-- That is correct.

When you say in your statement that the 2011 flood peaked at 4.5 metres, what's your basis or understanding of why that's so?-- Well, that was what was in mostly the media-----

Yes?-- -----that was saying that. So that was my understanding of that.

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Your understanding being that your property is at least eight metres above sea level; is that right?-- That's correct.

And so on the basis of those two figures, it was your impression that you should have been okay?-- That's right.

You also speak in the submission, I think, about the fact that you were registered with the early warning alert service?-- That's right.

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When did you do that?-- That would have been Monday morning and that would have been the 10th of January and it did state, after going online, that we were registered.

So there was no trouble registering even at that time?-- No.

And what did you expect from that service after registering?--
I thought we'd get an SMS through our mobile phones or an
e-mail sent to us advising of any alert in the weather
conditions.

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Did any such alert come through?-- No.

During the time frame that we're talking about, can you tell
us whether there were any police around?-- There was. We had
police officers - two officers patrolling our street, normally
it was in the morning or afternoon, and at that stage I did
stop them and spoke with them.

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And what sort of information were you getting from them?--
Well, they pretty much knew exactly what we knew, which wasn't
too much at that stage.

So no indication, for example, as to the fact that you might
have to evacuate?-- No, but they did just tell us, "Just",
you know, "pack your personal gear in the car just in case you
have to evacuate quite quickly."

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Just to clarify one thing, I think in the submission at one
point you talk about being somewhere where "I spoke to you".
Was that to Mr Finn?-- Yes, that is correct. That would have
been on the Thursday the 13th. He was - yeah, we met him with
other people viewing the flood area in Rocklea, yes.

You also refer to the fact that you sent your letter to the
Lord Mayor and received a reply saying a response would be
sent to you as soon as possible?-- Yes, and I did get a reply
back.

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You did?-- Yes.

And what was the communicated to you in that reply?-- Well,
in that reply it stated that the council had provided a list
of suburbs and probably affected streets and - in the media,
out to the media, and that was published through websites, you
know, newspapers, et cetera. And it did state that there was
a letterbox drop to those areas there could be flooding and
also says I was told that "your street in Erncroft Place was
on the list of affected streets."

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Did you receive anything in a letterbox drop?-- No.

Did you hear anything in the media referable to your street?--
No, not as to the street. But Rocklea the suburb, I - we did.

Yes. They're all the questions I have but can you just hang
on for a moment?-- Okay.

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Mr O'Donnell, do you have any questions?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: We don't have Mr Dunning?

MR PORTER: No questions for Brisbane City Council. 1

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you. 10

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You wish Ms Sutcliffe excused?

MR CALLAGHAN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Ms Sutcliffe, for your time, you're excused and we'll end the connection?-- Okay, thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED 20

MR CALLAGHAN: I think the next witness is Tony Motson. I'll just get that confirmed. Yes, I call Tony Motson.

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ANTHONY WILLIAM MOTSON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Anthony William Motson.

Mr Motson, you're the author of a four-page statement dated 28 April 2011; is that correct?-- That's correct.

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Yes, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 284.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 284"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Motson, in about August of last year you obviously became aware of the prediction for a wet summer?-- Correct.

As a result, you printed out the flood map for your area?-- Correct.

On the basis of that and by reference to the 1974 flood level, in effect, you figured you were okay; is that right?-- I - we believed so, yes, mmm.

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But, in fact, you're not okay?-- Correct.

I think you record about 1.2 metres of water, oil and slime in your property?-- Absolutely, mmm.

You lost a lot of quality furniture, fittings and stock and so on?-- Correct.

But you did manage to move some stuff?-- Yes. We had some wonderful help from some wonderful people, yeah.

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Your concern, amongst other things, is that you could have moved more with more warning?-- Absolutely.

Apparently others in premises nearby, that is to say near to your business, did get some earlier warning; is that correct?-- Absolutely.

Can you tell us about that?-- Yes. Well, I only actually found that out by - by good luck or accident, whatever. I deal with people in that precinct that I mention in this submission and I've been in this business a lot of years and made a lot of friends. I have a wonderful rapport with people I deal with for many, many years. And I just had to mention to them, you know, "How did you get on in the flood?" "Oh, well, we got out. We got warning. The council came and told us." And I said, "When was this?" and they said, "On the

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Tuesday." I said, "Well, that's incredible because we got absolutely no warning." Our warning was, you know, 5 o'clock on Tuesday night. We looked at the Internet, as I've stated in here, and we should have been safe, we felt. So having found one supplier had warning, I checked with other suppliers nearby, because I try and deal locally in the precinct there where we are, and they had all had warning. But I know of nobody in Beaudesert Road adjacent to me or Musgrave Road opposite, which is quite an industrial precinct, had had any warning. So it would seem that selectively people were warned or there just wasn't enough manpower, I don't know the reason, but I do know that had we had more warning we would have been in a far better position than we are today. And so would a lot of other people, you know.

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I take it you were keeping normal business hours, that is to say you were open-----?-- Absolutely. We're open from 7.15 till 5 o'clock every day.

For example, if someone had driven around with a loud hailer or something like that, somebody would have heard it?-- Would have - would have heard it without any doubt, mmm.

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But as things stood, having checked the flood map and the Internet, you were largely caught unaware?-- We felt we were safe, mmm.

You have got some other things to say about Energex; is that correct?-- Yes. Unfortunately, we did have some - some issues with Energex, and I would like to say at the outset I'm not wanting to point the finger at anybody. I would just like to see that this could never happen again, you know, that we are prepared in the future.

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Sure. Yes?-- But I can refer to some dates. I've got some dates and information here in that regard. We were actually, if I may, ready to go back to work on Sunday the 16th. We had wonderful help from wonderful people, which so many of us did, which will forever be appreciated. We got cleaned up as it happens and lucky for me our electrician is family. So he had us ready, all the power points, everything done, okay, ready, set, go. He - he put the - as I recall it, he put the necessary paperwork in the meter box and applied to the appropriate part of Energex to get our power put back on. They must have had a look and said, "Oh, well, we need a different panel with the meters." It turns out we have got different meters now so I can only assume that's why. When he went to buy those, Energex or somebody had bought the 200 that the manufacturer had so there was none available, so we had to wait three days to get though. Anyway, the bottom line, we were ready to have our power back on by the 19th and get going, we hoped. We rang Energex every day to be told ultimately that - and you only get to talk to a lady on the phone. They won't put you through to anybody. But eventually a lady told my daughter-in-law, "Look, they've got forgotten to put you back on." "Well, what about somebody come back and put us back on?" "Oh, no, that's not going to happen. You'll just have to wait and get in the line", which we finished up

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having to do. My comment there is that - and I have no complaint about the linesmen and the technicians. They were working under incredible stress and did a wonderful job I thought. But in those circumstances, mistakes were bound to happen and I have no problem about the fact that they forgot to put us on. That could happen. What I don't understand is and I would like to suggest to the Commission, if it could happen in the future, they should have some sort of backup vehicle running around picking up the loose ends if I can put it in that terminology. It took them 20 minutes to get us on the air eventually on the Tuesday night at 4.45, which was the - which was the 24th and we were back. We had phones again. Our phone didn't get affected by water, it just had no power. So in the meantime, we've lost a fortnight's trading where we should really have only lost a week. I've kept staff employed. You know, we're a dedicated family business of four people in the one family apart from the people we employ. It just seemed to me a pity for the sake of 20 minutes that a back-up vehicle could not have been picking up the shortfall and backing up guys that were doing a tremendous job out there under the circumstances I thought.

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Okay. Thank you?-- Yeah.

They're the only questions I have.

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

MR O'DONNELL: No, no questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MS BRIEN: No questions.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

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MR DOLLAR: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Motson can be excused I think.

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks for time, Mr Motson, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Ian Wade.

IAN ANDREW WADE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- Ian Andrew Wade.

Mr Wade, you are the author of a five-page statement dated 21 April 2011; is that correct?-- Yes.

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Yes, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 285.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 285"

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MR CALLAGHAN: You describe in that statement the business you run in Rocklea?-- Yep.

And you record that the first warning you had about the flooding was at about 10 a.m. on the 11th of January which was a telephone call from someone you knew; is that correct?-- Yeah, that's correct.

You then describe the fact that you checked the predicted flood map for Rocklea and by your assessment, the forecast would mean approximately 500 millimetres of water through your buildings?-- Approximately, yeah.

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Approximately, yes. In fact, you ended up with about 2.5 metres?-- Correct, yep.

Is that right?-- Correct, yes.

You describe in your statement the fact that you got no warning from any official body?-- Nothing.

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You say the Internet and the radio were your only points of information. What were you doing in that regard?-- Basically council website, just looking at their map, and just listening to what the radio was saying, basically. We turned the radio on in the office and one of the girls was listening to it, just giving us an update.

I take it nothing that you heard there prepared for you for-----?-- Not to the level, no.

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No?-- No. Like, we back on to the Rocklea treatment area and that water round there, that rises and falls with weather conditions, and that was still what, I don't know, a minimum three metres below the road level when they said there was another metre to come. Well, you know, it didn't reflect what was being said to what we'd seen over the years and things like that and, you know, I accepted the 500 mil, you know, and

that was all I anticipated for.

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You would have obviously liked a more accurate prediction as to, first of all, the extent or the level of flooding?-- I think just more relativity to the areas.

Yes?-- That was the thing. You know, like the - probably the predictions were right but the relativity to, like, where we were, a metre that they were talking about at the Customs House wasn't going to be a metre with us.

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Didn't mean anything where you were?-- No. Well, it - you know, I looked at it, what, about quarter to 7 on Tuesday night and for that amount of water to come, it had to be about another probably six and a half metres or so to where the water level was we were seeing at the time and the prediction was another metre to rise.

Right?-- So the relativity between what was - you know, it is probably all - all correct but it didn't relate to us.

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Yes. You needed more accurate interpretation?-- For the area, yes.

Of the data which was being issued?-- Yes.

And the other thing I think that comes through in your statement is the speed with which it rose wasn't really something that you understood?-- No. Like, again, we left about 7 o'clock that night and I had - later that night I decided we'd come back the next day just to pick up loose ends and Ipswich Road was covered. Well, that was just well above even what the maps were showing.

