

Transcript of Proceedings

Issued subject to correction upon revision.

THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE C HOLMES, Commissioner

MR JAMES O'SULLIVAN AC, Deputy Commissioner

MR PHILLIP CUMMINS, Deputy Commissioner

MR P CALLAGHAN SC, Counsel Assisting

MS E WILSON, Counsel Assisting

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1950

COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No. 1) 2011

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

GOONDIWINDI

..DATE 03/05/2011

..DAY 13

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.15 A.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. The Queensland flood Commission of Inquiry is sitting today in Goondiwindi. The Goondiwindi District has a long history of coping with droughts and flooding rains. Goondiwindi is no stranger to flooding waters. Since records began in 1886, there have been 82 major flood peaks in Goondiwindi. In 1956 Goondiwindi experienced three major floods within six months, which prompted the building of levy banks. Since then, the levy bank system has protected the town and ensured the safety of the town's residents during flood events.

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In 2010 alone multiple flood peaks occurred in August, September and October before the January 2011 floods, which are the focus of this Inquiry. What sets the flood events of 2011 apart from those previous floods is the sheer volume of water that moved through the local water systems, levels that had not been seen before.

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In Goondiwindi this year the first major peak occurred on 9 January. Five days later, on 14 January, it peaked again at a record level of 10.64 metres. With the levy bank height at 11 metres, precautionary measures were taken before the peak. The local hospital and nursing home were evacuated. An evacuation centre was established at the show grounds. A temporary hospital was also established at the local airport.

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In other towns in the region, Inglewood experienced flooding on 6 January; Texas on the Dumaresq River experienced its worst flooding since 1956 on 12 January. The Disaster District Coordinator for this region is Inspector Greg Morrow, who is based in Warwick, and helped support the local disaster groups during the flood event. The Goondiwindi Regional Council area lies within the Warwick disaster district. This district also covered the Southern Downs Regional Council.

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The Commission will also hear about the flooding that occurred in the Southern Downs Council, which was formed by the amalgamation of Warwick and Stanthorpe Shires. The Southern Downs area covers two different river catchments, a fact which was reflected in the flood events which struck the area. Astride the Condamine River, Warwick first flooded on 27 December 2010, whilst Stanthorpe on Quart Pot Creek and part of the MacIntyre River system, remained relatively unharmed; however, on 10-11 January both towns in the entire district were affected by major flooding. Stanthorpe sewage treatment plan was inundated, and the water treatment plants of Kilarny, Pratten and Wallangarra experienced breakdowns due to isolating flood waters.

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This raises an important issue which has broader relevance to beyond this region; that is, the capability of regional councils to deal with dual events at the same time.

The first task for the Commission pursuant to the terms of reference is to provide an interim report due on 1 August 2011 on matters associated with flood preparedness to enable early recommendations to be implemented before next summer's wet season. To that end, we will examine any practical or Legislative changes that would contribute to a more effective response by government agencies.

A purpose of these hearings is to understand what worked well, what can be improved, and what didn't work, to assist in making recommendations so that this region and Queensland is better prepared for the next wet season and for seasons to come.

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Today we will call witnesses to raise and discuss issues relevant to the regions within the Warwick disaster district, which includes the Local Disaster Management Groups of both the Southern Downs Regional Council and Goondiwindi Regional Council. These include evacuation processes, the effectiveness of local disaster responses, and other concerns specific to the border regions. Some of these issues are particular to this region; others will have State-wide application.

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We will hear from Inspector Greg Morrow, the coordinator for the Warwick Disaster District area, which includes Goondiwindi. The district disaster coordinator of an area performs an important role in disaster management, and he will be asked to comment on the effectiveness of the current disaster management arrangements and communication exchanges between the local and State disaster groups. He will also give evidence about the circumstances on 13 January 2011 when an emergency evacuation plan with trigger points was activated in Goondiwindi.

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Penni Roberts, the chief executive officer of Kaloma Home for the Aged in Goondiwindi, will provide the Commission with her experiences in evacuating residents from the home as the height of the McIntyre River rose.

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We will also call the Deputy Mayor Rick Kearney, who also holds the position of Local Disaster Management Group chair. Councillor Kearney will be asked about the actions taken by the Local Disaster Management Group, LDMG, during the flood events in this area, including the decision to evacuate Goondiwindi on 13 January 2011.

Peter Stewart, the chief executive officer and local disaster coordinator of Goondiwindi Regional Council, will also be called to comment on the flooding across the region, the flood preparedness, and response of the Goondiwindi Regional Council and, importantly, the actions that are being made for the future.

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We will call the major of Goondiwindi Regional Council, Graeme Scheu, to comment on the overview of the flood event and the council's experience with emergency services in the border

regions. Amongst other matters, he will be asked to comment on the levy bank system that helped protect Goondiwindi and the evacuation plan that was activated on 13 January 2011 for Goondiwindi.

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We will also hear from Rod Ferguson, the chief executive officer and local disaster coordinator for the Southern Downs Regional Council, who will describe the effects of flooding in Warwick, Stanthorpe, and outlying areas. He will discuss issues unique to that local government area and the response to the different flood events. One of those issues that he raises is the discharge from Leslie Dam that resulted in flooding of the Cunningham Highway west of Warwick.

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We will also hear from Mr John Ryall. Mr Ryall was an interstate motorist during the flood events. He raises the issue of information available to interstate travellers about road conditions in Queensland during flood events.

Finally, I should say something about the dams in this region. SunWater operates three dams in this area: Leslie Dam near Warwick; Coolmunda Dam upstream of Inglewood; and Glenlyon Dam upstream of Texas. It must be noted that these dams are not like Wivenhoe Dam that is upstream of Brisbane. They do not have any flood mitigation role, so are kept as full as possible to provide water for drinking, irrigation, and industry for the local area. The manual which guides the operation of the gates and spillways of these dams allows no discretion. When water starts flowing in and puts the lake level above a certain height, the gates must be opened. The operator does not make strategic decisions about when to let water out and how much. The operator's communications and warnings processes may be dealt with on a State-wide basis later in the Commission's hearings.

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

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Madam Commissioner, may we now have a short adjournment before we call the first witness?

COMMISSIONER: All right. Before we do that though, I should have taken appearances, because they are not identical to Toowoomba. Mr Favell, you're appearing-----

MR FAVELL: Madam Commissioner, if the Commission pleases, I'm instructed by King & Co. My name is Favell, F-A-V-E-L-L, initials P J. I appear on behalf of the Goondiwindi Regional Council. I understand we have leave. That was communicated to us.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes. Ms McLeod.

MS McLEOD: I appear with Ms O'Gorman on behalf of the

Commonwealth.

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COMMISSIONER: And Mr Rolls.

MR ROLLS: I appear with my learned friend Ms Brasch for the State of Queensland.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Dollar.

MR DOLLAR: My name is Dollar, initials L N, counsel instructed by holding & Redlich, and I appear on behalf of SunWater.

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COMMISSIONER: That's all the appearances s? Thank you. We'll adjourn until you let me know when you're ready.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.25 A.M.

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WITNESS - JOHN RYALL, SWORN, IDENTIFIED AND ADOPTED HIS STATEMENT AS TRUE AND CORRECT.

MS WILSON: Now, you continued your journey and you went to Tenterfield and also went to the Tenterfield Information Centre?-- Yeah.

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And they were also not able to advise you about road conditions north of the New South Wales border?-- That's right.

Okay. But as it happened you got some information from a truckie there?-- That's right, yes. We just stopped at a park there for lunch and we saw a truckie that appeared to come from the northerly direction. He pulled up and we asked him if the road to Warwick was open and he said yes, it was - because the day before we'd heard that Warwick was an island and we were a bit uncertain as to whether we should try to go through Warwick or to head off east out through Lismore or Grafton, so we knew there had been flooding around in those areas, too.

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Now, as well as going to these information centres on your trip north, were you also trying to get information via the radio?-- Yes, we were. We tried a number of stations. Mostly the ABC. At least in Victoria they advertise themselves as being the emergency broadcaster, and all that we got from the ABC was that the test cricket - the Boxing Day test cricket from Melbourne, even their normal hourly news broadcasts were not being broadcast.

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Okay. Now, you made some submissions to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry which is contained in your statement?-- Yes.

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And you submit that consideration should be given to having coordinated current interstate road conditions information available at the regional information centres?-- Yes.

So what you are seeking is that this should be nationwide, that you should be able to find at any of these information centres what the road conditions are further along in the journey?-- Well, I would think so, yes. That would seem to be eminently sensible to me.

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You also say that the information should be available at night when these centres are closed, and this could be possibly done via regional radio or adequate road signage well in advance?-- Yes, yes. Actually, we tried the regional radios. You know, there is signs from place to place "tune to 88 FM", we tried that and all we got was very localised information about the

tourist attractions in the immediate area-----

And-----?-- -----and just the local advertising. There was nothing about road conditions at all.

And you also believe that there should be - there should be the usual hourly updates on emergency conditions broadcast on national radio even if this means interrupting test cricket broadcasts?-- Well, that's right.

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Okay?-- Yeah, I mean, they seem to think that what was happening in Melbourne was happening everywhere else, they were enjoying nice bright sunny weather.

Mr Ryall, I have got no further questions for you. There may be some other counsel here who may wish to ask you some questions. Thank you, Mr Ryall.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar, we might start with you.

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MR DOLLAR: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell.

MR FAVELL: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: It seems, Mr Ryall, that is the end of your questioning. Thank you very much for your time. We will end the connection now?-- Thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MR CALLAGHAN: Madam Commissioner, I call Inspector Gregory Morrow.

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GREGORY ALLEN MORROW, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Is your full name Gregory Allen Morrow?-- Yes, it is.

And you are an Inspector of Police?-- Yes.

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And you are the appointed district officer for the Warwick District?-- That's right.

You have held this position since 2006?-- That's right.

And you were also appointed the District Disaster Coordinator for the Warwick District Disaster Management Group?-- Yes.

How long have you had that position for?-- Since that time.

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The District Disaster Coordinator for the Warwick Disaster Management Group also covers the regions governed by the Southern Downs Regional Council and the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's right.

Now, you have made two statements in relation to the flooding events of 2010/2011. If I can show you these two documents, please? Now, the first statement is on the 7th of March 2011?-- That's right.

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And the second is on the 14th of April 2011?-- Yes.

Are they your statements?-- Yes, they are.

They are true and correct?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender those two statements.

COMMISSIONER: The statement of 7 March will be 219 and the statement of 14th of April will be 220.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 219"

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 220"

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MS WILSON: Now, if I can just take you to a matter that's not contained in your statement? Were you aware that there was some discharge from the Leslie Dam which resulted in the flooding of the Cunningham Highway west of Warwick?-- Yes, I am.

Now, are you aware of the relationship which the operators of the dam have with the DDC?-- Yes.

Okay. And can you tell us about what to your knowledge occurs about communication in relation to potential and possible discharges?-- When they decide to discharge water they contact me.

Okay?-- And during this event I had numerous contacts from SunWater. 10

And what would those contacts be about?-- About the release of water - the volume of water. I would ask questions about what the repercussions downstream would be and those sort of issues.

Now, why is it important for the DDC to have this information?-- I am only one part of a big cog. Local government's also involved. 20

Whose responsibility is it to involve the local government?-- My understanding it is SunWater's.

Did you advise the local government at all?-- Not on the first occasion, no.

On the second occasion?-- Well, there was a whole range of occasions. 30

Yes?-- Not every time, but most times I have relayed the information I have got.

Okay. Did you assume that SunWater would be contacting the Local Disaster Management Group?-- Yes, I was.