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There are some things said in paragraph 7 about Energex?-- Yep.

Can you just elaborate on that?-- We had a lot of trouble trying - like we had electricians in on the Monday. One building was operational by Monday night. The other building was a couple of weeks to get going but it was very unclear on what was required to get process in place. We had one form filled out on the meter board. People came and said, no, we needed another form. We got that. Then we found we - those forms were irrelevant till we rang a particular phone number. When we rang the phone number, it was "join the cue". We had appointments made, we had people waiting on buildings all day to find out that they're busy and they just - you know, the circle kept going and I think it was just there was no clarity on what the requirement was to be able to move forward.

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And the other thing where a sense of frustration on your part is in your dealings with Telstra; is that right?-- Totally, yes.

What was the problem there?-- We had eight lines. Like, I knew our phones were going to be a problem. I bought a new phone system on the Thursday when the floods were on because,

you know, I figured they're going to be short supply. Getting Telstra just to get some phone lines going for us so we could put our system in. It turns out with them, you must tell them every individual phone number you're talking about not just your rotating number or anything like that. We had to deal with the Philippines. They had no idea what we were talking about. We had tech after tech come to tell us that - what, the main connection board was our problem, not a Telstra problem. Then it was a Telstra problem, then it was our problem. They didn't have the gear. Couldn't do it. And eventually at the end we just said, "Right. Stuff it, we'll" - sorry, "We'll pay someone to do it all", and that day they decided they could fix it.

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The only other thing in your statement I wanted to ask you about was the fact that you had a visit from what you describe as the Fire Ant Department?-- Yeah.

Do you know what that was about?-- No, not really. He was one of the first guys to come.

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What, checking for fire ants after the-----?-- No. No. I think PR from somewhere or something. I don't - we had no idea what he was about.

All right?-- One question he was asking was did we have any warning. That was one question he was asking.

Okay. Thank you?-- Okay.

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I have got no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

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MR MacSPORRAN: No, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

MR DOLLAR: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: You wish the witness excused?

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes, Madam Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your time?-- Thank you.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Lyndon Evans.

LYNDON JOHN EVANS, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name, please?-- My name is Lyndon John Evans.

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Mr Evans, you're the author of a one-page statement and a two-page submission; is that correct?-- That's correct.

Yes, I think they can be tendered as one exhibit, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 286.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 286"

MR CALLAGHAN: In essence, Mr Evans, what you have convey to the Commission is this, that on the 11th of January you had pieced together enough information from the Internet and from the television to realise that you were at risk of flooding?-- That's correct.

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And once you started moving your belongings, there wasn't really any other time to check for more information?-- That's correct. Once - once it was on, it was on. We decided we had to get out. There was no time to stop and double check, double guess, second guess ourselves.

No. And it was the Brisbane City Council website that you were relying on for information?-- That - that was one source of information. We'd - if I can just refer to some notes I've got. We had checked the flood flag map in the very early hours of Tuesday the 11th, around about quarter to 1 in the morning I think, and had a look at that. There was - at that time the flood flag map that was available then appears different to what I have seen since. It was a red dot on a map with no streets or anything. We actually had to compare it to a Google map to try and get our bearings as to what this red dot might mean where it was, and it was at a point about 500 metres away from our house. We had that. We did a Floodwise Property Report and according to the Floodwise Property Report, the rear of our property was 4.5 metres elevation, the front was 6.5 and we were expecting 4 - 5.45 metres, I think, the Brisbane River to rise to based on media reports. So based on that we might have expected about a metre of water through our house, which would have been not so bad, but - so our course of action was to move the stuff

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from downstairs on the Tuesday morning, start moving it to upstairs, which we thought might be okay. And very luckily, we happened to have the TV on in the background to try to keep track of any news or press statements or anything like that and Anna Bligh gave a press conference at about 4 p.m. in which she stated that the water levels were expected to be 1974 levels or worse, and we knew anecdotally that our house had gone under in 1974, so that's the point at which we said, "Right. We have to got to move everything out."

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You heard that, what, about 4 p.m. or so?-- About - about 4 p.m. That's how we recall it.

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Because you lost power from about 9; is that right?-- Approximately 9 o'clock because the water was actually coming up in the backyard and we think it got into the electrics somewhere and tripped all the safeties.

When you talk about the media reports that you were basing your assessment of the river level on, was it just a general announcement as to what the river level was expected to be or what do you recall the report actually was?-- I - I recall the figure of - I'm pretty certain it was 5.45 was the level was expected. It was somewhere. It was either the TV or the press or something somewhere that we got that figure from.

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Do you have a recollection as to whereabouts the river was expected to reach that level, whether was it at a particular gauge or-----?-- I don't recall. It was just a general statement. "The Brisbane River is expected to peak at this level."

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Right?-- Which, in retrospect, means nothing to us really.

No. It wasn't interpreted or able to be interpreted by you?-- No, no.

Subsequently, looking at The Courier-Mail online, you did find, after the event, a list of streets?-- Yeah, that - that was probably a couple of weeks after. We were just hunting around for information and we found a list of specific streets that had been published on that Tuesday night when we were frantically moving that stuff out. And it was quite an extensive list of streets and our street was included in that list of streets, but at no point - obviously that information was available on the Tuesday at some point. The Courier-Mail must have received that information from some source or somebody but we weren't directly given that information at the time. So we only - as I said, we only moved out based on what we were able to piece together ourselves.

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As we understand it, other residents of your street were not as proactive as yourself?-- That's correct, many people weren't moving out. We continued moving our belongings out with the help of some friends all through that night and we continued non stop until 5.30 a.m. Wednesday morning at which time the water was neck-deep at our front stairs and we decided it was too dangerous to continue so whatever was left behind at that point was left behind. And at the point at which we gave up the sun had come up not long before and there were people emerging from their houses in our street coming out onto their front verandah and thing and going, "Wow", you know, "here's the water, what do I do?", and they got very little out. Some residents in our street were coming out with a suitcase of clothes and that's it.

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Were you aware of any text message alert services that were available?-- Yes, we actually subscribed to the text alert system.

And did you get any?-- We got one on Saturday the 8th of January at 11 a.m., which was a Queensland severe weather warning-----

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Yep?-- -----advising of heavy rain and localised flash flooding with all Brisbane at risk. On Sunday the 9th at 11.09 p.m. we got an alert from Bureau of Meterology advising heavy rain early Monday and local flooding possible, but didn't give any location, but it did give a phone number for sandbag locations if you wanted to ring them. And then on Tuesday the 11th at 8.28 a.m., there was Queensland emergency flash flood warning, advised of very heavy rainfall in greater Brisbane area, and it said, "Flash flooding likely in many areas". That was the final warning that we got and I still have those messages on my phone.

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Yes. What sort of warning do you believe might have been effective in your circumstances?-- Anything. Anything would have helped. Loud hailers in the streets, more efficient detailed use of that warning system, information scrolling across the bottom of the television, anything like that. As it was we got nothing.

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Yes?-- And as I mentioned, we started moving stuff out for real at 4 p.m., the power went off at 9 so we were working after that time trying to move the contents of the house using hand-held torches in the dark through water. Even a couple of hours' extra warning in daylight, in daylight especially, would have made so much difference and even though we got a lot of stuff out we still estimated we lost about \$60,000 worth of uninsured contents.

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Thank you, they're the only questions I have.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

MR O'DONNELL: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr MacSporran?

MR MacSPORRAN: No question.

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MS McLEOD: No questions.

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: May Mr Evans be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thanks very much, Mr Evans, you're excused?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Andrew Young.

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ANDREW ALEXANDER GEORGE YOUNG, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Andrew Alexander George Young, Chief Executive Officer of Brisbane Markets Limited.

Mr Young, you're the author of a 10-page statement prepared for the purposes of the Commission; is that correct?-- Correct.

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That's a copy of it-----?-- Thank you.

-----being shown to you?-- Thank you.

I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 287.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 287"

MR CALLAGHAN: The Rocklea Markets you tell us were sold in 2001/2002; is that correct?-- Correct.

And in paragraphs 9 and 10 of your statement, you refer to the information memorandum issue at the time-----?-- Correct.

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-----which suggested that the Wivenhoe Dam would have the effect of reducing a major flood event such as 1974; that is to say, would have a reduction, I think, in effect of some 2.9 metres in the vicinity of the Brisbane markets; is that right?-- That's correct, and over 5,000 cubic metres per second in terms of the river flow.

And you make the point in paragraph 13 that the main selling floor was inundated in 1974 by approximately three metres?-- Correct.

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And at paragraph 14, you refers to the 2011 flood reaching a level of 9.17 AHD?-- Correct, yes.

Where did you get that figure from?-- We had some surveys conducted on the site by our own surveyor - well, not our own, an appointed surveyor so it's a surveyed level.

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The short point being, I suppose, that the expectation would be, given the relative levels, that - or would have been that the situation at the Rocklea Markets would have been at least no worse than 1974, that would have been the expectation on the-----?-- The expectation was certainly it wasn't going to be as bad, and a metre below that level would have meant that there would have been areas that wouldn't have suffered the inundation to the extent that they had and the dams would have

been a lot lower, and what probably caught a lot of the tenants out was when they moved to some of the higher ground within the sites, forklifts and product, those areas ended up being inundated to 1.6 metres instead of what might have been only 100 or 200 millimetres so there were much greater losses.

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You probably detail it, but what was the depth of water at the site in 1974?-- It was about 11 metres AHD.

But what did that translate to in terms of the Rocklea Markets themselves?-- That's a set measure so there's variable heights across the site.

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Can you just describe what it meant in practical terms? First of all-----?-- Well, at the selling floor, for example, there was three metres above the floor or ground level where the selling floors are, so a lot of product was taken to that area. Obviously if the level had been 2.9 metres lower, people would have got their toes wet rather than having what ended up being, you know, one and a-half metres of water through the selling floor areas which is the higher part of the site.

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And do you know what the level was, say, at the selling floor in 1974? Is that similar or-----?-- Well, 11 metres AHD translates to around three metres of depth.

On the selling floor?-- On the selling floors.

Okay. All right. At paragraph 16 you describe BML issuing warnings to the tenants. Can you just tell us what was the content of those first warnings which related to an anticipation of moderate flooding? What did you tell them at that stage?-- Well, we'd been monitoring both the Bureau of Meteorology website and obviously the Brisbane City Council text message service, so the first insight we had into the situation was the early reports from the Bureau of Meteorology website which - and I think from memory the reading was either 5 - round 5 o'clock in the morning on that Tuesday morning. And the projections at that time indicated that we would have some moderate levels of flooding around the lower parts of the site so, you know, our warning were along those lines, you know, expect some moderate levels of flooding. Obviously the situation throughout Tuesday deteriorated dramatically, and throughout the day our warnings got progressively more dire right through to the final warnings we issued towards 5 o'clock on the Tuesday which was obviously the whole site is going to be totally inundated. What makes it worse for our tenants is that they work hours which see them arise very early in the morning, finish work around midday. So by the afternoon the site's pretty much vacated, people are either getting some rest or gearing up for the next day. So by the time the magnitude of the event became known, there were not a lot of people left on site, and whilst we issued the warnings, people then were struggling to get back to the site and/or accessing the likes of tilt-trays to be able to take equipment from the site so it became problematic as to how much was moved or not.

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How do you actually issue warnings around the site itself?-- We were - those warnings were issued by e-mail, plus also we have staff on site, so, you know, they were starting to talk to people directly, but the physical warnings were by way of an e-mail message sent to all tenants.

And as you say, you revised those during the day as best you could on the information?-- On the information available, and again, you know, you got to the situation when we saw, you know - and you're probably moving into the data we had to rely on which made it very difficult to assess the impact on our site particularly with the projections increasing to the extent they did. And, like, the Jindalee bridge, for example, going from seven metres to 14 metres, the City going from, like, two and a-half metres to four and a-half and trying to get some indication of that - the impact on our site and, you know, the changes were so dramatic.

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Well, that's the difficulty you've really identified and are concerned about is the lack of ability to interpret the information which was being issued; is that correct?-- Correct.

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Sorry, please elaborate?-- The lack of flood warning stations, the lack of readings along the river, the lack of interpretive data and the lack of any kind of benchmark or a context to put it into, and I think for most people they didn't really have a context until the Premier said Tuesday afternoon, I think it was, it's going to be as bad as '74. I think the penny started to drop for people at that point in time because until that was said, you know, a metre reading on a river gauge somewhere for a lot of people means absolutely nothing. I don't think many people anywhere know the AHD level of their land.

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No. And indeed-----?-- We had some indications, but again we lacked the interpretive data being issued by BCC or the Bureau of Meterology.

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Was there anything in the information you received prior to that announcement by the Premier which gave you any real way of measuring how it was going to affect the site itself?-- Only by doing our own assessments and, you know, estimates of the impact ourselves.

All right. Can I ask you this: we know that in October the Government received a warning about a severe wet season coming up. Was that information conveyed or somehow distributed to BML?-- Not specifically, no.

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Did you have any premonition or any basis upon which to do any preplanning for an event such as this?-- No. Look, we'd done some base level preplanning but that's just our routine work arrangements. I think like most people there was the expectation particularly what's been said by the Government and others over the last 20 years that another flood was once in a lifetime or, you know, a one in a hundred year event, or

even I've seen some people refer to it as one in 400 year event. But, you know, there was always the potential it may happen so there was some planning on our part and that did hold us in good stead in terms of how quickly we were able to get parts of the site back up and running again. But it didn't help in terms of some of the damage and the inability of some of the tenants to remove assets from the site, like vehicles and forklifts, because of the site being isolated and the limited time in which they could act.

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You record receiving prompt and extensive assistance in re-establishing the site?-- Yeah, it was given priority. We got excellent levels of cooperation from the Brisbane City Council, State Government, emergency services, police, volunteers. So, you know, once the event had happened and once we were back into the site, we did get good levels of cooperation to get up and running again as quickly as possible.

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You talk, I think, about re-establishing functionality of part of the site within 60 hours. Which part was that?-- That's the selling floor, that's the area I've referred to at the beginning of discussion. It's the area which was probably least affected by floodwater to a depth of around one and a-half metres. It's the trading floor area. There are buildings there, an open area from which we receive and distribute product so that's called "selling floor", and that became our focus to re-establish our operations from that area, so that the markets could operate in the limited capacity. That was our focus and that's what we were able to achieve.

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So how do we assess the total disruption of this event?-- On the markets?

Can I qualify that by saying disruption to the service that you provide. I'm sure that-----?-- To - to customers of the markets?

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Yes, I'm sure to your organisation it's been a-----?-- And is on-going, yes.

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An on-going one, yes, but in terms of actual providing the service to the people of Brisbane, what level of disruption are we talking about?-- There was - well, it's in the context of flooding throughout the State as well so there were other issues in relation to the supply of product. In terms of the role of the markets as a receival point and distribution hub for fresh produce, yeah, you looking at the time that the markets were inundated so from the Tuesday night through to Friday, we're back operating from Monday morning, so, you know, really from Tuesday to Monday, that was limited operations because we did have the power shortages so that product wasn't being fully refrigerated and wholesalers were seeking the cooperation of growers to limit supply so that the markets could handle the product that was being supplied given that there are a lot of cool rooms not operating. So it was probably restricted. You know, came back on-line six days in

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a limited capacity, improving over the following two or three weeks as cool rooms came back on line. You know, it's how long is a piece of string. We still - we only get one - a major cool room is only coming back on-line this weekend, so.

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I suppose it's in this context that as you know in your statement you canvass options about moving the site and that sort of thing and you point out difficulties with that and the advantages to the site that you're at. In terms of assessing whether it's worth moving the site at all one thing you'd weigh into the mix is just the level of disruption-----?-- Yes.

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-----that was occasioned by this event. It would seem that you were able to contain that to a relatively brief period?-- A major part of it. We were probably back at - to throw some numbers in, and these would have to be analysed, but probably back at 80 per cent capacity, say, within a month.

Okay. And short of moving the site you suggest, I think from paragraph 62 and onwards, a number of mitigation strategies that might be adopted. You refer to a flood study in paragraph 67?-- Yes.

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Can you just advise us where that's at?-- We've proposed that and that's gone in submissions to BCC and the State Government on the basis that we would be seeking their assistance and cooperation in progressing that because some of the issues, like building levy banks, obviously go well beyond what we would like to do. So that's sitting there as something we need to look at. The flood study including the assessment of options such as the building of levy banks, ways of mitigating - you know, from where we sit, there's probably three main options to be assessed: the do nothing option, which we don't really see as an option; the relocation option which certainly isn't feasible in the short term because of the size of the site and the infrastructure on it, but should be analysed in any event; and the other option is the mitigation option which could include a number of responses such as levy banks, such as raising the ground level of certain parts of the site where fill can be added, and raising the level of critical infrastructure, such as plant, electrical distribution boards, et cetera. So the real feasible options are obviously medium to long-term. If there's motivation and some basis for justification where we'd be looking for State Government to work with us, relocation; or the other options in terms of mitigating to be able to stay put.

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Just on relocation, short of permanent relocation, is there any advantage or any point in investigating the feasibility of a contingency arrangement for a short term - could the market operate from another location albeit only for a short term? Is that the sort-----?-- We did assess that in this current flood. We looked at five sites. If the flood level had been higher and the first floor offices of the second - of the selling floor, if they were inundated, it would probably be more feasible but, you know, those offices weren't flooded so

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a lot of the tenant wholesalers did still have their computer systems operating. So in terms of assessing the options of relocating on a temporary basis we could not find another site which gave us a more practical solution than what we did, which was get that selling floor area up and running because size-wise it was comparable to where else we looked, and in terms of the alternatives away from the site there were always other issues as well, such as access, traffic control power, or a lack of access to power, a lack of access to covered areas. So they all had some problems with them. So the option that we took deliberately was to focus all our efforts on reinstating the area which we did. It also meant that tenants were also focused as part of that solution and we didn't have divided workforces, some people trying to clean up at the same time as they were trying to operate from somewhere else. So it was the best solution in terms of getting the fastest response and getting up and running again as quickly as possible.

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Tell me those five potential short-term solutions, did they involve public land or private?-- It was both. You know, we got good cooperation in looking at a location at Brisbane airports, we looked at the car park area over at the ANZ stadium at Mt Gravatt, and then we looked at number of commercial options as well where we were also, and still getting, cooperation from the owners of those facilities to give us short-term access given our role in supplying fresh fruit and vegetables to the community. So all parties cooperated in making the sites available if we chose to go down that path, but at the end of the day we couldn't see how we'd get them working any better than the path we took.

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Is that something that had been discussed with State or Local Government before, the possibility of a short term-----?-- Only - when you say before, probably the discussions commenced on the Tuesday.

No, I meant was it any part of - has there ever been any contingency planning for a back-up-----?-- There's no fixed contingency plan because sites can change over time particularly, you know, if it's once every 30 years it's hard to have a site picked out and 30 years or a hundred years, whatever it might be, you know, it's hard to have a site picked out and retain the currency that as a contingency.

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The suggestion might be, though, that it should be part of Disaster Management Planning generally that the availability of an alternative site be reviewed on a continuing basis?-- Can be, but again I'd still say that unless, you know, the flood levels were sitting back up probably over that 11 metres AHD level, you know, at the '74 level or worse, so that we had much greater damage than what we're seeing now, the pathway we took gets the fastest response.

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No, I'm not - no-one is being critical of what you did. We're just looking to the future and perhaps for disasters other than floods which mightn't involve the same considerations. I'm just interested in the dialogue that you might have had

with governments about alternative short-term solutions if the market had to close for any particular reason. You obviously had some during this event?-- Nothing standing, no.

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No. All right. In your statement you - in paragraph 71 I think as one of the mitigating strategies talking about re-engineering Curzon Street; is that right?-- Correct, yes.

Is that something that you say you've written to the BCC seeking assistance on that. Is there any update on that?-- No.