Now, it is important for that information to be known because that would affect road closures and to be able to give proper information to travellers on those roads?-- Yes, that's right. 40

Do you - have you had any consultation or communication with SunWater since this event in relation to communications?-- We have had - since that time we have had an DDMG meeting and SunWater attended but not in particular in relation to that, no.

Now, if I can take you to your first statement. Have you got your statements there?-- No. 50

I will get you a copy of that. We will give you the copies of the first and the second statement. If I can take you to page 9 of your first statement, please? Now, this is a recommendation or a suggestion that you make-----?-- Yes.

-----following your experiences of the flood events in Warwick, this recommendation, these particular two, where you say, "Due to the location of Warwick DDMG, a number of its

members are members of not only Warwick but also Toowoomba and Dalby DDMGs."?-- That's right.

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Now, what occurs then in times where DDMGs are activated in each of these areas, then these members are split?-- That's right.

And you can't be in three places at once?-- That's right.

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So you say to improve this situation, locally identified members from various government agencies should be able to step in?-- Have some sort of delegation, yes.

How do you see that work? Can you give us an example of one member from a government agency who could have a delegation to another - to another member at a local level?-- It is probably a little more complex than that because as well as that we have also then - say for fire or Queensland Health, within the district it is also split because my understanding is Goondiwindi comes under Toowoomba and Warwick comes under Ipswich. So you haven't even got that consistency at the local level, let alone further up.

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We will just pause there. What you are saying in your District Disaster Management Group, the area that you are looking at, that there are different areas and they have - from government agencies that are looked after by different LDMGs, is that the case?-- No, just their chain of command is different, different areas.

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So why would that affect you in your role at DDMC?-- If I have got something I have got to manage, say from a Queensland Health perspective, if I contact my member on the DDMG, which is the Director of Nursing from Warwick, she has really got no line of command for the Goondiwindi Hospital.

Right?-- Because she answers to Ipswich.

Right?-- And the lady here at Goondiwindi answers to Toowoomba, as far as I know.

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That means you have to make another call, do you?-- We manage it the best we can, yeah.

So how can this be resolved and make it more efficient?-- Unless there is some sort of understanding between hierarchy within the government departments to say if there is a disaster declared this person is the lead person for that agency maybe.

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In that area?-- In that area.

So, for example, in the area that you look at, which encompasses the Southern Downs Regional Council and the Goondiwindi Regional Council, for QFRS there needs to be one person that you talk to?-- Yeah.

Just one?-- Just one.

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Okay. Now, then, can I take you now to your second statement, and can I take you to page 4 of your second statement? If you look at the - "On the morning of the 12th of January 2011 I received instructions from Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart"-- That's right.

Okay. Now, that conversation was concerned to find out what an 11.5 metre peak at Goondiwindi would mean in relation to flooding of the levee bank?-- That's right.

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That was in the early morning, was it?-- I can't recall exactly when but it was in relatively early in the morning.

Were you aware why an 11.5 metre peak was being considered?-- Not really, no. All the predictions were only showing around the 11 metre mark.

And you actioned this by contacting Mr Kearney of the LDMG? He is the chair of the LDMG?-- That's right, yeah.

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The answer you got back would see that if it was 11.5, many properties would see over a metre of water through their houses?-- Basically, yeah.

And the 11.5 metre flood, any 11.5 metre flood is beyond the modelling of the council with all modelling stopped at 10.85 metres?-- Around that 10.85 mark, yeah.

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Okay. Which you say was the 1976 flood level?-- Yeah, I may be out slightly there with the height, but it is around that - it might be 10.7.

Okay. Now, council, you say, also indicated that they would need some 36 hour warning of the flood to initiate evacuation plans?-- Yeah.

Now, at this point in time, on the 12th of January, were you aware of what evacuation plan was in place that had triggers to say when it reaches this flood level, this will happen?-- No, I wasn't.

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Well, no you weren't aware of it or was there no plan?-- Well, I wasn't sure whether there was a plan or there wasn't a plan.

Did you make inquiries whether there was a plan?-- Not at that time, no.

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Okay. Now, we can go over the page to page 5 of your statement where at 8 o'clock on the 13th of January, and there is a State teleconference, and the issues were again raised surrounding the predicted flood height and the levee banks. What was the issue that was being raised at this point in time from the FDC level?-- Just the predicted 11 metres and the fact that the levee bank was 11 metres, so the potential of it going over the levee bank.

You contacted Mr Kearney?-- Yeah.

What was - why did you contact him?-- From that teleconference there was a list of questions I was asked that I couldn't answer.

Okay. Stop there. What were those list of questions?-- Basically, the answers to it is there. So there is a whole range of things about extra infrastructure built around the levee banks since 1996 flood, how that would affect the levee bank-----

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Mmm?-- -----had there been any repairs or maintenance done to the levee bank over that period.

Is it the case that those - the information that's provided on the first and second paragraph at page 5 are the answers to the questions that you were being-----?-- Basically, yes.

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Okay. Now, as your role of the DDC, you receive situation reports from the Goondiwindi LDMG?-- That's right.

And they are known as Sitreps?-- Yep.

Perhaps if we can have a look at some of these documents.

Madam Commissioner, these situation reports will be tendered through Mr Kearney who will be giving evidence later today.

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But if we can go through to one of these situation reports, which is the 2 p.m. on the 13th of January 2011. Thank you very much. Now, can you see that, inspector?-- Yep.

Okay. You certainly were aware of the contents of this situation report?-- At the time, yeah.

At the time. Can we just go down a bit to where we talk about the damage assessment overview? Now, you won't be able to read that so I will read that out to you. In fact I will probably be able to give you a copy of one. Okay, so this is 2.59 p.m. on 13 January. It says, "The Goondiwindi Levees are expected to protect the main portion of town up to an 11 metre gauge height at the Goondiwindi Bridge. The predicted 10.85 metres peak with possible further rises will exceed all recorded levels."?-- That's right.

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Down further it states that, "It is expected that within a short period of time the traffic route surrounding Goondiwindi will be impacted."?-- Yeah.

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So was it the case that at thereabouts, 2 p.m. on 13 January, that Goondiwindi was at risk of being isolated?-- Yes, for sure.

So is it the case that when we've got a situation arising in combination with predictions coming in, the situation arising

being that a town could be isolated, should that be a case that is when evacuation plans should be considered?-- Yes, I would agree. 1

Okay. Now, evacuation plans often have the trigger points; when it hits this level, that's when we all start stage 1 evacuation, that's when we will start stage 2 evacuation, and stage 3 evacuation. Now, there is voluntary evacuation, and that occurs of going around to the residents and saying, "Look, you know, floodwaters are coming. You should leave." And that can be elevated to the mandatory evacuation where you exercise your powers and you say, "You must leave."?-- Yeah. 10

So voluntary evacuation gives residents information-----?-- Yes.

-----and they can make decisions. At this point in time do you believe that the Goondiwindi residents should have got that information to say, "Look, you know, now is the time that we should leave."?-- From my understanding there were flyers given out and council workers were moving around the town telling people. 20

Okay. But - we will leave it at that point?-- I think the evacuation centre - if it wasn't open, it was almost open by that stage.

Now, at page 5 of your statement - if we can go back - can we go to the third paragraph on page 5 which discusses a teleconference that you attended with Graeme Sheu, the Goondiwindi Mayor, Rick Kearney and Peter Stewart?-- Yes. 30

Now, you say there that Deputy Commissioner Stewart asked numerous questions in relation to Goondiwindi evacuation planning and trigger points. You say there that, "Clear responses were not given by the members present from the Goondiwindi LDMG and Deputy Commissioner Stewart convened a separate teleconference, which included the three Goondiwindi members, the deputy and himself." What are you talking about when you are talking that clear responses were not given?-- Well, the Deputy Commissioner was asking questions in relation to trigger points, you know, at what stage was the evacuation plans in place, those sort of questions, and there weren't clear responses by the council as matter of fact. Personally I believe they had plans in place but that they weren't articulated well at that time. So the Deputy Commissioner called us aside away from the State teleconference and we had our own meeting to discuss those issues. He gave me some fairly clear instructions as to the development of an evacuation plan in conjunction with the LDMG to address those trigger points, which we did, and within a very short time we reconvened another teleconference with the Deputy, the Mayor, and the LDMG outlined their plan, which was accepted by him, and a short time later a document with those details came out for adoption. 40 50

Okay. Now, if I can take you then to this document, which is

the agreed Three-stage Evacuation Plan? Now, we will get you a hard copy because you won't be able to read that. Now, this is the - and this is dated the 13th of January at 6.30 p.m.-- That's right.

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So is this the product of the conversation that occurred between yourself and Deputy Commissioner Stewart and the members of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's right.

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And this is what the Deputy Commissioner was seeking; he wanted an evacuation plan with trigger points?-- That's right.

Now, can you recall just a short time ago I was asking you questions about the situation report of - at 2 p.m., earlier that day when we were talking about evacuation plans. When I was talking about that, it is this type of structure that I would like you now to refer to. Should that type of structure of stage 1, stage 2, stage 3 with trigger plans, should that have been developed earlier in the day?-- I'd say so, yes.

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Because it was the case, as you said, that evacuations had already started to begin in the sense of the showgrounds had been set up, there were - and there were media alerts as well?-- That's right.

Now, why is it important, Inspector, to have a document like this with stage 1, stage 2, stage 3 with the trigger points?-- I think it is just for clarity of communication, so everyone knows what those trigger points are so they know what to start doing at a particular point in time.

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Okay. So these - this plan that we've got here that occurred at 6.30 on 13 January, should these type of plans be included in the disaster management plans?-- I believe so, yes.

What happens when we've got these trigger points, though? For example, if we look at stage 2 is at the river height of 10.95 metres, and then you step in because you can use your powers under section 77 of the Disaster Management Act, which will order a mandatory evacuation. So we have got the trigger points. We're focussing on the heights of the flood level but what about if a day before you had received a prediction and the town was beginning to become isolated?-- I suppose you have to look at every case as it comes up. And, again, you have to look at what the predictions are and how high that prediction might be.

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Okay?-- So that would affect your planning.

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So is it the case that trigger points should also - are good to be able - to be able to say we're definite action - when it reaches 10.95 metres, mandatory evacuation will occur, but also does have to be considered of predictions of height?-- Yes, I think so.

And how do you see that predictions of height can be seen in a disaster management plan? What triggers?-- I suppose it all goes up to the lead-up. Depending how far ahead your predictions are, if you have plenty of time and your predictions are fairly definite, which most times they are from the bureau, I think we just act a bit earlier and start acting earlier.

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If I can take you back to your statement - page 6 of your statement. The levy banks held?-- Yes.

The levy banks kept Goondiwindi safe. The river got up to 10.64 in the early hours of the 14th. The levy banks can hold up to 11 metres, so the levy banks held. Goondiwindi was safe?-- Mmm.

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And was always going to be safe if we knew that outcome of what the peak would be. You say at page 6 that you believed that the Mayor was confident in the integrity of the levy bank he a sound knowledge of previous flooding events of the river and he knew that the levy bank was higher on the Queensland side of the river, forcing excess water to the south. The Mayor and others were open to my directions and advice in relation to the formulation of the evacuation plan and showed no resistance to the need for its urgent development. What we're bringing in here is local knowledge?-- Yes.

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And how does local knowledge, in your experience, fit in with the operation of a disaster management plan?-- It's an integral part of it, because people like Mr Scheu have been around here for a long time, they know what the river does. They have confidence in the levy bank because as the Major, he knows what maintenance and things like that have been done to the levy bank, plus he just knows the lay of the land, the same thing as shown up towards Texas in the floods there. The locals up there knew exactly what was going on. They knew how to react. So you've got to incorporate that local knowledge into the planning and into your decision-making processes.

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You say that they showed no resistance to the need to urgent development, but that's the point isn't it; there shouldn't be a need for urgent development?-- Probably so.