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Likewise in paragraph 72 you talk about flood mitigation channels that might be investigated again. That's something you would be looking to work with the BCC on?-- Yeah, they created the channel and I think probably this is maybe something that's more broader than just how it relates to us. There's a lot of work done after '74 in creating mitigation channels and other flood mitigation strategies but, you know, if they're not properly maintained - we know for a fact that the ground level in that channel has probably been raised by 30 centimetres over time just by the, you know, reeds grow, reeds dry, they breakdown, soil washes down. So the effectiveness as a mitigation channel diminishes over time unless they're maintained.

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All right. All the questions I have, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr O'Donnell?

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MR O'DONNELL: Can you assist me with timing of when the water was on the land around the Brisbane Markets?-- The markets itself-----

I'm particularly interested in the water-----?-- -----or the land around?

-----that broke the banks of the river relative to Rocklea. Can you assist with timing of that?-- Very visibly - oh, well, see, you can't see the river from our site, but if you're talking about Oxley Creek and what is visible our site, throughout Tuesday the water was becoming more and more visible and in fact if you look out to the southern side of the Brisbane Markets site, it starts to look like a lake, massive amounts of water that back up through that area.

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And that came, you say, from Oxley Creek?-- Well, that's the creek that's adjacent. So if the river is backing up, it backs up Oxley Creek, then it spreads out onto that floodplain area.

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Can you assist when did water come over the banks of Oxley Creek?-- Well, it would have been - I haven't got an exact time, but, you know, Tuesday afternoon water was becoming very visible. Progressively throughout Tuesday night access to the site was - was cut off for most vehicles from about 3 a.m.

Wednesday morning, and for heavy vehicles one did get out at about 8 o'clock on the Wednesday morning, but that was it.

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I'm interested in how early the water was on the ground from Oxley Creek - onto the ground from Oxley Creek. If you look in paragraph 28 of your statement-----?-- Yep.

-----the second half of that sentence, "Many under low-lying roads and surrounding areas were closed off throughout the day" - "throughout the Tuesday because of local flooding." So did you see local flooding throughout that day, the Tuesday?-- There would have been, and I'm relying on what I have been advised because I wasn't in Brisbane on the Tuesday so I was monitoring it from - remotely from the Bureau of Meterology's site et cetera, but-----

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Pausing there, I'm not asking for hearsay. So you didn't see this yourself?-- That - I didn't see that, no.

You weren't there on the Tuesday?-- I was not there on the Tuesday. So the operations-----

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When did you get back to the Brisbane Markets area?-- Sorry?

When did you get repeat?-- On the - I got back into Brisbane on Thursday.

Oh, you weren't there until Thursday?-- We had an operations manager stay on site throughout the whole event who's provided the advice. We had staff there right through-----

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Sorry to cut you off. Take for example, paragraph 33-----?-- Yep.

-----you're not deposing to that of your own knowledge?-- Sorry?

You're not deposing to that of your own knowledge, something you saw, something you observed?-- That's direct advice provided to me by my operations manager who stayed on site throughout that entire period.

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I see. No further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

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MS BRIEN: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: Mr Young, I appear behalf of the Commonwealth. I just want to ask you some questions by way of clarification about the warnings that you had for the Rocklea Markets. As I understand it, the Rocklea Markets sit between the Jindalee bridge gauge and the Brisbane City gauge?-- Yes, and there's a gauge at the Oxley Creek mouth.

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On the Oxley Creek or at the mouth of Oxley Creek?-- The mouth of Oxley Creek as I understand it.

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And just to clarify the last answers that you gave, did the flooding of the markets come from the Oxley Creek or from the Brisbane River or both?-- The advice we were getting, and again I'm not a hydrologist and don't proclaim to be, but the advice we have been given from talking to hydrologists that we consult with, the likes of Cardno, they're saying that the water came up Oxley Creek from the Brisbane River.

Okay. The discussions that you had - or at least you were monitoring the Bureau site, were you?-- Yes.

20

And were you aware that from 4.16 p.m. on the 10th of January there was a listing in the flood warnings for Brisbane City?-- Yes.

That noted the significant flood mitigation of the Wivenhoe Dam which would lead to increases and rises in the Brisbane River, Monday and Tuesday?-- Yep.

And the detail given from as early as 4.16 on the 10th of January, but this continued with each warning, was an explanation about rises at the Brisbane City gauge and what that meant in terms of the usual peak flood level?-- Okay. But can you quantify then what they're projected levels were?

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Let's start with that early one on 4.16 p.m. on the 10th of January just as an example. "At the Brisbane City gauge, a river level of about 2.1 metres is expected with an afternoon high tide on Tuesday; about three metres is expected with a high tide on Wednesday causing moderate flooding", then in brackets it says, "(three metres at the Brisbane City gauge is about 1.5 metres higher than the highest tide of the year at this location)"?-- Yeah.

40

So that's a common statement, the levels may change, but that explanation frequently appears in those flood warnings around that time?-- Okay, yeah, but my point was - and I saw all that - it was really only later that day on the Tuesday that the projections that were given deteriorated dramatically. We went from seven metres at the Jindalee bridge to 14 metres when the projection at the City gauge went from two and a-half metres to four and a-half. So there was a dramatic deterioration in the situation that we were facing.

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On the Tuesday?-- Yeah.

just before I leave that first warning on the Monday
afternoon, there are specific river height locations given for
Jindalee bridge and the City gauge on each - with each of
those warnings, aren't there? Do you accept that?--
Projected levels, yeah.

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Then let's look at the Tuesday mornings. The 4 a.m. warning mentions seven metres at Jindalee?-- Mmm-hmm.

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Then at 9.30 a.m. there's a mention of at least nine metres with further rises. And at 3.24 p.m. on the Tuesday afternoon, there's a mention of at least 14.2 metres?-- I accept that all that and that's what I'm saying. It went from seven metres to 14 metres in a matter of six to eight hours.

Are you aware what the Bureau was responding to a significant change in the release strategy from Wivenhoe Dam at the time?-- No.

10

And that a leak from three to 4,000 cubic metres per second was notified on Tuesday afternoon at around 1.30 p.m. and that that prompted the Bureau to issue that new warning?-- I probably did hear something about it Tuesday afternoon but the issue being, from our perspective, it deteriorated dramatically, people had limited time to react. On top of everything else, you know, there was the competition for tilt trays, which became unavailable. There was competition for, you know, hiring tilt trays to move things like forklifts. So I accept the release strategy probably caught everyone out, I don't know. But, obviously, more time for people to respond is what's critical if assets have to be moved or protected in relation to any form of flooding.

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All right. Would you accept that it was useful for the Bureau to indicate in that 3.24 warning on the Tuesday that "river rises will continue into Thursday with levels higher than 1974 expected"?-- Yes.

30

Because that indicates to locals where that water is likely to come to?-- I agree and I acknowledged that when I said that's when the Premier came on the TV and said it and when it really became apparent to people that they were really facing a problem.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr Young.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, anything?

MR CALLAGHAN: May Mr Young be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Young, you're excused.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Colin Jensen.

COLIN DAVID JENSEN, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name and occupation, please?-- Colin David Jensen, Chief Executive Officer, Brisbane City Council.

Mr Jensen, relevantly for today's purposes, you have prepared two statements. You have actually supplied three to the Commission; is that correct?-- Three statements, correct.

10

Three statements, yes. The ones that are being tendered today are probably going to be referred to as the first and the third because the second concerned communication with the Flood Operations Centre; is that right?-- That's correct.

Which doesn't really doesn't touch upon the business of the Commission at the moment. So can I show you what we'll call the first statement. It is contained in a folder with a number of exhibits which are referred to in that statement. Is that right?-- That's correct.

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Can you just tell us the date on that statement, please?-- It, I suppose, has two dates. The actual statement-----

The date you signed it if it's there?-- -----is signed on the 25th of March and then a stat dec on the 7th of April.

All right. I tender that folder.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 288.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 288"

MR CALLAGHAN: And the other one, which is referred to sometimes as the third statement, that's in front of you now, is it?-- Yes, it is.

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And the date on that one?-- Dated the 19th of April.

And there are many other documents referred to in that statement which are contained in associated folders; is that right?-- That's correct.

Yes, I tender those.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 289.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 289"

MR CALLAGHAN: Now, Mr Jensen, you held the office or the title, if you like, of Local Disaster Coordinator; is that correct?-- Yes.

And that was for which - can you just describe the area for which you were responsible?-- Effectively, the local government area of the City of Brisbane.

In that capacity you were required to administer the disaster management arrangements according to the Disaster Management Plan?-- That's correct.

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And I might tender a copy of the plan.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 290.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 290"

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MR CALLAGHAN: Now, as you say, it's effectively the local government area of Brisbane which, as we know, encompasses a high degree of regional variation. Does the plan take account of regional variation within the local area? For example, just to perhaps clarify what I'm talking about, if you look at the plan master index V, (v), there is a Moreton Bay Island Evacuation Plan and Welfare Recovery Plan?-- I don't have a copy in front of me but I accept what you're saying.

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We can get a copy put in front of you. Just in the master index V?-- Yes.

There is part of the plan which appears to be specifically directed towards the Moreton Bay Islands?-- Correct.

Are there any comparable provisions within the plan of which you're aware directed to specific areas of Brisbane or the local government area?-- Not that I'm aware. My understanding is that it separates islands from mainland.

40

So there is no comparable provision, for example, directed to one area which you know we're interested which is the far western suburbs around Moggill, Karana Downs?-- Not that I'm aware, no.

You would have been aware though of the flood history relevant to that area that we're talking about, what has been described as the far western suburbs to which you gain access from Moggill Road?-- As much as I am of all parts of the city, yes.

50

Well, you were aware though that this was part of the city which was vulnerable to being cut off when water levels were raised?-- At least partially, yes, that's correct.

What do you mean "at least partially"? Partially aware or

partially cut off?-- I'm sorry, partially isolated. So Brisbane River would isolate first before Moggill Road would, for example.

1

Well, look, even as the January events unfolded, you were steadily receiving reports about road closures?-- Correct, across Brisbane City.

Across the city, that's right. And indeed - and the reports, I think, are all available and exhibited in your materials - from this area, from the Moggill, Karana Downs area, you even received reports about the fact that the SES out there were stranded and cut off from each other. You recall that?-- I do. We received reports into the coordination centre from all those agencies.

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That's right. What I'm suggesting is that for that area in particular, as the event unfolded there was a picture that was coming into focus which clearly revealed that that part of Brisbane was going to be isolated?-- Correct.

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And my question is this: when a situation is unfolding in a fairly obvious fashion, how proactive does someone in your position need to be? Does the plan require you to do anything proactively or do you wait for information from the area? How does it all work in that sort of situation?-- I suppose the important distinction is the plan. It is simply a plan in advance. During an event you're proactive and adapting. But across the city.

30

Yes?-- So across the city, yes.

Well, there's nothing in the plan then that compels any sort of attention to be given to anything in advance in this sort of situation that we're talking about? Where a situation is unfolding-----?-- Yes.

-----and you're getting information, as I say, which you accept was coming in on a steady basis, you weren't required by the plan to do anything to respond to that information?-- Not that I'm aware.

40

No. So was it the situation then and would it be the situation in the future that the onus would be entirely upon anyone who was concerned in that area to get in touch with you to notify you as to the problems which were going to flow from the impending isolation?-- No.

Well, what would you perceive someone in your position as being required to do in that sort of situation?-- Well, as you stated before, we received reports from external agencies as well as Brisbane City Council staff about emerging situations across the city.

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But what do you do about it? As I say, a picture was surely coming into focus of an area of Brisbane which was going to be isolated. Do you do anything about that?-- An assessment is made as to the extent of isolation, the expectation of

duration.

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Yes?-- And likely needs that may arise.

Did that happen in this case? Did you make an assessment as to the extent of isolation of Moggill, likely needs?-- To the - to the same extent as the entire city was assessed that way.

So it didn't receive any special treatment?-- The entire city received similar treatment. Some areas-----

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Well, what I'm-----?-- -----required more assessment than others.

Well, I'm suggesting to you that this was an area which did require more assessment than others. Are you telling me it didn't get it? Is that the effect of your evidence?-- No.

You are telling me it got the same treatment as everywhere else in the city and I'm asking did it get, actually, any more attention than anywhere else?-- I'm saying it received a similar treatment in terms of analysis. I did not mean to imply the same level, quantity of analysis.

20

Well, what level or what quantity of analysis did the unfolding situation in Moggill actually receive?-- I can't specifically attest to the analysis. I don't personally undertake that.

30

Who would do that?-- That's undertaken by whoever the officers are on duty at the time in the LDCC.

Is it any part your of function to oversee that?-- I oversee the entire thing as coordinator, yes.

Well, were you aware as to whether people were in fact performing that process of analysis?-- I believe it was being undertaken, yes, across the city.

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Yes, you keep saying "across the city" but you appreciate I'm interested in this situation because it's a situation which we can envisage all too easily occurring again, where a particular part of the city might be more affected more keenly by a certain event than other parts of the city, and you're telling me there are people under your supervision who are performing analysis?-- Yes.

Of this sort of situation?-- Yes.

50

Are they reporting to you?-- Yes.

Through what means?-- It depends on the nature of what they need to report in terms of urgency or priority.

Well, let's stick with this example and use this as a basis for seeing how the system works. What were the people who were - sorry. The people who were performing the analysis of

what was going on in Moggill, how were they reporting that to you?-- Both in situation reports, formally, in terms of three to four times a day leading up to the event, which is what you're talking about, in advance of the flood peak.

1

Yes, that's-----?-- Sorry.

Yes, okay, I understand the situation reports contain a lot of factual information. I'm interested in how that's being analysed and what's being done, if anything, about the conclusions to be drawn from those facts?-- Well, the forward planning group and the manager of that area is looking in advance to see what the consequence of that event would be and the-----

10

The forward - sorry?-- Sorry, which is part of the local disaster coordinating committee. That is in the submission.

Yes?-- In the statement. And the operations, field operations group is actually looking at what the immediate impact of that is.

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I might have cut you off before. The situation reports are one means of getting information. Were you going to tell me about something else?-- If there was an urgent situation arising of which - for the far western suburbs that you're referring to, my recollection is there wasn't an urgent, life-threatening, for example, situation with that isolation.

No?-- But merely discussions around communication to ensure that the broadcast of information was occurring.

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Well, it might be an opportune moment to explain or just give us an overview of the manner in which the Local Disaster Management Group actually functions, just in broad terms?-- The Local Disaster Management Group?

Yes. You're a member of-----?-- I'm the executive officer, effectively, of that.

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Yes?-- So it is chaired by the Lord Mayor as the head of the local government area. It has representation from external agencies as well as council officers. The instant controller of the time of them - at that time of the meeting from the LDCC would also be present. Any reports would be given as to progress or situations occurring. And any immediate response or direction requiring to be given - would be given verbally on the spot during that meeting. And those meetings occurred typically at about 10 a.m. each day through the event.

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As you say, the Lord Mayor is a member of that group?-- Chairman, yes.

As a matter of course, just in the context of that group and other aspects of disaster management, what role is there or what role do you see for elected representatives? We had Dr Flegg here this morning who was obviously expressing the concerns of his community to various people within the

disaster management framework. What do you perceive the role of elected officials to be during disasters and in disaster management?-- For local disaster management group, elected officials from two out of the three levels of government are present for those meetings. From the state - so you mentioned the state local member for those western suburbs. Usually, typically, the Deputy Premier Paul Lucas attended as the state's representative. On several occasions I recall it being the Treasurer Andrew Fraser attending.

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What about those who aren't actually at the group though, who aren't at the meeting, someone like Dr Flegg who was out at his electorate? What status do you see someone like him as having?-- In participating in the LDMG?

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Well, not in participating in the LDMG as such but in participating in the overall scheme of disaster management?-- I suppose I would see local councillors for Brisbane City Council having a higher level of involvement than I would State MLAs and, again, they perhaps greater than a Federal Member of Parliament just by nature of their brief, their elected brief.

20

We've heard from Councillor de Wit this morning who was in communication, I think, with the Local Disaster Coordination Centre. Is that correct?-- She and many, if not most, of the flood affected wards. The - sorry, I would say many of the councillors representing those wards would-----

That's what I was going to ask you?-- Would be in frequent contact either to the LDCC and occasionally directly with myself by phone or e-mail, depending on the urgency that they perceived their request to have.

30

But do they have any official status as such or they're just recognised as being an obvious point of - or conduit of information?-- They don't have a special title or anything in the LDCC, no.

No?-- But they are elected members for those wards. I'm not picking on the councillors, referencing the councillors. And they're important connections into the local community. So I suppose they would have more weight if they actually made a request of LDCC than someone that was unknown.

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We mentioned Councillor de Wit and you're aware of the group that she was bringing together in her constituency, a subgroup if you like, for the purposes of disaster management?-- A advisory reference group or some such, yes.

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Yes. Do you see a place for a group of that kind in the disaster management framework especially given that there is such diverse territory within the local area?-- We hadn't before this event. It's not referenced within the legislation as a - as a normal part of process if you like, but I think some interesting things have come out of this event which we should consider further. So, possibly.

Let's work with the possible and hypothetical and understand that you're not necessarily advancing this as something that has to happen, but how might something like that work? How would it fit in to the overall scheme?-- Personally, and this is not something that we've had opportunity to reflect on greatly yet, but personally, I would actually see it somewhat dependent upon the strength of, actually, the local representation in that respect. Councillor de Wit, for example, I think in this event performed very well in terms of actually being connected into her community, but it does require that sort of strong representation.

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Does that suggest that you wouldn't see it as something that was necessarily compulsory or something that would be legislated; it would depend upon the individuals involved in a given ward?-- I was probably only responding within the current legislation where it's not compulsory or mandated or required. If the legislation required it, then that's a different scenario which, of course, we would actually work to ensure that it worked.

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Yes. We are actually interested in your opinions?-- Okay.

I understand your position within the council, but this is an opportunity, I'd suggest to you, for your experience to be shared. If such a group was to be formed, ought it be the responsibility of the alderman of a given ward or should it be organised on a community basis? Do you have a view on that?-- As a personal view only obviously, as you've requested, I think it would actually depend on the strength of and type of those communities. Some councillors are very connected into their local communities and could be of great assistance. Other communities have very strong other church or service club, organisations that also would be equally beneficial to participate. So Brisbane is a very large city and is quite diverse in terms of the strengths and characteristics of different areas. And we would also have been to cognisant of we're talking a flood event from January but our - we plan for a disaster of any type.

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Any such plan would, one would imagine, necessarily have to involve the SES and I know you've said, I think in paragraph 5.2 of your first statement, or you give some explanation of the support given by the council to the SES but you've also made it clear that operational arrangements for the SES are not part of council's responsibility. In this sort of situation though, where we had an LDMG and a LDCC active, how are the resources of the SES actually deployed?-- The resources of the SES are always directly controlled by the SES controller, coordinator.

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Yes, who controls him, or her?-- They sit under the framework of the state in terms of emergency services.

Yes, I know where they sit in the - you know, as we stand here today I know who is in charge of them. But during a disaster, how are they deployed?-- So - and that continues during a disaster with the change that with an LDCC in operation within

Brisbane - can't test outside of Brisbane obviously - that we actually have those emergency management responders represented in the coordination centre. So they can be rather than directly tasked, because that's not quite legislatively correct, they actually provided the information on they respond and what's required of them. So, to be clear, they are sitting in the same room as us.

1

But you as an LDC or the Mayor as Chairman of the LDMG doesn't actually have authority over them?-- I suppose technically I believe that to be correct. However, in my experience with this last event there wasn't an issue of authority being required over the SES. So if I took it to be a suggestion rather than a directive, they still responded to the need.

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Well, there wasn't an issue of authority over the SES certainly in some areas. It seems like they were just going about their business without much direction or coordination at all. That's why I'm interested in how the disaster management framework does deploy them. But from what I understand you're telling me, it is not a case of the LDCC or the LDMG actually ever suggesting or directing them what they should be doing?-- I - the short answer would be, yes, that's correct. However, in an LDMG, for example, where the state and external agencies are present, if there was any lack of service by any of those agencies, that would be brought to immediate attention and would be resolved on the spot, was my experience.