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In your experience of what occurred, how could this be better managed for the future?-- I think we're already on the way to doing that.

How do you say that?-- I've been to some of the LDGMG meetings here at Goondiwindi as well as the Southern Downs. Both councils are taking lessons learned from this experience, and they have already started actions to address some of the

shortfalls, and that's been ongoing since this event. It's not just one meeting. It's a constant review, and they are developing plans and updating their plans and monitoring them.

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Now can I take you back - I'll just pause there. The role of the DDC just doesn't stop, does it, after the flood events had passed?-- No, they still monitor.

You've got a continuing role that you play with assisting the LDMGs in development of future plans?-- That's right.

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If I can take you to page 1 of your statement, which is the second statement. This talks about your discussions with the Goondiwindi LDM chair, Mr Rick Kearney, in relation to a number of issues, but in particular to the necessity to evacuate the hospital and Kaloma Aged Care Facility. This conversation occurs on 13 January, so it appears it's happening at the same time as those previous discussions that we had taken-----?-- From memory it was late morning, lunch.

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Why were you raising this with Mr Kearney?-- I think he probably raised it with me more than me with him, because he knows the town better than I and the lying of the - where the different facilities are situated in the town.

Then you go through on page 2 about the - what occurred in relation to the evacuation of the hospital and the aged care facility?-- Yes.

Your point is that you state that there was some confusion that occurred in relation to the communications?-- Yeah, there was a lot of phone calls to and from. They asked the Queensland Ambulance Service, my representative on the DDMG, Bill Hunter, to make the arrangements for the necessary transfer of patients. There was in the early stages some confusion of actual numbers and where they would go to. I understand the aged care facility had a plan to send the people there to Crows Nest or Haden, down that way. But because of the situation in Toowoomba at that time, that was not possible, so they had to very quickly change their plans. And then with the actual transport, there was some confusion as to methods. Although with Kaloma Aged Care Home, it was - most of their people were going by road, and information from the Main Roads Department at that time was the road would probably be cut about six o'clock that afternoon. So we had to get the people on the bus and gone before then. We actually had police drive this road prior to make sure it was safe for them to do that, which it was.

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Your recommendation that you provide at page 3 that you believe that both the hospital and aged care facility need to identify a clear and early trigger point, and that is again looking back at what we talked about before about the necessity for trigger points?-- Yes.

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You said before that you believed the council had - knew what they were doing, but they just couldn't articulate it. Can you explain that?-- I think at the situation of the

teleconference with the deputy commissioner asking questions. I just don't think - I think they had it in their mind, but it wasn't written down somewhere they could just go straight to it and say this is what the plan is. I think they needed to have it more documented and a bit more structured.

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That's your recommendation, that you are suggesting for other facilities that may need to evacuate, you've got to know when to evacuate and when you should start a various stage process of evacuation?-- You've got to look at the predicted heights in the future too so it can give you as much lead time as you can.

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We talked before about the stages of evacuation, voluntary evacuation, and that's giving the information and residents being able to make decisions, and then the final level would be where you as DDC order a mandatory evacuation. Voluntary evacuation is what it is, that is, it's your decision to leave. Now, would it be the case, in terms of looking at the Kaloma Home For the Aged, would emergency services be willing to support the transport needs for the aged care residents in a voluntary evacuation when it is not raised to the level of mandatory evacuation?-- Again it would depend on what we were asked from the management of the Kaloma. Because I believe the management have the duty of care to the patients, so it would probably fall on that person to make those decisions on behalf of the people they care for.

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COMMISSIONER: What about the practical arrangements?-- I think the management of the centre should come up with their own plan and then with - if they see a need they can't fulfil all their needs at once, they can make then make a request to either the LDMG or to DDMG to get the extra resources for them like in this case, where we arranged the aircraft.

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MS WILSON: There would be no distinction from - I'll withdraw that. Obviously if it was a mandatory evacuation it would be prioritised and it would be actioned from the SDC?-- I would think so.

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And resources would be thrown at it quickly and efficiently to deal with that, and a voluntary evacuation, we do not have the same level of priority?-- No, that's right. But if the need was there as a voluntary, we could still assist with resources if they are available.

So when you say we still could assist with resources, who is that?-- The LDMG or the DDMG.

That would be able to provide assistance for transport for residents?-- Yes, as in this case we arranged ambulances and aircraft.

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Thank you, Inspector Morrow, they are all the questions I have.

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls.

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MS McLEOD: Shall I go last, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER: I suppose it depends on which angle you're taking. There are a few allegations. But yes, that's all right. What about Mr Dollar.

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MR DOLLAR: Inspector, you're aware that SunWater operates three dams within the Warwick District Disaster Management Area?-- Yes.

Leslie, Coolmunda and Glenlyon?-- Yes.

And you're aware that each of those dams is governed by a variety of documents, one of which is an emergency action plan?-- Yes.

20

And these emergency action plans are what is referred to commonly as a controlled document?-- Yes.

And one of holders of the emergency action plan control document is the district disaster coordinator in Warwick?-- Yes, I have a copy of those plans.

You have a copy of each of those plans?-- Yes, I do.

30

You'd agree that those plans are a formal plan that allows the District Disaster Management Group to understand the nature of those plans, including that those plans identify the emergency conditions which would endanger the integrity of the dam?-- Yes.

They describe procedures which are followed by the dam owner and operator in a emergency event?-- Yes.

Provision of these plans provides the District Disaster Management Group with detailed information on how and why the dams are operated during a flood event?-- That's right.

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You're also aware, are you, that each of the emergency action plans provides a list of SunWater personnel that can be contacted during a flood event?-- Yes.

And that this list of SunWater personnel includes the work number, the mobile phone number, an after hours contact number, and fax number for various people?-- Yes.

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And you're aware, are you, of the range of people from the CEO to the manager of assets, the flood operations engineers, and area operations managers and dam supervisors, that can be contacted through this list provided by SunWater?-- Yes, it's a very comprehensive contact list.

Are you aware of SunWaters's 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week

call centre that can be contacted during a flood event?-- Yes.

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And are you aware that SunWater operates a website through which information relating to the storage capacity of each of the dams can be contacted?-- Yes.

You'd agree, would you, that SunWater has made available numerous means and methods for information to be sourced from the District Disaster Management Group or Local Disaster Management Group during a flood event?-- Yes.

10

You had - you referred to some communication between SunWater and yourself throughout the flood event. That was contact initiated by SunWater?-- Yes, it was.

And that was regular contact?-- I wouldn't say regular, but they contacted me whenever they were releasing water or there was a change in the flow of water.

You were satisfied with the frequency of that information provided to you?-- Yes.

20

You did not express any concern during the event that it wasn't frequent enough or the information wasn't sufficient?-- No.

You've spoken about - in your evidence with council assisting - about some issues relating to the Cunningham Highway being cut, and you've spoken about that SunWater has contacted you throughout the event in relation to releases through the dam. You'd agree that the district disaster management framework and its interactions with local disaster management groups involved the District Disaster Management Group planning and coordinating the response to disasters such as a flood event?-- Yes.

30

And coordination and communication between particular government agencies?-- Yes.

And one of those agencies would be the Department of Main Roads?-- That's right.

40

And the framework of the disaster management legislation requires a Local Disaster Management Group to seek and receive information from a District Disaster Management Group, and the converse would apply as well?-- Yes.

Now, on 5 January, some two and a half hours before discharge is actually commenced from the Leslie Dam, were you contacted by a person from SunWater warning of the potential for discharges from Leslie Dam?-- I received numerous phone calls. I can't recall on exactly what day, but certainly I received phone calls quite regularly saying they were discharging water from the dam, yes.

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You would receive a warning that discharges would be about to occur?-- Yes.

And you're aware, aren't you, that during the event SunWater was requested to communicate directly with the Main Roads Department in relation to releases from the dam?-- Yes.

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And you're aware, are you, that SunWater did in fact make those communications as requested?-- As far as I'm aware they did, yes.

Numerous roads within the district that were cut by the floods?-- Yes.

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And not all of those roads are impacted by releases from the dams; that would be the case?-- Yes, that's true.

In those situations the District Disaster Management Group or the Local Disaster Management Group would generally coordinate and liaise with Main Roads about the safe closure of roads as that information came to hand?-- That's right. In conjunction with the LDMGs as well.

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It would be a combined effort between the LDMG and the District Disaster Management Group coordinating the safe closure of roads?-- Yes.

And that's because the District Disaster Management Group and the Local Disaster Management Group has lead accountability for communicating with government agencies such as the Main Roads Department?-- That's right.

Thank you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell, are you happy to-----

MR FAVELL: I am, thank you.

MR FAVELL: You made mention of predictions when you were being asked in your evidence-in-chief. What sort of predictions are you talking about?-- Predictions from Bureau of Meteorology as to the river heights.

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Was there such a prediction on this occasion?-- For Goondiwindi here?

Yes?-- Yes, we've sort of changed. It was - 10.8, I think, was one of them, then said it could go higher than that. So it wasn't a definite height.

I think at some stage you mentioned 11.5. Do you know where that came from?-- Yeah, that came from the deputy commissioner. I don't know what he put that height at, but he suggested that we should look at evacuation plans for that height. He wanted to know at that height what would the plan be. I don't think it came from any prediction.

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Sorry?-- I don't think it came from an actual prediction. Not that I'm aware of anyway.

The predictions that you are talking about are from Bureau of Meteorology Bureau of Meteorology?-- That's right.

You don't know that a prediction of 11.5 eventuated?-- No, I don't recall anything of that height other than the conversation with the deputy commissioner.

Are you aware of the modelling that the council had done in 1977 by Cardno?-- We did get-----

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2007, sorry, by Cardno?-- We did get some modelling maps sent to us, but I'm not sure what year they were produced in or anything like that.

But in any event, you raised the 11.5 figure with the mayor and his deputy and CEO?-- Yes.

Of Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- Yes.

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They placed a lot of significance on the advice that they got from the Cardno report. You are nodding?-- I assume so.

Did they not tell you?-- No, they just said that from their modelling, from what they had had.

They were very confident what the peak would be, and that was it would be below the levy level?-- Yes, they were confident the whole time, yes.

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Did they explain their confidence?-- Yes, they did.

What did they say?-- Because of the integrity of the levy bank, plus the fact that the levy bank on the southern side is lower, so the water would go to the south, away from the town.

And what about the level itself of the river? Did they make any mention of their confidence in that regard?-- Just that from their modelling, that to get to a certain height they would have to have twice the amount of water that was already there and predicted to come down to go up to that 11-metre mark.

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Do you know if they had an application of local knowledge, which you mentioned earlier, in making that assessment?-- I'm sure they did.

Are you aware of that local knowledge that they took into account?-- I know the Marcher has been here quite some years, and I know the deputy Mayor has as well. I'm sure they have confidence in their engineers who were there as part of the LDMG as well.

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Based on their considerations, they were confident there wasn't a prospect of going to what is now level stage of that management plan?-- Yes.

Level 2. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls.

MR ROLLS: Inspector, you were asked by counsel assisting whether or not you perceived that any improvements could have been made having regard to your experiences in the recent floods; do you recall those exchanges?-- Yes.

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You seemed to make reference to the relevant local authorities. Could I ask you to turn your mind to the district level. Are you able to assist in identifying whether any improvements could have been made at the district level in the manner in which the district group operated during the flood event?-- Well, because of the situation in Toowoomba and Dalby and those other areas, it is virtually impossible for me to form a DDMG group to meet, because some of my members are also in those other groups and it was physically impossible for them to attend Warwick and have meetings. So basically the DMG, in the role we had during these floods, is basically my XO and myself via telephone conversations with the people we needed to talk to. So the improvement would be to have the appropriate people on the ground, obviously, in Warwick.