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Yes. No, it is not is much conflict that concerns me as coordination?-- Well, to the matter of coordination, I suppose it would depend to which SES outfit, branch you were talking about.

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Does the LDMG do any training itself?-- The LDMG meets several times a year for no purpose if you like, for no disaster event, sorry, more accurately. Routinely meets. In that is part of the consideration as to what the preparedness is, status report of preparedness. And I suppose there's an element of awareness, situational awareness of changes to the way that any of the documentation, standard plans, governing legislation would be. In my time with council there hasn't been a exercise run with the LDMG but, in fairness, I joined just in time for the commencement of the summer storm season and I would not expect to run a training exercise during the season. I'd expect to run it offseason.

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Are you aware from the records or anecdotally even of any training of any LDMG anywhere?-- I'm not aware of that but that's also not something that I've actually explored.

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We understand that EMQ provides a lot of training, but is there any disaster training provided on a local level by local governments?-- To the former, the EMQ training, that's what I'm referring to at the LDMG standing meetings. In terms of training internally within council with LDCC, the answer is, yes, we do actually training exercises.

In Brisbane at least, what has been the nature of that sort of

training?-- It could range from awareness in terms of information, again about disaster plans changed, legislative requirements change, contacts have changed as to the District Disaster Coordinator changed last year, through to running an exercise with external agencies on a hypothetical case study.

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That would be a practical operation-----?-- A practical operation example and, yes, we have run those in recent - recent times. The only knowingness about it is actually when it would be held to book it into diaries.

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The question being that if subgroups of the kind perhaps modelled by Councillor de Wit ever became part of the framework, whether there'd be a method by which a local government could assist in that training of such a group?-- I would agree. I would extend that to if there is any change to the way that we operate in our standard procedures, we would look to incorporate that through training.

I'll move then to the question of warnings and information generally and I appreciate that Mr Morris will be giving evidence at a later stage in relation to the Flood Information Centre?-- Mmm-hmm.

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So there may be some questions which you prefer he would answer. But I'm sure you're aware of the controversy which is being repeated throughout this Inquiry, in submissions and in evidence, and that is the lack of correlation between the general warning that is given in relation to river heights at the city gauge or the Jindalee gauge, or something expressed in those terms, and the lack of ability to translate that to something meaningful for people who might have had a shop in Milton or a house at Goodna or something like that?--

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You're familiar with the-----?-- I'm familiar with the issue, 1
yes

Yes. And to the extent that the ability to translate that data or the responsibility for that, would you agree, that's a Council responsibility?-- I'd put it particularly as an LDMG/LDCC responsibility which in our case means, yes, Brisbane City Council.

Yes. So if you're aware of the controversy, do you have a view as to the manner in which it might be resolved?-- Sorry, 10
to the last question as well I would add it's probably not Brisbane City Council in isolation, can only be done with the State and indeed we've discussed that with them. For example - so if I can extent that, sorry. You may have to remind me the following question. For example, people react to different information based on their own knowledge. So for someone that surfs or fishes or boats, tide heights is actually an appropriate thing in the main. To someone who has a technical background, AHD measurements. So we actually have 20
to converse with the entire community and we need to find those mechanisms. We've adjusted it several times already in terms of the way we communicate that information over the last half decade. I think we'll have to keep doing that particularly as we get findings out of the various inquiries, our own included.

Well, can I suggest you don't need a finding to accept that there's a level of frustration within the community about the lack of ability to translate a prediction of a reading at the Port Office gauge to something meaningful where they live somewhere along the river?-- I understand your point. I 30
accept what you're saying. However, the City gauge is not - or Port Office gauge is not the only piece of information that was put out. There are also various announcements that Council put out which are quite general.

Yes, we will come to those?-- Sure, okay.

But this specifically is an issue which seems to be recurring and I'm interested in what the Council's response to it might be?-- Well, already we've started process in terms of the Joint Flood Task Force in terms of the work that they've done, that's internal with Brisbane City Council, in terms of actually reviewing how do people relate their house, their residence to flood heights, and we're already looking at reviewing the information that we have and how we present that. I----- 40

Right?-- I suggest it's probably as much a marketing communication expertise as rather than a hydraulics - hydrology. 50

Well, that's probability right?-- So we already have a process in place to adjust that but I don't know the outcome yet.

Okay. Just for our benefit, where is that process at, who's

doing it?-- So, for example, in - sorry, one of my submissions, submission 2 perhaps, on town planning exercises, we detail how we've actually adjusted and put in place a temporary local planning instrument with the State to actually communicate what rebuilding height should be. I think that's a big step forward for people to actually communicate what the January 11 flood level is which at least for a few years will be remembered. Secondly, we - sorry?

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No, I understand that. That's a slightly separate issue from the one we're talking about a moment ago which I understood you to say you were reviewing the way in which this was communicated, marketed if you like?-- Correct, and as part of that because - and, sorry, if you felt it was a digression - in communicating, for example, on the development assessment, the town planning side of things, is actually the process we're also jointly going through with about how to communicate what a flood event would look like compared to that.

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And my question is where is that process - who is doing that process and where is it at?-- We're undertaking the process within Council and using others from outside to advise us as well. In terms of where's it at, I think we'll actually before next storm season have put in place some revised measures which they will be - it hadn't been recommended to me yet, but I would like to have them in place for the next possible event.

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You understand our timetable I'm sure which is why I'm particularly interested in yours. You say before the next storm season. That would suggest that you'd have something set well this advance of that?-- My staff remind me frequently of the Commission's timetable and we're working to give you the information as quickly as possible. So, for example, the Flood Response Review Board, I believe will have the information to the Commission by the end of the month.

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Yeah, but on this issue?-- This issue, I'm sorry, I haven't completed the analysis, I'm not so sure, but I understand the Commission's need for the information and we will endeavour to get it to you.

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Before next wet season?-- Well, sorry, I'm understanding the Commission's need for the information in reporting and-----

Yeah, and you - no, I'm sorry, you just can't be more specific than that?-- No, not at this point-----

That's okay?-- -----but I'm happy to take that on notice and I'll see if I can actually provision the Commission a more rigorous timetable, but I'm just not aware of it off the top of my head.

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No, I understand, thank you. Can we turn then on the question of warnings to text messages, the issue of warnings by way of text, and again this might be something that I think, is it, Petroccitto?-- Yes.

Might be more-----?-- Another Council staff member, yes.

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-----equipped to answer, but is there any - sorry, for a start, we're talking for Council purposes about access to the Early Warning Network, you're familiar with that?-- Early Warning Network being a third party provider for us-----

Yes?-- -----for our two systems?

Yes?-- Yes.

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And the proposition that that might be used for warnings about floods. Is it used for - is one of the uses of that system for warning about floods?-- To be clear, there are two systems that Council have. One is actually more recent and is specifically and only about creek flooding events.

Mmm-hmm?-- We have that rolled out in four suburban catchments at this point in time, and we are looking to quickly roll that out even before this event to perhaps another half a dozen creek catchments. As a result of this flood, I'm sure that we will quickly look at seeing how we can also include the Brisbane River as part of that specific system.

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This is - sorry go on?-- The other one is a more general severe weather alert, which is usually what people are referring to when they talk about Council's SMS or text.

Both delivered by the same mechanism?-- Yes, both by the same provider.

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Yes?-- Both free services, Council pays the provider to do. The former, the severe weather alert system, is generally available to any Brisbane resident. The creek catchment one is for those in those particular flood hot spots.

And both were in operation in January?-- Correct, yes.

Was there anything to stop the system being used for alerts about the, for example, releases from Wivenhoe sending things to 1974 levels. We know that-----?-- Not sure of the second part.

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-----on the afternoon of the 11th, I think, that the Premier went on the television and said we can expect 1974 flood levels. I think the Lord Mayor was doing similar sorts of thing?-- Same thing.

Is there any reason why that couldn't have been - that such a warning could not have been distributed by way of SMS text message?-- No, technically we could write a specific message to give to the provider to distribute on our behalf. At the time of January 11 we would have around 20,000 subscribers to that network. As you have just said, given it was broadcast widely by the media, it wasn't utilised as being anymore effective.

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Well, the television was great if you had power but as you know a lot of people were starting to lose power around that time?-- I wasn't limiting my comment to television, but I acknowledge what you're saying. 1

Well, Internet is problematic without power as well?-- There's radio broadcast as well.

Sure?-- Printed media, but some suburbs isolated, people would have difficulty receiving communications at that point. 10

I mention the Internet, and it's the case, isn't it, that during this event the Council website crashed due to excess demand?-- The Council website crashed, colloquially, several times. We got it back up each time which is quite successful compared to many other agencies that crashed and didn't get back up at all.

The concern that might be expressed here is that whilst the excess demand can be understood because many thousands of people were affected by the flood, the floods weren't necessarily a threat to the whole of Brisbane for those who were at some elevation or some distance from the river there wasn't a huge need to access the Council website, whereas it is possible, I'd suggest to you, to imagine an event during which the whole of South-east Queensland might want information from the - from the Council quickly and might all want to get on the website at the one time. Is that something that's been taken on board for the purposes of future disaster planning?-- Absolutely already, and I'll explain. Ordinarily perhaps in a five-minute peak period we might get three to 5000 hits on a Council website so during some other event or peak demand for information. During the flood event of January we were getting 50 plus thousand hits in a five-minute period. To put that in context, as we ramped up the provision of Internet supply even during that week by going to additional external providers, by actually removing all unnecessary information from the Council website so it became flood only, not general inquiries from interested parties about Council activities, even the external providers were very surprised at the unprecedented levels of demand. We consequently, already through our own internal informations services area, are looking at, well, how would we actually ramp up that at quick notice in the future. 20 30 40

And to what level, because what I'm saying is this experience might have drawn our attention to the limitations of the service, but it could be-----?-- I totally understand your question. The level is being determined as to what's practical to have on tap, if you like, all the time versus how do you ramp it up in stages to 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, hundred thousand hits, but I take this opportunity to perhaps say that we are in doing that looking at where those hits came from because, indeed, international media attention was resulting in international ex-pats logging in to see actually what the impact was. So it's not just about supplying more, we are also considering how do we limit demand from those that may not need to know. 50

That can be filtered, can it?-- I'm not a technical expert, sorry.

And that's what you're looking at?-- That's the sort of thing we're looking at. Blocking those that are in an overseas country, for example.

All right?-- But we don't have the answers yet, we are working on it.

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Again is there any sort of timetable?-- I think we would be able to actually provide some information for the Commission on that. Indeed we already have actually ramped up in one respect for it. I'll come back with some information.

Okay. All right. Well, on the topic of information, I think it was suggested earlier this morning that somewhere like Moggill there was a need for an information centre as much as there was for an evacuation centre or a coordination centre, there was a need for an information centre for people to get to know what they needed to know. Is that part of any existing planning or contingency under the Local Disaster Management Plan, provision for information centre?-- It's my understanding it's not formally in there, but I think it's actually one of the areas of great interest to us in terms of - and I'd like your distinction that you're making between evacuation centres which are quite defined internationally and nationally by standards versus information and support centres which may be less formal. So it is something that we are working through at this time.

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Right. Well, we might as well move from there to the concept of evacuation centres. We understand the Council has a memorandum of understanding with the Red Cross-----?-- That's correct.

-----in that regard. And it would seem that that makes your job, I won't say easier, but clearer in this regard - or your responsibilities are quite clear under that memorandum as to who has to do what?-- It is very clear, and that's intent of any memorandum.

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Yeah?-- Yeah.

I'm asking this, I suppose, on behalf of other Councils because it does seem that, as I say, it makes things clear-cut for a Council as large and well-resourced as Brisbane, but what's involved in entering an MOU like that with the Red Cross? Was it an elaborate process or-----?-- Personally I don't have the information to say - to respond fully to that but in general terms there is actually - I'm sorry, I'll have to refer to the submissions to find the correct title of the document which is actually our own management plan, Evacuation Human Management Plan, which then the Red Cross document forms an adjunct to. I suppose the difference that I'd actually draw is perhaps that we already had a relationship with Red Cross, that the actually drafting of the MOU is not as

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difficult as if you were starting from scratch without an existing relationship and arrangement with them.

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I suppose what's required is fairly obvious, is a functional Red Cross administration that you can work with?-- That's correct, and the other point I would make is that regardless of how much documents you have preprepared you'd have to be able to have a relationship and work with the organisations and we do have that with the Red Cross.

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Is the document that you were referring to the Evacuation and Emergency Human Services Standard Operating Procedures-----?-- That's correct, thank you.

-----is that the one? Yes. I might tender a copy of that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 291.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 291"

COMMISSIONER: Can you give me the title again?

MR CALLAGHAN: Brisbane City Council Evacuation And Emergency Human Services Standard Operating Procedures.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

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WITNESS: Which I suppose I should note is actually part of the Disaster Management Plan.

MR CALLAGHAN: Yes?-- Sorry, if that makes it easier for the Commission.

I'll take you to a separate or a specific part of the document that I've handed to you. It's at - sorry, page 8 refers to the identification and - of shelters and to a register of shelters. Such a register is maintained, is it?-- Yes.

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And is it made publicly available?-- I'm not aware, sorry.

Is there any reason you can think of why it would not be made publicly available?-- Yes. Would you like me to elaborate?

Sure?-- We have - my understanding is we have something like 50 different centres currently on that register. At any point in time we would not actually activate all of them. We would make decisions as to the appropriateness indeed even just physical safety of a particular centre not just at the time of opening it, but in, you know, 72 hours and beyond time as to will it still be secure or will it itself be an evacuation problem. You know, my general response would be one of I think it's very important to clearly communicate where the evacuation centres that are open are as opposed to going - or having people aware of going to centres that potentially not

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only are not open, but in themselves could be at risk, so.

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And in that regard, I suppose, Brisbane is in a very different situation. If you have got 50 on the register, it's a bit different from a country town where there might only be two or three options?-- I quite imagine so.

Yes. During the floods, there were two formal evacuation centres, two or more, there was the RNA and QE2; is that right?-- QE2 by general name.

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Yes?-- That were opened. There were others prepared for opening.

All right?-- Indeed we'd actually completed planning for the 13,000 evacuees and we were working towards 16,000 evacuees, but we opened the two large ones.

Of course they weren't much help to people at Moggill or Bellbowrie or somewhere like that where we know some unofficial or unauthorised evacuation coordination, recovery, whatever you want to call them, centres sprung up. The question I suppose is how quickly can one be endorsed or authorised in a situation like this?-- I'd have to make the distinction between those that are on the register, one of the 50 or so, versus one that had been totally unplanned. By definition we would prefer one that was on the register, that's one that we've planned on how to logistically support, know that it's safe and secure, that we can get the services to it, et cetera. In terms of how quickly, I said that we were prepared for 13,000, thereabouts, in terms of opening further centres, we didn't have to. We were planning towards 16, that was done - 16,000 evacuees. That would have been done in the space of less than - between two and three days from go to woe.

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But was there one on the register anywhere in the far western suburb district that was isolated?-- I don't know the answer to that and the reason is because it wasn't actually an evacuation requirement. So the numbers of evacuees were quite low comparably. Isolation was the issue we were dealing with with those suburbs.

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That's right, but we're looking to the future. You don't know sitting there, and that's fair enough, you don't have the register of the 50 there?-- Not in front of me, no.

You don't know whether there was one there that had been authorised?-- No, I don't.

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But in the situation where there is an isolated area, what's involved if one does spring up spontaneously, what's involved in authorising it and giving it accreditation?-- I'd perhaps like to go back to your kind of first question there where you made a distinction between an evacuation centre and something which is support, information.

Yeah, no, I am talking hypothetically about an evacuation

centre?-- Evacuation where people need to shelter?

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Yep?-- Okay.

How, where one does spring up, is it possible for one to be authorised? Do they necessarily have to remain illegitimate?-- My response - my response is that, yes, if there was a need even though one was not on the register, if there was a necessity that we had to shelter people and provide the support services associated with the sheltering of people in a centre, then, yes, we would be able to do that.

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How? What would be involved?-- Sorry, yes, so it's quite hypothetical for me, I'm sorry, so I'm running through the process.

Sure?-- The main things would be in terms of actually provision of services. You mentioned the MOU with Red Cross, for example. Red-----

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Can I just stop you because I'm not sure - I'm not really asking what would be involved in providing them with services. We've had some evidence today of a situation which is not too hard to imagine happening in the future where a request is being made for assistance to a centre, requests being made to the State Disaster Management framework, or through that, and they're being told, "Well, you're not an official evacuation centre, you're not" - "you don't necessarily get the same sort of treatment as coming through the official framework." What could people in that situation do to become an official part of the State Disaster Management Plan at whatever level?-- Look, I'm not at all familiar. There will be no forms, there will be no, sort of, procedure on that that I'm aware of. So it's not a case of that, rather it is an assessment of need, which is where I was leading to on my previous answer, which is around how many people do you actually have that you actually need to shelter there.

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Okay?-- An assessment of the period of time.

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Let's run with the hypothetical and say, "Well, there's a need there"?-- And I'm saying that, therefore, I believe that actually that could be done relatively straightforwardly. Indeed, the unofficial evacuation centres throughout the City that did pop up where people naturally went, as you called it, to higher ground to a facility were temporarily supported until we could actually get them moved to the official evac centres. If there was a need to not move them but had to actually keep them due to lack of transport, isolation, my experience is that I believe that we would be able to support that appropriately. But the difficulty would be there would not be the services that you ordinarily would provide to a centre that had been preplanned.

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COMMISSIONER: One of the other questions may be insurance too. If you have a centre that's springs up that isn't on your books which is uninsured, can you do anything to help them? If it's a needed facility in the area, can you give

them some sort of retrospective authorisation or at least immediate authorisation?-- My official answer would be no, not really, that's not the way insurance works. However, I know that, for example, the 23,000 volunteers that we put on buses to respond on the weekend of the 15th, 16th, part of the reason that we actually registered those was such that they could get some limited cover under Council's insurance policies. So it is something that we're very mindful of to actually see how we can stretch existing arrangements. Obviously there's no time to phone an insurer and get new arrangements, but to use what we have in place we were mindful of being able to do that. I think the things that would come to mind about the risk assessment of insurance would be around what are those support services, there's Queensland Police Service there, Red Cross or some other counselling support and the like, because you are talking potentially large numbers of people in close proximity with each other.

Well, the alternative to insurance is indemnification, Council taking responsibility, is that a possibility?-- It's possible, it's not one that actually arose, so-----

You know it's not that hypothetical because at Bellbowrie people were sleeping in the local church's premises but it doesn't seem that they ever did get any recognition of the function of that centre, and what one would want to know is what happens next time?-- Yes. It's a question I haven't processed before. I suppose I've expanded also to what happens to people sheltering with strangers in local communities too, how they're protected, covered, indemnified as a home owner, but that's an interesting question, Commissioner. I'll have to think through how we could assist there. I suppose my analogy or example back to the volunteers was that we were willing to do that to actually provide some cover to those volunteers and I'm sure that we would also look at how to provide cover without being specific of what that could be to other centres, so.

MR CALLAGHAN: I have no further questions, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Now, I don't know how much we've got by way of cross-examination, but I think we might forge ahead, Mr O'Donnell.

MR O'DONNELL: Go ahead?

COMMISSIONER: Yes. How long do you think you'll be though?

MR O'DONNELL: Two minutes.

COMMISSIONER: Sure.

MR O'DONNELL: You were asked about the giving of information to Brisbane residents about the impending flood. One form of information was as to the expected height of the flood measured at the City gauge; do you recall that?-- Yes.

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And there was some questions about whether - sorry, the questions along the line, well, doesn't tell residents in particular localities very much. For example, somewhere in Rocklea doesn't mean much to them; someone in Fig Tree Pocket doesn't mean much to them. And you were asked about whether a different form of information can be given to residents. You said, "I thought that that was being reviewed by a study which was under way at the moment"?-- Yes, but I also responded with it's not the only measure that we use to communicate.