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So that picks up the question and answer that counsel assisting put before in relation to some uniformity - or at least uniformity of districts, or, alternatively, designations of persons within their districts which could assist you in the work that you are undertaking as the DDC?-- Yes, that's right.

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Am I right in saying from your statement one of the areas of concern, that is, one of the areas you had to deal with, was the evacuation of the hospital and nursing home?-- Yes.

Do you have any concerns with respect to the way in which that was undertake?-- It probably took a little bit longer than what I had hoped. But then keeping in mind that we're in Goondiwindi trying to get to Inglewood and Warwick and to get aircraft resources as well as ambulances, it just seemed to take that little bit longer than what I would have anticipated.

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And would that have been remedied by you identifying trigger points? Would that have been remedied by moving earlier, or not?-- It could well have, yes.

As a result of that matter, were you aware that the health of no patient was in any way compromised?-- As far as I'm aware, no one's health was compromised. There was a hospital set up at the airport as well as a transition point to the aircraft.

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It was more a question of convenience rather than injury to health which was important?-- Yes.

Which is the essence of your criticism?-- Yes, that's right.

Now, did you have any issues or have to deal with any issues of reply to either townships or any properties within your district?-- No, not at DDMG level. The LDMGs managed that themselves quite successfully.

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That's not a matter that they concern you with unless they require assistance?-- Unless it's outside their realm of capability, then I would be involved. If they could resource it locally, they would to that. And they did that in this occasion.

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That's all the questions, I have thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Could I just clarify with you when you talk about the problem with your DDMG members being spread around other disaster areas, what is it that you want of them? Should they have identified - I'm just trying to-----?-- Identified understudies that reside locally so you've got better access to them.

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You just need to know who to call on if your main player is occupied elsewhere?-- As part of the DDMG we're in the process now of reassessing membership, and that may be able to iron some of those issues out.

Thank you.

MR ROLLS: Nothing arising.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks Inspector, you're excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I call Penni Roberts.

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PENNI ROBERTS, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Penni Louise Roberts?-- Yes.

Are you the Chief Executive Officer of the Kaloma Home for the Aged Care in Goondiwindi?-- I am.

Did you send a letter to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquire addressing issues that were raised with the evacuation of the Kaloma Home For the Aged?-- Yes.

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In the January 10, 2011 floods?-- Yes.

That letter is dated 20 April 2011?-- Yes.

This morning you signed a statement attaching this letter as an exhibit?-- Yes.

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Can I show you this document, please. That's the letter that you send to the Commission of Inquiry and also the statement just attaching that as an exhibit?-- That's right.

The material that you've covered in your letter is true and correct?-- Yes, it is.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 231.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 221"

MS WILSON: Since the flood events of this year, the Kaloma Home For the Aged has updated their emergency plan?-- It has.

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Can I show you this document, please. You've got it there in front of you. And is that - that's the emergency plan that now identifies triggers and when evacuations should occur?-- It does.

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 222.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 222"

MS WILSON: I apologise, that plan was attached to the statement. If I can take you to your letter that you sent. The first issue that you raise is the lack of identifiable

trigger events to commence the evacuation of patients. At the time you were of the understanding that the role of determining evacuation rested with the LDMG?-- Yes.

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And that the LDMG was to direct the Kaloma Aged Care about when to evacuate?-- That's right.

Since the flooding events you've been able to clarify the position with the LDMG?-- Yes.

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And can you tell us what that position now is?-- The LDMG have indicated that evacuation can either be voluntary or mandatory, so - and then in the first instance it isn't their responsibility.

And did they suggest to you that you in your emergency plan identify trigger points about when evacuation should occur?-- Yes, they did.

Can I now take you to the emergency plan that has been developed, and if I can take you to page 2 of that document. On page 2 that sets out the triggers?-- It does.

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And it's stage 1, stage 2, stage 3?-- Yes.

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Now, the first stage just deals with heavy local rain and rain upstream with a Bureau of Meteorology prediction of 9.6 metres?-- Or council closing the flood gates.

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At 9.6 metres. At stage 1, what occurs at stage 1 now?-- Stage 1 is where we get together our - Kaloma emergency committee gets together and undertakes the planning necessary to facilitate an evacuation. So, as indicated in here, you know, making sure that we've got our admission pages, you know, all the clinical information about the residents, identification of residents. I mean, it also includes protection of the facility but also contacting transport companies, contacting the ambulance, and so forth.

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Okay?-- It is quite comprehensive.

Stage 2 occurs when the rain event is stage 1 but there is continuing rain?-- Yes.

Okay. And stage 2, where does that - what does the Kaloma aged care home do when it reaches stage 2?-- It is really just consolidating what we've already done in stage 1 and getting ready to evacuate but not - you know, not evacuating.

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And you then talk about stage 3, and that is the trigger for stage 3 is the river height at 10.6 predicted with local upstream rain predicted on the Bureau of Meteorology site. No rain but river height of 11 predicted. What does that mean? 11 metres?-- 11 metres, yeah. I found it very - the LDMG, when we had the meeting with them, were helpful in terms of identifying triggers. I mean, as you know from our first plan we didn't have any trigger identified, but on the Monday we'd done a lot of work - all the stage 1 work we started doing, so we were very well prepared. I mean, my comment would be about triggers, as Inspector Morrow said, it is very much reliant on what's happening locally, but at least the triggers are there.

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What do you mean reliant on what's happening locally?-- Well, I mean, how much water is there, how much local rain has there been. We're very lucky in this time because there was no local water, so it wasn't raining as well. So, you know, if the river heights are coming up and how heavy is it raining, those sorts of things, I would imagine it would impact.

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Okay. So whilst we have the documented triggers, is it the case that Kaloma aged care may act earlier-----?-- Absolutely.

-----depending on the local conditions?-- That's right.

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What about acting later depending on local conditions?-- Well, no, because I think if you've got - at least if you have got those triggers there, that's your immediate start. So, I mean, it is better - I mean, from a risk management point of view you are going to start earlier and not later.

How long does it take from starting the planning preparation for the evacuation of the aged care facility to actually

evacuating the residents?-- It would have been 2 o'clock that we started evacuating, and by 20 to six all the equipment had gone and the residents were across Backwater Creek. I mean, had we not done any of that planning that would have been a very different story.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I just get the picture, what threatened your nursing home? What's the water-----?-- There is a water - probably a creek that's at the back, it is like a dam at the back. The water - it is in a very low spot but the aged care facility has been built, so it would be one of the very, I would suggest, places that would go under. On the modelling that's been done - or my discussions with the LDMG it would have been very high if it flooded.

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I have seen its name come up in an earlier report as a vulnerable place but I didn't have a clear picture in my mind what that was. I see, thanks.

MS WILSON: Now, also in the evacuation plan - the emergency plan that you have developed, you have also gone through and identified possible evacuation places?-- Yes.

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Where your residents could go to. And these locations are suitable for the needs of your residents?-- Yes.

And that also is an important list to have so at quick notice you know which places to go to?-- Mmm, yes.

And this list encompasses areas that if one area is cut off you can go to another area?-- They tend to - probably not. They tend to be very - well, with Crows Nest, I had identified that earlier in that it could have taken all 50 residents but on a proviso that we needed staffing and bedding-----

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Yes?-- -----and other resources. The other areas - some are local and the others are reliant on the highway being open to Warwick and Inglewood. So I would suggest further work needs to be done if we're looking elsewhere. You know, if you needed to take another path.

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Is that some work that you are going to undertake?-- Yes, it is.

Because if some areas are isolated where do we go then?-- The LDMG have indicated they are doing work, too, working with one of the representatives to identify other places.

Okay. And that brings me to the next point, which is number 3 in your letter, which talks about the need for appropriate arrangements for evacuated patients, those other health facilities. Some of your residents were evacuated to the Inglewood MacIntyre hall?-- Yes.

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That was not air conditioned or fly screened?-- No.

You have suggested to the LDMG that should the MacIntyre hall be used as an evacuation site in the future, perhaps the

council could consider air conditioning and flyscreening?--
That's right.

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Is that something you are working with the LDMG about or have you got a response to that?-- I have raised it really I - I mean, that's all I can do, is raise the matter, and they have indicated that as resources are available or maintenance is required, that that's something that they will - that they may consider.

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If I can take you to page 4 of your letter. On page 4 of your letter it lists some of the issues that you raised in relation to this flooding event. The first one is that "the LDMG has expressed bewilderment that beds and other resources were required to be transported to evacuation sites to care for residents. It appears their view is that these resources should be available from other agencies."?-- Mmm.

What other agencies are available?-- Well, what I thought - well, there aren't any. You have to rely on the facility that you are going to.

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Just step back. So if you are going to a facility?-- Yeah.

Give me an example?-- So, for example, the Akooramak, they were able to say that they had - it was three beds-----

Okay?-- -----that they were able to provide that we would have to bring the rest.

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Yes?-- So every facility that we contacted, I asked what resources were they able to provide.

Yes?-- And what did we need to bring. Consequently we had to send 35 beds to various sites. The majority obviously to the MacIntyre hall, but in the preceding days we'd organised food for a week. You know, clinical supplies, incontinent supplies, and they all went with the residents as well.

Now, have you been able to ascertain whose responsibility it is in relation to the moving of these resources?-- Sorry, I don't understand what you mean.

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Well, you talk about in paragraph 1, "It appears that the LDMG view is that these resources should be available from other agencies." Are the other agencies you are referring to-----?-- The other aged care facilities, where they go to evacuation sites is what I thought that meant.

The position now - what is your understanding of the position now?-- Unchanged.

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Unchanged. You have to bring your own?-- Yes.

Your beds if you are going to-----?-- That's right.

-----any facility that hasn't got enough?-- My view is that because we had the benefit of time to organise, I didn't think

it was acceptable for frail, elderly people to be nursed on mattresses on the floor. Hence, we organised transport, trucks and so they were - all the equipment went before the residents did.

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Okay. Now, also you talk about that aircraft had been promised and not delivered, or aircraft with greater capacity can be expected. Where did you get this indication from?-- From the LDMG. It was quite unexpected by anyone, from what I gathered, that we still have four residents waiting 12 hours later at the airport.

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The third point that you raise is the clarification of responsibility of the hospital staff in relation to patients at airport field hospital. Now, that is in relation to what roles you say that the hospital staff can give to the residents of Kaloma?-- There was misunderstanding at the airport. When our residents went by ambulance from Kaloma, I did send staff for emotional support and to help - what I - I had made an assumption that the staff at the field hospital would care for the residents. So I sent my staff to provide the support, as well as to emotional support so the residents would have familiar faces there. An issue came up where the staff there said that it wasn't their responsibility to care for - told my staff that it wasn't their responsibility to care for our residents and my point in raising that is that in an emergency, really it needs to be clarified because we're not going to be the only emergency area. But when it happens again, which it will one day, that we need some sort of clarification. In our emergency plan I have put down make sure that there are adequate numbers of qualified staff go just in case it can't be clarified.

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And also you refer to the request to retrieve Kaloma residents when the MacIntyre hall had been lost in the system, and the Kaloma residents had to stay a little bit longer in the MacIntyre hall, and this is the hall that was not air conditioned or flyscreened. What agency do you understand this request was put through?-- I can't actually recall who that was. It was done with the LDMG, and the residents did come back on the Monday. But it just - it was getting very concerning. We had two residents who were palliative care, plus a lot of residents who needed to come back and they were frail, so I was anxious to get them home as quickly as possible, but there were a lot of inquiries as to where that order had gone to. In the end it still wasn't found and the ambulances were issued by whoever was responsible.

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Now, at point 5, which is on the last page of your letter, you ask about "could clarity be given to voluntary evacuation, that the LDMG has made it clear that voluntary evacuations can be considered", and then you raise two issues: that is, "Would emergency services be willing to support the transport needs, given that there may be higher priorities elsewhere." This is in the event of a voluntary evacuation, that is Kaloma says, "No, we wish to evacuate." You are wanting to know what assistance you're going to get from government agencies to assist with that process?-- My concern there is that if it is

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likely that there may be other priorities - higher priorities elsewhere, do - you know, where do I get that assistance from to say, okay, we need - we need ambulance support for X number of residents, and I think inspector Morrow indicated earlier on that we would approach the LDMG or himself.

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And then that ties into the second point, that your view was then because of that concern that you needed to be directed to be evacuated from either the police or the LDMG?-- My point there is really about that everyone needs to keep in mind the effects of evacuation on the elderly, and that should we go prematurely, and - I suppose I am suggesting unnecessarily early - then, you know, the residents, whilst they all came home and they were - they really didn't cope well with the effects of evacuation. And, I mean, you know, they had to go, but I am just saying from an aged care point of view I would like to see that it be directed because then we know that the right information. We're not on the LDMG. The LDMG have the right information to say, okay, now is the time to go. Obviously that would need to be during daylight hours and not at night, and that's what happened.

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Now, you are not on the LDMG. Would that assist if you could have access to the LDMG to get that information?-- We did - the board had a delegation and I actually approached the LDMG about that very issue. I think as long as - we were a bit disappointed with the amount of communication that we didn't get and as long - and we have been reassured that the communication from the LDMG will be better next time. As long as we're kept in the picture, I'm - I think from an aged care facility point of view we would be happy with that.

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

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod, do you have any questions?

MS McLEOD: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

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MR DOLLAR: No, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Bit of a toss up, but Mr Favell?

MR FAVELL: No, thank you.

MR ROLLS: No questions, Commissioner.

MS WILSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. May Ms Roberts be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Ms Roberts.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call William Rick Kearney.

WILLIAM PATRICK KEARNEY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name William Rick Kearney?-- No, William Patrick. I am known as Rick.

And you are a councillor of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's correct.

And you are the chair of the Local Disaster Management Group?-- I am, yes.

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

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Can you have a look at this document, please? This is a two-page document?-- That's correct.

Do you swear that the contents of that document is true and correct?-- I do.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 222.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 222"

MS WILSON: Now, there is some other documents that I wished to tender. The Goondiwindi Regional Council has done up a timeline of key events?-- That's correct.

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If I can show you this document. That is the document that has been done up by the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's correct, yes.

And that sets out the events as it occurred in Goondiwindi during the relevant time?-- That's right, yeah.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 223.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 223"

MS WILSON: Now, the Local Disaster Management Group had some debriefing meetings?-- We have, yes.

And there was notes made at these meetings?-- Yes.

Can I show you three of these notes, please? And these notes, the debrief notes I am showing you, are on 13 January 2011?-- Yes.

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One at 10.50 a.m.?-- Yes.

One at 5.20 p.m. and one at 6.26 p.m.?-- Yes.

They are the three?-- Correct.

Debriefing notes?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: They will collectively be Exhibit 224.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 224"

MS WILSON: Now, there was some information requested in relation to the response to an 11.5 metre flood height. Do you recall that?-- Yes.

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And some information was provided by the Goondiwindi Regional Council to address the issues of what would occur at 11.5 metre flood height?-- Yes.

Can I show you this document, please? Now, that's a document that was prepared by the Goondiwindi Regional Council to address the issues that could be - that could occur at an 11.5 metre flood height?-- That is correct, yes.

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I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 225.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 225"

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MS WILSON: Now, you heard the evidence by Inspector Morrow about the agreed three-stage evacuation plan by the Goondiwindi Regional Council, timed at 6.30 p.m. on 13 January 2011?-- Yes, I did.

That was a three-stage process?-- That's correct.

Can I show you this document, please? That is the document that was prepared at that time?-- That is correct, yeah.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 226.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 226"

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MS WILSON: Now, situation reports are done by the Goondiwindi Regional Council Local Disaster Management Group to the District Disaster Coordinator?-- That is correct.

And I am going to show you some documents of the situation reports that were completed by you, because that's your responsibility?-- That's my responsibility, yes.

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The reports I am going to show you span the time-frame between the 11th of January 2011 to the 18th of January 2011. There is a number of documents there?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 227.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 227"

MS WILSON: The Goondiwindi Regional Council had a flood Response Checklist for Goondiwindi local area?-- Yes.

Now, when was this checklist written? I will show you the document?-- Yes, thank you.

40

It might assist you?-- Do you want the date-----

No, that checklist was in action before the flood events?-- That's correct, yes.

Okay. Madam Commissioner, I tender that document which is regarded as the Goondiwindi Flood Response Checklist.

COMMISSIONER: 228.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 228"

MS WILSON: Now, after the flood events of January 2011 the Goondiwindi Regional Council Local District Management Group had some debrief meetings?-- Yes.

1

And there were minutes that were made of those meetings?-- That's correct.

And the purpose of that was to go through and look at what occurred?-- That is correct, yes.

10

Can I show you this document? Now, that is the debrief meeting minutes?-- That is correct, yes.

And they are dated the 31st of January 2011?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 229.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 229"

MS WILSON: From that debrief meeting there was an action plan devised by the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- There was, yes.

Can I show you this document, please? And that looks at matters raised and about how they are going to be actioned?-- That is correct, yes, who is responsible for actioning each of those items.

30

Okay. And, Madam Commissioner, I tender the Goondiwindi Regional Council debrief action plan.

COMMISSIONER: 230.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 230"

MS WILSON: Now, you have heard some matters - some questions raised in relation to the Goondiwindi Environs Flood Investigation by Cardno Lawson & Treloar. That was a report that was conducted prior to the flood events?-- That's correct. 2007, I believe.

50

Okay. Can I show you this document?-- Yes.

Was that a document that the Goondiwindi Regional Council relied on during the flood events?-- That is correct, yes.

Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 231.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 231"

MS WILSON: Now, the Goondiwindi Regional Council had a Disaster Management Plan?-- Yes.

10

With a draft evacuation subplan?-- That is correct.

Can I show you this document? That is the Goondiwindi Regional Council Disaster Management Plan?-- That is correct, yes.

Now, included in that document, is there the draft evacuation subplan?-- For an evacuation subplan, yes.

20

Was that in draft at the time?-- It is still in draft.

Still in draft?-- Yes.

Still a work in progress?-- It is.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 232.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 232"

MS WILSON: Now, after these flood events, the Goondiwindi Regional Council wrote to the Bureau of Meteorology?-- Yes.

And can I show you this document, which is the 22nd of February 2011?-- Yes.

40

In that document you were trying to learn from what occurred - well, using what you'd learnt from the flood event of Goondiwindi and corresponding with the Bureau of Meteorology to get further information and to get a system that you could work forward?-- That's correct, yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

50

COMMISSIONER: 233.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 233"

MS WILSON: Finally, the local emergency services, there was a local emergency service meeting at Inglewood?-- Yes.

1

Now, how did that work in relation to the Goondiwindi Regional Council about the meetings that were occurring at Inglewood? Were they meetings that got together local emergency services in that area and reported back to the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- They report back through the branch manager in Inglewood, yes.

10

Yes. And did that work well, having local people on the ground in Inglewood who were reporting back the local conditions?-- Yes.

There was a delay there?-- Well, they have only - they have only been set up for a very short period of time.

Yes?-- So, therefore, we probably haven't had sufficient time to examine how it will function.

20

Okay. What is their function?-- They are the local people in the area that will be able to provide us with additional information that we may require to make decisions on.

And how did that work during these flood events?-- Inglewood wasn't affected to the extent that it required the LDMG to be activated for that area but they did provide sufficient information to assist us, yes.

Can I show you the document of minutes of a local emergency services meeting in Inglewood?-- Yes.

30

You have seen that document before?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 234.

40

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 234"

MS WILSON: Mr Kearney, if we can go to the 13th of January 2011?-- Yes.

Now, Inspector Morrow had been in contact with you in relation to what would occur to Goondiwindi on an 11.5 metre flood?-- Yes, yes.

50

And we looked at that document that we just tendered previously and that was the Goondiwindi Regional Council's response to that, setting out the effect on Goondiwindi if an 11.5 metre flood eventuated?-- Yes.

Now, that occurred on the 12th of January?-- Yes.

On the 13th of January, Inspector Morrow contacted you again in relation to levee banks and possible flooding. And you heard the evidence of Inspector Morrow that he'd given this morning about that. He asked you certain questions and your answers to that?-- Yes.

1

Now - and the basis of the questions were about the status of the levee banks?-- Yes.

And you said that they had been regularly inspected and maintained since 1996?-- And well before that, yes, but yes.

10

Is there any significance of 1996?-- That was a high - our last high recorded flooding event.

And the levee banks had been raised by .5 of a metre and extended to the west of the township?-- That's correct, yes.

How much protection does the town get from the levee banks?-- Had the levee bank not been constructed since - 1957 was when they were constructed, the town would have been inundated with water numerous times.

20

With the levee banks as they are now-----?-- Yes.

-----and the height of them, what areas of the town are still vulnerable?-- To the north - to the north-east, the area we refer to as Glenoak Estate - that's on the Brigalow Creek.

Right?-- That area does not have a levee bank around it. It will flood. But the town itself, as the centre of town and the environs and the residents, no, they are very well protected by the levee bank.

30

So you talked about this housing estate. That's a new housing estate?-- No, it has been there for some time. It is large acreage estate. It is built on the floodplain to the north of us, north-east.

When you talked about flooding would occur there, what level of flooding would occur there?-- Normally - it doesn't inundate the houses. The houses are all raised. They are built up on pads - on earth pads. The water - they are completely surrounded by water. No, we haven't had any that have been inundated.

40

Any small breach of the levee, that could be managed locally, is that the case?-- That is correct.

What about severe breaches?-- Severe breaches would be dealt with the same way. We have sufficient resources available to us and the manpower to remediate any breaches in the levee bank.

50

What would you regard as a severe breach?-- If you took out 50 metres of levy bank, it would be severe. 1

Took out 50 metres in distance?-- Yes.

So 50 metres of the town not having a levy bank?-- If it was to breach in an area, 50 metres we would still handle that.

How would you manage that?-- With our heavy equipment, the facilities, all the resources to patch that, that wouldn't be a problem. 10

Is it the case that you advised Inspector Morrow for the river height to go above 10.7 metres and reach the 11-metre mark, twice the water volume would be needed in the river for this to occur?-- That was the information provided to me by the Bureau of Meteorology, yes.

If I can take you to the debrief note on 13 January 2011, 10.50 a.m. We'll get you a copy of that. Was this meeting after your discussion with Inspector Morrow on the 13th?-- I can't recall. No. No, we were - no. 20

In discussion all day?-- Constantly, yes.

The meeting commenced at 10.50. Several issues are raised here. There was a phone call from the Bureau of Meteorology, Peter Bradley, which I think is Peter Baddiley?-- Baddiley, yes. 30

The prediction remained at 10.7 metres?-- Yes.

Suggested there will be an extended peak for approximately 24 to 38 hours?-- That's correct.

It was acknowledged that this flood event had produced a record flow?-- That's correct.

Is there any significance of that to you? Did that affect the integrity of the levy banks?-- No. 40

There was some concern expressed relating to the saturation of the heavy banks and the duration of the event?-- That's correct?--

Can you tell me what that concern was?-- We had had a number of high flow events through the system during the past few months, and on each high flow event you would get saturation into the levy bank. It's something that we have to be conscious of and aware of and monitor. So that was the concerns around the saturation level. 50

And the next page you see, "Suggests seek advice on saturation levy bank and duration of event with Dave Burgess." Did you get any advice?-- Yes.

What was the advice?-- That we just continue to monitor the event and keep our teams on the levy bank monitoring.

It says there underneath - on page 1 "Queensland Police Commissioner". It wasn't the case that you spoke to the Queensland Police Commission. Is that the Queensland Police Service?-- We never spoke with the Police Commissioner, no.

It seems to be there's concern coming from the Queensland Police, could we put it to that?-- Yes.

That an evacuation plan is in place should it become necessary. Concerns have also been expressed relating to the integrity of levy banks?-- Yes. 10

When referring to that an evacuation is in place should it become necessary, is that talking about the evacuation plan that we have seen previously been tendered, that is, an evacuation with trigger points?-- Yes.

Is that what was being sought at 10.50 a.m.?-- Yes. 20

This also talks about evacuation planning for the Kaloma Hospital, that the advised levels given by BOM, discuss any concerns that they may have, and discuss whether or not action should be taken at this point?-- Yes.

And was that when the decision was that you contacted these facilities and advised them evacuation should occur?-- We had discussions with them, yes, about evacuation. The evacuation - there was no direction given about evacuation at that stage. 30

If you look over the page it says, "Evacuation planning, Kaloma Hospital - do we move the high risk patients in high risk areas at this time point in time? How long would it take to evacuation if necessary? Suggest meeting with the staff"?-- That's correct.

Did that occur?-- Yes.

We've heard the evidence of Penni Roberts about the evacuation that eventuated on that day?-- Yes. 40

Can I then take you to the situation report from the Goondiwindi Local Disaster Management Group at 2 p.m., which I'll give you a copy of. I apologise. Can we actually now go to the Local Disaster Management Group minutes for the meeting at 12.45 on 13 January. This will come up on the screen, but you won't be able to see it, so we'll get this document. This document addresses various issues. The Bureau of Meteorology update is that the Bureau of Meteorology suggests issue warning for 10.85 metres?-- Yes. 50

The questions arising from the change of circumstances now, is that in terms of change of circumstances in relation to an elevated peak height?-- Yes.

The questions that you were asking is should we factor in local knowledge, that is, historical information?-- Yes.

So how is that going to occur in relation to you've got a peak height 10.85 metres. What are you going to do with this local knowledge?-- The peak height of 10.85, from memory with the Bureau, again they weren't - I considered that they weren't confident in that height as being a possible height. Factoring in the knowledge that we had from our - from the local sources that were contacting us upstream giving us information, we still considered that 10 - to get a peak of 10.85 was extremely unlikely.

1

And if you go down to the last point under that, "questions", "As the peak gets closer will the BOM readings become more accurate? The Bureau of Meteorology indicated yes, that would be the case"?-- That is correct. That's why I was saying that they weren't confident in that 10.85 as an accurate reading.

10

So you were using historical information, that is, that you had never received a peak of 10.85, to not be confident in the Bureau of Meteorology peak?-- Only in the peak, yes.

20

The questions also arising is, "How long do we wait before making decisions and update communication with community"?-- Yes.

What was the answer to that?-- From memory, I can't recall that.

"And at what time does voluntary evacuation become mandatory evacuation?" Was that something you were seeking some information on; when do these trigger points go from voluntary to mandatory?-- Yes.

30

EMQ were at that meeting?-- Yes.

And they gave some advice?-- Yes.

And their advice was the Bureau of Meteorology are fairly accurate?-- Yes.

And if possibility that the increase may occur, then community needs to start making necessary precautions?-- That's correct.

40

Better to carry out potential evacuations during daylight hours rather than during the middle of the night, when the water is peaking?-- That's correct yes.

It looks like their ultimate advice is that there's a hard decision to be made. Be aware if this is the information that is provided, then really have to act on it appropriately. Best to err on the side of caution?-- That's correct.

50

What was their advice about best to err on the side of caution? What were they wanting to you do?-- Considering all the information that we had at hand, and if we had come to a decision that an evacuation could be required, it's better to make that decision earlier rather than later.

And from this meeting, did you decide - could you have - from

this meeting, no decision was made to step into a staged process like we've got at 6.30, that is, a staged evacuation plan?-- No, we had started. We had advised Kaloma. Katie Jefford from Queensland Health, she is a member of the Local Disaster Management Group, she was present. So the hospital was aware of what we were thinking. From my understanding-----

1

MS McLEOD: I'm just having trouble hearing.

10

WITNESS: Sorry. From my understanding, the mayor - or the LDMG, we were preparing media releases. Media releases actually were going out quite frequently from the mayor himself.

MS WILSON: So what was the LDMG thinking at eleven o'clock - sorry, at 12.45, one o'clock?-- Probably that, you know, always keep in mind that evacuation of high risk people - should always bear that in mind with all our decisions.

20

You heard Inspector Morrow give evidence this morning when he talk about the - that the LDMG, he thinks you did have a plan, but it was not articulated?-- Yes.

So can you - did you have a plan? Did you have a plan like what was developed at 6.30 p.m., which is that staged process of trigger points?-- Probably not including the trigger point. The evacuation plan itself, yes.

Because there's some parts of the evacuation plan that had started in the sense of the show grounds had been opened up as an evacuation centre?-- That's correct.

30

You were working with Kaloma Aged Care facility and the hospital?-- That's correct, yes.

An emergency field hospital was set up out at the airport?-- That's correct.

But you hadn't got to the point of the trigger point?-- No.

40

Were you considering a plan for the trigger points? When were the trigger points going to come into play with you?-- Again working on the information that we had from BOM, working on the Cardno Report on the river heights, the modelling that we had at hand, and placing a lot of - lot of emphasis on that information, a trigger point probably wasn't a key factor for us at that stage.

Did it become a key factor?-- We did put some heights in this as trigger points.

50

Sorry, when you say, "we put some heights into it as trigger points", when was this? At a later date?-- At that later time, yes.

But that was under the direction of the deputy commissioner?-- The deputy commissioner did want trigger points put in there,

yes.

1

So what do you think are the work of trigger points?-- Really, they are - each event has to be interested on its own merit. As Penni from Kaloma highlighted, the location of their facility is in a very, very low area. Had we had internal raining and internal flooding, Kaloma may have been evacuated well before it was. So if you had a trigger point in there for a river height, it may have been irrelevant to the evacuation of Kaloma.

10

How do you take into account the isolation that the community can be suffering if roads are cut off and then when to evacuate?-- Goondiwindi is isolated many, many times during the wet season. It's not a special occurrence to be isolated here. All our roads get cut from local rain itself without a river flood. It's nothing new to be isolated in Goondiwindi.

So trigger points in relation to evacuation does not need to take into consideration the isolation of Goondiwindi?-- Evacuation of high care patients, the community - you know, the at risk people, probably. But as far as the general evacuation of Goondiwindi, it's something that you have to determinate at a particular time knowing the circumstances you're dealing with.

20

And would it benefit to have any documentation about when this should occur?-- Again that is very hard because, as I referred to before, Goondiwindi is isolated many, many times throughout the year. Do you evacuate when you are going to become isolated? I don't think so.

30

What about taking into account predictions?-- Accurate predictions - if you get a prediction that works - if there was a prediction that the town was going to flood, yes.

And what about the prediction - let's look at the January 13 event. The predictions that you had got was 10.86?-- 85. 10.85, yes.

40

Did it exceed that at all?-- The predictions?

Yes?-- They said that it could go higher, but they weren't prepared to say.

Did you have any particularised number about how much higher it could go?-- No, I had no thought of it going that high.

No, let's just look at the information that you were being provided from the Bureau of Meteorology?-- Yes.

50

Could go higher?-- They said yes, it could go higher.

Could go higher over in excess of 11 metres?-- To my knowledge, they never - they never mentioned higher than 11 metres.

I'm just wanting to appreciate what - the information that you

got?-- 10.85 and possibly higher.

1

Then can we go to the meeting that you heard Inspector Morrow talk about that occurred around about five o'clock with the deputy commissioner?-- Yes.

He gave you instructions that he wanted an action plan - an evacuation plan with triggers?-- Yes.

And that was done?-- That was done.

10

The evacuation with triggers plan with triggers was - we've got a document that statements around about - at 6.30?-- Yes.

Do you think that evacuation plan with triggers was necessary?-- The State wanted a trigger evacuation plan with triggers. They got it.

Do you think that was necessary for Goondiwindi for you to do that?-- No.

20

Why is that?-- Because there was no evidence from all our reliable sources, the Bureau of Meteorology, there was no evidence that there was sufficient water in the whole of the system to ever get to that height.

What about taking the view and erring on the side of caution?-- That still was erring on the side of caution. They could not tell us that there was sufficient water to ever get to that level.

30

The evacuation plan with triggers, do you think that is an important document to have at some stage?-- Yes, I do, Yes.

When would you have done up the evacuation plan with triggers?-- When they could give us the information for us to make a decision that we were going to receive the amount of water that was required through the system that would require an evacuation.

40

Is that a number, or is that a number that is - I don't know. In terms of 11 metres-----?-- At 11 metres the levy banks will overtop.

So it's a number somewhere between 10.86 and 11?-- Yeah. On the higher side-----

I'm just wanting to know-----?-- Yes.

50

Are you looking for a number, or are you looking for a prediction?-- I'm looking for a prediction.

And that is associated with a number?-- It has to be. It has to be over 11 metres.

So in your mind when - what number does it have to exceed before you get into devising an evacuation plan with triggers

like that was done at 6.30 that night?-- I don't know I can answer that.

1

And at that point on that day did you have a number in your mind?-- Yes, we had a number that it was going to reach 10.7 metres and that it could not exceed that.

But we looked at that 12.5 - the 12.45 LDMG meeting where Bureau of Meteorology suggested issue warning for 10.85?-- Yes. We spoke with the Bureau. As I said, they weren't confident in that figure. It was a figure that they put out, and from talking with them at the time, I was still quite confident in our prediction of 10.7.

10

Now, we've heard evidence from Ms Roberts from Kaloma Aged Care. You've heard evidence of the issues she's raised. Kaloma is not included on the LDMG. Would that assist, do you think?-- They are an advisory group on the LDMG. They are not on the executive of the LDMG, no.

20

Would it assist having them in those meetings leading up to that decision to-----?-- For a flood event, yes, they would be included.

And is that being actioned?-- Yes.

Could I go to your debrief meeting on 31 January. This occurred, obviously, after the floods, and it was to look at what occurred and what can be done?-- Yes.

30

If I can give you this document. If I can take you to page 4?-- Yes.

That's headed up "EMQ, SES Bob Bundy"?-- Yes.

The feedback there was acknowledge the availability of EMQ staff during the event was limited due to various other emergency response operations underway within Queensland?-- That's correct.

40

What did you want from EMQ that you couldn't get?-- We required a representative from EMQ in the LDMG.

You require a representative from EMQ attending your LDMG meetings?-- That's correct.

Did you have any involvement from EMQ in relation to the LDMG meeting?-- We did. They - I spoke with Mr Bundy and put my concerns to him that we did need a representative from EMQ, and they flew a chap down, a retired staff member from EMQ from Toowoomba.

50

Did that assist?-- He was present during all our meetings.

Did that assist?-- I would have preferred to have had a serving member from EMQ present.

Why is it important, do you say, to have an EMQ member at

these meetings?-- For guidance and assistance.

1

And what guidance and assistance does the EMQ give you?-- They have very good experience in dealing with emergencies. They can give you a source of information that you may require in your decision-making.

Can you just particularise that? What sorts of information?-- Accessing resources, helicopters, experienced - they have good experience with establishing evacuation centres and the likes.

10

Then under there is the resupply guidelines. "It was noted that the interpretation of the resupply guidelines by various agencies appear to be loose. The document will be reviewed by EMQ and feedback updates will be provided ed to stakeholders as when available"?-- Yes.

What to you mean about the guidelines appear to be loose?-- Very, very open ended. It's your own interpretation how you utilise the resupply.

20

And how does that affect your disaster management?-- Mainly in the recovery phase for resupply in this event. That's probably-----

I see that's been actioned - communicate to find protocols - sorry. "Clarify and define protocols", I took that as being to look - relook at the guidelines?-- The guidelines, yes.

What do you want? What do you want done in relation to the guidelines?-- Probably clear direction as to what the LDMG can do within the resupply guidelines, to what extent they can operate.

30

The flood boat operators - the EMQ acknowledged there was limited availability of suitably qualified flood boat operators within your local region?-- Yes.

The flood boat operators, are they coming from SES?-- Yes.

40

And that there is a limited number in your area?-- There were at the time, yes.

50

Did that hamper the response by the LDMG to flood events?--
No, we sourced flood boat operators from Warwick and
Inglewood.

In there you say that the issue will be addressed in the near
future. How is this issue going to be addressed?-- It has
been addressed. They have had a flood boat course conducted
in Goondiwindi in March with 14 other - 14 SES members have
been qualified as flood boat operators in the district.

10

Okay. It also talks about the - acknowledge that the 132 500
SES emergency number experienced technical difficulties and a
review is underway to address that problem?-- That was
overloading of the system, yes.

Do you know how that problem is seeking to be addressed?--
No, I don't.

20

Now, can I take you to the LDMG action plan, which is the
project list, which I think came out of this meeting and
various tasks were allocated to be actioned?-- That's
correct, yes.

Can you have a look at this document, please? If I could just
take you to a couple - first of all, these tasks are being
actioned?-- Yes.

30

Presently?-- Yes.

And will the Goondiwindi Regional Council be able to give to
the Commission an update in the near future about where they
are at in relation to these tasks?-- Yes, I am sure we can.

If I can take you to a couple of these? If I can take you to
page 3?-- Just bear with me for a moment.

Sure?-- The pages aren't numbered.

40

Yes?-- I think I am on page 3.

Now, the second bottom entry is "Update DMP" - which is the
Disaster Management Plan?-- Yes.

"To incorporate LECG role"-----?-- Yes.

-----"responsibilities"?-- Yes.

50

"Consider establishing separate LECG at Texas"?-- That's
correct, yes.

We spoke before about Inglewood?-- Yes.

Is that what you are talking about an LECG?-- That's correct,
yes.

How - looking at the disaster management group for the Goondiwindi Regional Council, how does the Goondiwindi Regional Council envisage that the LECGs will work?-- We have established the one in Texas now, so we have two operating.

1

Inglewood, Texas?-- Inglewood and Texas are both operating. They will meet themselves as an organisation, as a group and they put the local knowledge that's required for a flood, a fire, whatever, they have the ability to be able to provide us then, as the LDMG, with the extra information that we may require.

10

And how often would you have contact with the - these groups during a flood event like what you have just experienced? How often would you have contact with them?-- Oh, the branch manager in Inglewood is on the Inglewood LECG. We have our communities staff members who lives in Texas, he is on the Texas one, and we would provide information through those people if we want to get some information to them, or if they have information they want to get back to us, that will come through. As far as how often that would happen, I couldn't say.

20

Okay. Now, if I could take you to the next page? 1, 2, 3, 4 - 5 up from the bottom it talks about the boundary alignment. "Follow up alignment of boundaries for LDMG, QPS, QFRS, FAS, Health", et cetera?-- Yes.

What issue are you addressing in relation to that?-- As Inspector Morrow mentioned, some of the boundaries of Queensland Health, QFRS don't align with the district boundaries and they don't align with the Local Disaster Management Group boundaries. For instance, the policeman in Texas, he comes under the Senior Sergeant In Stanthorpe who is under - and then for a disaster event, Stanthorpe is part of Southern Downs. So we felt that it would be far better if the police in Texas came under the Goondiwindi Senior Sergeant for a reference.

30

Yes. And have you set this out about what the Goondiwindi LDMG would be seeking?-- Yes, we have.

40

And who have you set that out to?-- I know that Inspector Morrow has already addressed the police issue.

Yes?-- The QFRS, again Inglewood comes under the area inspector in Goondiwindi, whereas Texas comes under Warwick. We have made the request that they all come under the area officer for Goondiwindi and that's still a work in progress, that one.

50

And the last matter that I wish to take you to in this plan is the second bottom entry, which is "Training SES volunteers, establish defined roles and responsibilities and prepare target specific training for SES volunteers."?-- Yes.

Can you tell me what that issue addresses?-- A lot of the training for the SES - I think some of their prerequisites for

doing some of the training specific for - take flood boat operators, required them to have experience or have accreditation for ladders for working at heights. If you have people who want to be a flood boat operator and are concerned about climbing ladders to climb on top of houses, why should they have to have that as a prerequisite to doing flood boat training. That was our concern there.

1

And is any of this being addressed?-- Yes, yeah.

10

Can you tell me the outcome?-- Not specifically. We have raised that with Bob Bundy from EMQ and they are taking that on board. So hopefully that will be addressed by EMQ.

And the last document that I wish to take you is the letter that was written by - from the Goondiwindi Regional Council to the Bureau of Meteorology on the 22nd of February 2011. If we look at this document, this is a document that you wrote to the Bureau of Meteorology addressing some of the issues that arose during flood events?-- Yes.

20

The first one is the data sharing in relation to flood modelling, and that is you providing them with information about the local conditions?-- Yes.

And what was experienced in Goondiwindi?-- Yes.

And that is to be able to assist them, the Bureau of Meteorology, in providing information back to the Goondiwindi Regional Council in the next flood event?-- Yes.

30

You are hoping - you are hoping by doing that, are you, that the bureau takes into account local conditions?-- Yes.

Okay. The river height bulletins; your suggestion there is for the LDMG to request the bureau to consider increasing the frequency of issuing river height bulletins during an emergency event?-- That's correct, yes.

Why is that?-- If you take, for instance, at the eastern end of our boundary at Riverton, a property there, Top Rock Station, they can be flooded within six hours.

40

Yes?-- And if the bureau doesn't put out their warnings for six hours, the flood can have already affected that area.

So you are just wanting it to be done in six hours?-- Earlier than six hours. Send them out more frequently-----

Okay?-- -----in areas like that.

50

And then the next matter that you address is river monitoring station and you are wanting to seek advice from the bureau regarding the process of establishing additional river monitoring stations. "Council understands they may be required to source funds for the establishment of the station but requires the advice from the bureau about the ongoing maintenance and best possible locations."?-- That's correct,

yes.

1

Have you heard any response back on how that's going to be addressed?-- No.

Okay. In terms of also - the last point that you raise is the regional dams, water release notifications, "and council seeks the bureau's advice as to whether State boards" - that is dam operators, is that what you are talking about?-- Yes.

10

"Actively notify the bureau of dam releases"?-- That's correct, yes.

Do you have any update in relation to that?-- No.

Thank you, Mr Kearney. They are all the questions I have for you.

COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you a couple of questions? You said you were confident that the river wasn't going over 11 metres?-- Yes.

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And you've got that from the Bureau of Meteorology?-- No, we had that from our - working in consultation with the bureau, they were giving us the flows - the volumes of water coming past, and with our modelling that Cardno Treloar Lawson had done for us, based on their research compared to what the bureau was giving us for the volumes of water, there was no way that the river could get to-----

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All right. So you depended on that Cardno modelling?-- Yes.

And the bureau didn't at any time give you a definitive answer to how high it could get, I gather?-- No.

The other thing I wanted to ask you do you have enough SES volunteers in this district? Is it a problem here, or not?-- We have a high turnover of SES personnel. A lot of them are transient. At one stage we were probably down to two, then we got up to 30 and we had, I suppose, about 25 on the road for this flood event. We accessed additional staff from Inglewood, SES staff there, because they weren't under threat. They were able to provide us with personnel. Yelarbon, just up the road, exactly the same, and we got flood boat operators in from SES in Warwick.

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So do you have any concerns for the future with the SES or do you think you are fairly-----?-- You do. It is something you have to monitor all the time to be proactive in getting people to join up to the SES.

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Thanks for that. Now, I might ask you first, Mr Dollar, if you have any questions.

MR DOLLAR: I do have some questions, thank you, Commissioner.

MR DOLLAR: Mr Kearney, the Goondiwindi-----

COMMISSIONER: Kearney, is it?-- It is Kearney, yes.

MR DOLLAR: I am sorry, Mr Kearney. The Goondiwindi Local Disaster Management Group, that's made up of a number of committee members who are executive members?-- That is correct.

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And there is also a number of specialist advisors who are not necessarily core members or executive members, that may be called upon to give specialist advice to the Local Disaster Management Group?-- That is correct.

Are you aware whether SunWater is one of these specialist advisors who the Local District Management Group can call upon during an event?-- Yes, they are.

20

Is that something that occurred during the flood events?-- Yes, we had quite a bit of conversation with SunWater, yes.

I want to take you to before the January flood events to the 1st of December 2010. Can you recall whether you attended a meeting with the District Disaster Management Group with other members of the Goondiwindi Regional Council, particularly Neil Kratzke?-- Neil Kratzke.

Kratzke?-- Yes, yes.

30

Can you recall whether SunWater was one of the organisations that was present at this particular meeting?-- To my recollection they were, yes.

A man by the name of Ron Newman, if that rings a bell?-- That is the man, yes.

Can you recall Mr Newman giving information to the District Disaster Management Group meeting in relation to the emergency action plans relevant to a number of the dams within the district?-- I can't say for sure, no, no.

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You are aware of these emergency action plans?-- Yes, I am.

And you are aware, are you, that council, or in particular the Counter Disaster Executive Officer from the LDMG at the Goondiwindi Regional Council is issued with the control document or a version of the emergency action plan?-- Yes.

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And you are aware that this provides the LDMG and the council with information relating to how these dams are operated?-- That's correct, yes.

Now, I want to ask you about your knowledge about the means and manner by which SunWater can be contacted throughout an event. Do you have any means of contacting SunWater during a flood event?-- Yes, I use the 24 hour emergency contact

number. That's the only way I contact them. It is reliable. 1

It is reliable?-- And I know that someone has that phone with them all the time.

And is that something you have utilised during these flood events?-- Yes, it is.

Can you recall the person that you spoke to?-- It was Ron and I believe it was Ron Newman. 10

Ron Newman. Can you recall whether you also spoke to a person Peter?-- Yeah, Peter Bilsborough from - I spoke with him at Glenlyon Dam and another chap from Coolmunda Dam.

You have mentioned that you found that means reliable for you?-- That's - yes.

Is that a number that you store - or that you have with you at all times?-- It is. It is in my phone. 20

And are you aware that SunWater, through the emergency action plan, also provides various other means by which the council and the Local Disaster Management Group can contact various members?-- Yes.

And that's a comprehensive list - I won't go through it?-- Yes.

But do you have any understanding as to the type of people who are listed on that contact list?-- All the way from the CEO through to the managers at the dam sites. 30

So you are aware of numerous different means by which communications - or by which you can seek specialist advice under the Local Disaster Management Plan from SunWater if the Local Disaster Management Group feels it is necessary or required?-- Yes.

And that's, indeed, what did occur throughout this flood event?-- That's correct. 40

Now, the Local District Management Group meetings, there is a number of meetings for which minutes have been produced and presented to the Commission. Now, I understand - or you can tell the Commission whether this is true or not - did SunWater attend any of those meetings?-- No.

Had they been invited to attend those meetings?-- Not to my knowledge. 50

But they are, indeed, a specialist advisor that can be called upon?-- That is correct.

Is it fair to say that had the need arisen for them to attend one of those meetings, the Local District Management Group would have called upon them to attend one of those meetings?-- Yes.

Yes. You would have done that?-- Would have done that but I was in contact through that emergency contact number quite often and therefore I didn't think there was any need for them to attend.

So that served as the means for the Local District Management Group to obtain the necessary information by contacting these relevant people at SunWater that you had this established relationship with?-- Yes.

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And that process worked well?-- Yes.

Now, is there some - do you think it would be necessary for SunWater or desirable in future events for a SunWater representative to attend the operational meetings of the Local District Management Group?-- If it is in relation to flooding, yes.

Yes. Is that something that you think would be attractive or worthwhile pursuing?-- I think it would be, yes.

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Now, I want to ask you a few very short questions in relation to your statement. You have said in your statement at paragraph 3A that council does not have any formal arrangements with SunWater. This is at paragraph 3A. But we have discussed here today the formal relationship in that SunWater is a specialist advisor under the Disaster Management Plan?-- Yes.

30

We have also discussed that SunWater issues a control document to the counter disaster executive officer at the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- That's correct.

And there is also a formal contact list under that emergency action plan whereby numerous members of the Goondiwindi Regional Council are kept informed or can contact SunWater in relation to flood events?-- That's correct.

So it is not true to say there is no formal arrangements; there is a formal framework of relationships between SunWater and the council or local disaster-----?-- Just no formal arrangement for them to be on the LDMG. That was all.

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Other than as a specialist advisor?-- Yes.

Okay, I understand that. Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ms McLeod?

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MS McLEOD: Thank you.

MS McLEOD: Mr Kearney, I appear for the Commonwealth, in this instance, the bureau. Could I just clarify some issues to do with the forecasts - river height forecasts. I understand that the former peak for Goondiwindi was in 1996 of 10.6 metres?-- 10.6 - 10.62.

10.62, around that region?-- Around there, yes.

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And then in 2000 you had around 10 metres?-- Yes.

On the 14th of January, the peak flood for this reason - season was 10.64 metres?-- That's correct.

Now, the bureau had forecast from early evening or late afternoon on the 11th of January a major flood level expected to rise again and peak around the January 1996 flood level of 10.6 metres late on Thursday?-- Yes.

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So from that time on you knew at least their prediction was 10.6?-- Yes.

And then in early afternoon on the 13th of January, that was revised to a record flood peak of 10.85 metres with possible further rises?-- That's correct.

In the interim, that is between the 11th of January and the 13th of January, the forecast was 10.6 with further rises possible?-- That's correct.

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Now, you also had access to the continuous river height data on the website?-- Yes.

And that is publicly available-----?-- Yes.

-----that information? So when you indicate in your letter to the bureau that it would be useful to have this more frequent than the six-hour flood warnings-----?-- Yes.

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-----does that presume that locals aren't looking at the bureau website river height information?-- That's correct, yes.

Right. But they could certainly be doing that?-- Yes.

Now, just in terms of the communications with the bureau, as well as the website forecasts and river height data, you also had these conversations with Mr Baddiley?-- Mr Baddiley, Mr Stewart, numerous people.

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Others at the Flood Warning Centre?-- Yes.

Mr Baddiley is, of course, the regional hydrology manager, so you had-----?-- Yes.

-----the top level information, as it was?-- Yes.

And your view, as I understand your evidence, was that the river height would not get beyond 10.7 metres?-- Yes.

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But, of course, you had your 2007 study to hand that the bureau didn't have, is that right?-- I am unaware if the bureau have that study.

You sent it to them in this letter of the 22nd of February this year?-- Right.

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And, as you have indicated, or as the author has indicated in that letter, once you get beyond historical peaks, it is difficult to run the modelling for the expected peaks because you don't have the data - the base data?-- Yes.

Thank you, Mr Kearney.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

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MR ROLLS: Just one matter I would like to clarify with you in relation to your statement Exhibit 222, paragraph 2. You say that late 7 p.m. on the 12th of January, request was received from EMQ Toowoomba for a helicopter to be dispatched. Did you receive that request?-- I did myself, yes.

You did?-- Yes.

30

Who from EMQ did you speak to?-- A chap by the name of Jay.

By the name of Jay?-- Jay. I was at home at the time. They called my mobile and he just said he was Jay from EMQ. I didn't follow it up any further who Jay was.

Did you have any subsequent dealings in relation to this matter with a Sergeant Moore?-- Not that night. I received a phone call about an hour later, again from EMQ saying that the helicopter was not required.

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Was that from Jay again or from someone else?-- I believe it was from Jay.

How do you spell that name?-- J-A-Y.

J-A-Y, okay?-- Yes.

You don't know the surname?-- No, I didn't pursue it any further when he said that it wasn't required.

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So you received a phone call at 7, one at 8 from the same person at EMQ, the first one asking for the helicopter?-- Yes.

The second one saying it was no longer required?-- Yes.

Did you ever have any dealings with a Sergeant Moore from people on the Dumaresq River?-- I probably spoke to him the following day about that.

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But do you know what involvement he might have had in relation to this particular matter?-- No, no.

That's - I have no further questions, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Favell?

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MR FAVELL: Mr Kearney, can I ask you perhaps - I don't know if you have a copy of it - to look at the 2007 Cardno Lawson Treloar report, Exhibit 231. Can I ask you to go to page 9? In particular I am asking you to look at numbered paragraph 6.4. I think you just said a moment ago this was a document that BOM did not have, it was given to them at a later stage?-- That's correct, yes.

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This is a document that the council relied on heavily in assessing the predictions which were given to it by BOM, is that so?-- That's correct.

Can I ask you to look at 6.5? You will see there is a statement, a PMF. -now, that means probable maximum flow - of 5,520 cubic metres per second, "twice the 1976 flood magnitude has been assumed based on a previous study of New South Wales Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources." See that?-- That's correct, yes.

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Now, are you able to tell the Commission what that probable maximum flow would equate to in terms of river height? And perhaps I can give you some assistance?-- Yes.

If you go to paragraph 7.5 and the table that appears therein and look at the last line, where you will see under table 7-4, PMF?-- Yes.

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Yes?-- 10.74.

Sorry, 10.74. If you look at the bottom, 5,520?-- Sorry, 10.85.

10.85?-- Approximately.

So the flood which was twice the 1976 flood magnitude-----?-- Yes.

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-----having a probable maximum flood of 5,520 cubic metres per second, would give you 10.85 metres in river?-- That's correct.

Now, were you given probable maximum flood data from BOM?-- I

was, yes.

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What was that?-- From recollection it was 4,880 CUMECS.

So it was quite a bit less than the 19 - twice the 1976 flood magnitude?-- That's correct.

Now, did you draw any comfort from that?-- Yes, I did.

What was that?-- That it was still going to be around that 10.7 metre predicted height that we had.

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And that was despite - well, that was taken into account using the predictions given to you by BOM?-- By BOM and the fact that they said that they could not find any further water in the system to increase that volume.

Were there other factors that you also took into account relevant to the Goondiwindi township in this flood?-- There were.

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What were they?-- A number of creeks that break out on to the floodplain.

Can you tell us about that?-- One in particular, the Whalan Creek which is - it breaks out below - on the south-east of Boggabilla and that breaks out at - I can't recall the height.

Let's find out where it is. You will see there is a framed map in front of you. May the witness just hold that up, your Honour - Commissioner? Perhaps you can describe to the Commission what it is.

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COMMISSIONER: Do you want somebody to hold it while you point? Will that be easier?-- It might be easier.

MR FAVELL: Describe what it is?-- This is the catchment area for the border rivers. Our State boundary is on the Macintyre River. This is New South Wales. Our council boundary ends just around the hook here. We have a number of major rivers coming from New South Wales that feed into the Dumaresq, namely the Mole River, Beardy River, Severn River and the Macintyre River. They all feed in. What I was saying about what effect the volume of water had on this flood that we have to consider is the fact that below Goondiwindi there is what they call Whalan Creek. It is just below Boggabilla. And that drains out on to the floodplain. And that creek, Whalan Creek was dry at the time of this flood. So that allowed a lot of water to drain out of the system.

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Why is that important in your consideration of what's coming down from the higher river flow?-- That's taking - again, that's taking a large volume of water out of that predicted volume that was going to come through Goondiwindi.

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So it is going to make the prediction for river height of Goondiwindi lower-----?-- Lower.

-----than if it was saturated or if it was otherwise receiving water?-- If the Whalan Creek had have had a larger quantity of water in it, yes, it would have meant the river would have been higher but it didn't.

Can I ask you to take this document, please? Perhaps you can put it on that frame before you put it down. Now, that's the best we can do, a photocopy of a photo of that framed document. There is some markings on it in orange and blue. Can you see that?-- Yes.

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Are you able to tell the Commission what they are?-- The orange outline, that is the Goondiwindi Regional Council boundary. The blue - this blue line here is the State boundary, as well as being the Dumaresq River boundary. We have the MacIntyre Brook highlighted coming in from Inglewood, and we have the Macintyre River coming from Inverell, through Yetman to where it joins on to the Dumaresq, and it then becomes the Macintyre River. From there around through to Mungindi. Our council boundary is approximately 520 kilometres of New South Wales border and the Dumaresq and MacIntyre rivers.

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So the major waterflows coming towards Goondiwindi are coming from New South Wales?-- That's correct.

New South Wales is the source of the problem here?-- They are. They are always a problem. So, yeah, the water comes out of the Beardy, the Mole - all the major rivers in that part of the catchment for the Murray-Darling, for our border rivers component of the Murray-Darling system.

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Now, you made some recommendations, I think, to the Commission concerning cooperation with New South Wales authorities. How does that arise?-- Mainly because this border is a great hindrance to us here and into Warwick. Mainly for emergency services, with accessing information, New South Wales tend to keep it and I suppose Queensland tends to keep their information to themselves. There has to be a greater capacity for information sharing between the States there. What else was there? I think the Mayor will touch on a number of the cross border - other cross border issues.

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We can leave that for the moment. Can I tender that, if the Commission pleases?

COMMISSIONER: That's - whose is the big one? Is that yours or ours?

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MR FAVELL: The big one has been borrowed from another authority but we have reproduced what appears on the big one on the photocopy of the photo.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit 235.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 235"

MR FAVELL: Thank you. Can I ask you to look at these documents for me, please? I will hand them to you one by one. Can you tell us what this document is?-- This outlines the activities that council has had since November 2009 through to October 2010 involving our involvement with disaster management planning.

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You will see there is a back page as well?-- Through to December 2010, yes.

And that's just an outline of the type of involvement that the council and the Local Disaster Management Committee and others have had in preparing for floods?-- That's correct, yes.

I tender that, if the Commission pleases.

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COMMISSIONER: 236.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 236"

COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell, do you think you will be some time or will you finish in the next 10 minutes?

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MR FAVELL: I will probably finish in the next 10 minutes or so, your Honour.

Would you have a look at this document, please? Can you tell the Commission what that is?-- That is an evacuation centre assessment form that we completed for potential sites for evacuation centres within - for this one for Goondiwindi.

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When was that done?-- It should have been done - commenced around 2009.

Has it been updated recently?-- Yes.

All right. I tender that, if the Commission pleases.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 237.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 237"

MR FAVELL: Would you have a look at this document for me, please? And tell the Commission what that is?-- This is the

subplan for the welfare and evacuation. It is a draft format that's been developed using the assessment form that was previously-----

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When was that commenced?-- This would have been commenced in early 2010.

Well, it has - you will see Disaster Management Plan 2009 on the second page?-- Yes.

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Has it been worked on since then?-- It is still being worked on, yes.

It is a document in progress?-- It is, yes.

I tender that.

MS WILSON: It has already been tendered.

COMMISSIONER: I think it might have been part of the