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All right. Is one problem there the different localities are at different levels?-- That explains the topography of the City, that's exactly the point that-----

All right. Someone at Rocklea is at a different height compared to someone at Fig Free Pocket or Bulimba or Milton and so on. So if you were to give more informative information to particular localities than just telling them an expected river height at the City gauge, what more informative information could you give to them?-- Speculating as to what we may to the future. We have to work out how feasible this is. It - at lower levels of flooding then we've just experienced, it is more possible to provide specific information. At the level of flood - as in property by property. We had the conversation around the Internet and whether it would be even available for people to access. Conceivably you could do with a development of systems. However the level of flood that we just had we don't actually even have accurate flood modelling information, is my knowledge, to be able to provide property-by-property flood. So I think it would actually have to be tiered response or a multi-part response.

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Right. Let's stick with the level of flooding we had in January this year. Could you provide different information to residents of Rocklea as distinct from Fig Tree Pocket for example? And if so, what form of information would that be?--

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Well, there is already some different information. For example, in general terms, a question earlier referred to the '74 flood level as being something which is memorable and at least partly understood by the Premier and Lord Mayor, media sort of statements. One of the measures, it's speculating because the analysis is on how practical and whether this actually works - it is one thing to say it works technically; it is another to say it works in a communication sense. But, for example, actually having things which referenced local landmarks, so something that the general public understand. Hotels or bridges that go under water or roads that go under water or something.

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Yes. Well, if you told someone in, say, Breakfast Creek that the Breakfast Creek Hotel would be under water, the floor would be under water, people could make an assessment in that area of whether their property was above or below that level. Is that what you mean?-- That's what I was saying. But as to the feasible - at different flood levels of putting that information out, we have to do some work to work out how would you do that technically, but that's what I was referring to.

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What about for other suburbs such as Rocklea that was mentioned this morning?-- My answer was generic across the city.

What form of information could you give residents in Rocklea?-- I suppose Rocklea Markets is a landmark that could be referred to, but I'm speculating as to what would be an effective communication method with Rocklea locals.

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So is the answer you're still struggling to come up with some more informative form of information?-- We are having to work through what will work. I said in an earlier answer for boaties, tide heights is a great thing to refer to in terms of compared to referring AHDs, which might be meaningless to them. It is that sort of effective communication and I personally believe we have to look beyond the technical answers to what is effective communication. So I'm - I keen for us to find some good answers to that.

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All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Apparently in Lismore they mark light poles and things with levels of-----?-- Yes.

-----outstanding floods, so that there has been suggestion and submissions to the Inquiry you could do something here with the '74 flood level and 2011. Is that feasible or?-- It's certainly feasible to do. There are - we have surveyed with Department of Environment and Resource Management, for example, relatively precisely where the flood actually was. As you imagine, that's not in itself straightforward after the event. We did as much as possible during the event. We are talking about the feasibility of flood markers as we generically refer to. There is some anecdotal sort of response that perhaps the resident that actually has the lamp pole outside their house with the flood marker saying that

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their house floods might perhaps remove the council property that devalues their home in the marketplace, if I expressed it that way. So we're kind of looking at, yes, a light pole or a bus stop sign or something like that that's - actually, a light pole is not necessarily a council asset, but assets that we have locally that are recognisable that people could go to. We have some sort of view that they might not last and perhaps that's why I was referring before to structures or landmarks that aren't quite as devaluing to people's homes or perceived to be.

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All right?-- But, yes, Commissioner that's exactly the sort of thing that we're having to work through what things will actually last into the future.

Thank you. Mr Dunning?

MR DUNNING: Your Honour, again, may I go at the end?

COMMISSIONER: You want to go last.

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MR DUNNING: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Brien?

MS BRIEN: I have no questions, thank you.

MR MacSPORRAN: I have nothing, thank you.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

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MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: It is you, Mr Dunning.

MR DUNNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Jensen, just a couple of questions for you. In relation to the functions discharged by the SES during the recent flood event, they were tasked, were they not, with certain jobs that you'd like them to do by the LDMG?-- Absolutely.

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As, indeed, many other organisations, volunteer and paid, were tasked by the LDMG?-- Not just volunteers, yes.

Including paid or the existing organisations. Our learned friend Mr Callaghan asked you a couple of questions that were directed to the coordination of the SES aspect of the response to the floods. Was that coordination via the tasking from the LDMG?-- Sorry, was the-----

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You were asked some questions about how the SES were coordinated during the flood event and was the manner in which they were coordinated, that is the services they had available, deployed by the task given to them by the LDMG?-- The LDMG and even more specifically within that the LDCC was quite aware of where the SES assets were, resources were at

and what they were doing because staff sitting in the centre actually relayed that. And indeed, they also received the tasks that we were mindful that SES could deliver best.

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So you or those who were reporting to you within the disaster management group were aware of what the SES were doing?-- Yes.

And were cooperating in tasking them to give effect to the most pressing needs at the time?-- Fully.

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Thank you. Now, the issue of predicted flood levels in Brisbane was a matter that was put to the council both before and after the flood event?-- Before, during, after, continuing, yes.

Is one of the limitations that, ultimately, it is a prediction and it can't be said with certainty precisely at what level the flood will peak?-- Yes. By definition, it is a model. Model relies on inputs, assumptions, the accuracy of the model itself and then interpretation of the results.

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Yes. In addition to the fact that it's a model and that it requires interpretation, it is also the case, isn't it, that it is dynamic in the sense that it is affected by events that are still unfolding at the time you make the prediction?-- That is correct.

And they may exacerbate the situation or they may improve it?-- Or they may improve it. And indeed, even since the model was last created or calibrated, things may have changed that are known.

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Is it presently possible to be able to predict in an event like the flood events we had in January in Brisbane, whilst the event is unfolding, whether a particular house will flood?-- Not currently. The level of analysis in real time at a fine grain would actually be quite significant. At a coarser grain, as in at street level, yes, we have some information as to what streets will flood at what sort of inputs, rainfall, et cetera.

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Thank you?-- I should hasten to add, I'm not the expert in the flood model, so.

Certainly. Mr Jensen, can I ask you, please, to have a look at this document for me and, Commissioner, I'll pass it up. It is a copy of submissions presently on the website but it is probably, for the present purposes, sufficient to give you a copy to follow the examination.

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COMMISSIONER: Could I just check with you, Mr Dunning, are you likely to be very much longer? I don't want to hurry you.

MR DUNNING: No, your Honour, I think about five minutes. Mr Jensen, I have passed to you a document that appears on the Commission website as a submission from Councillor Griffith, who you are aware is a Brisbane City Council Councillor?-- Yes.

You had an opportunity to read this submission previously?-- I glanced at this submission yesterday. I have not actually fully read it but I'm familiar with it.

The pages are numbered. Can I ask you to go page 3 or the page with the number "3" on the bottom, please, bottom right-hand. It is the second of the typed pages. Can I ask you, please, to go to the second-last paragraph on that page which starts, "I am aware"?-- Yes.

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You are familiar with that paragraph?-- Yes.

Thank you. And you're aware that it contained, that is Councillor Griffith's submission contained, allegations of a similar character elsewhere but that's probably the most severe of them?-- Yes.

Are you aware of that? Thank you. And you're aware that the essence of the complaint made by the councillor is that information was made available by the Brisbane City Council administration to Liberal and National Party councillors and candidates but not readily made available to Labor councillors or officers?-- Yes, I'm aware that's his statement.

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Now, can I just ask you a little bit about your own background. You in fact have spent your not only working life but professional life as an engineer in the employment of government instrumentalities in Queensland; correct?-- That's correct.

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You started at Main Roads under what would have been then the National Party government in 1987?-- Yes, it was.

Yes, and you continued in the Department of Main Roads under what became the Goss Labor government after 1989?-- That's correct.

And rose to managerial positions in there?-- Yes.

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You continued in the employment of the Main Roads during the Borbidge National Party/Liberal Party government between '96 and '98?-- Yes, there were some name changes of the organisation but, effectively, yes.

Effectively for that department. You, for a time, worked - sorry, you continued to work for the Queensland government after the election of the Beattie Labor government in 1998?-- That's correct.

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In the Department of Main Roads or the Queensland Transport as the case may be?-- Yes.

And for a time in the Department of Attorney-General?-- Justice and Attorney-General.

Justice and Attorney-General, yes. And in 2007 you were appointed by the then Labor government to the position of

Coordinator-General and Director-General of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning?-- That's correct.

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And last year you were employed by the Liberal/National Party Brisbane City Council administration as chief executive officer?-- That's correct.

You have spent your entire not only working life but professional life but as an apolitical public servant?-- Absolutely.

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Can I then please ask you to return to that paragraph in Councillor Griffith's submission where the assertion is made there, and indeed elsewhere, that a partisan approach was taken by the council towards Liberal and National Party councillors in their favour and against Labor councillors. Is there any truth in that?-- No.

Did you at any stage favour any councillor or any constituent based on the political persuasion of the city councillor?-- No, not at all. Indeed, often not aware.

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Particularly, can I ask you, can you tell the Commission whether at any stage did anybody among the councillors ask you to do so?-- No-one did.

And at any stage did you become aware of any council officer under you favouring any Brisbane resident over any other based on the political persuasion of their councillor?-- No, absolutely not.

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Thank you?-- And, indeed, I wouldn't accept that.

Had you been directed by anybody to prefer one area over another on that basis, what would have been your response?-- I would have intervened quietly and discreetly but not followed such a direction.

Thank you. If you had become aware that any council officer was doing so, what would have been your response?-- I would have quietly taken them aside and redirected their task.

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And so we may be clear, in the discharge of the council's functions during the flood event, on no occasion was the political disposition of the local councillor of any consequence to the response made by the administration?-- No consequence whatsoever.

Thank you. That's the evidence, thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Callaghan.

MR CALLAGHAN: Just finally, in the course of your evidence on a number of occasions you indicated that council is in the progress of reviewing things and assessing-----?-- Continual improvement, yes.

Yes. Just in terms of our terms of reference though, would it be difficult to get by the end of these hearings, which is the end of this month, a status report from you as to where you're at with various initiatives that are relevant to our terms of reference?-- Yes, I'm happy to do that, to make another submission with that on it.

Just so that we're not recommending things that you've already done?-- Sure, yeah, no happy to be of assistance.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. You're excused and we will adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

WITNESS EXCUSED

THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 4.46 P.M. TILL 10.00 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY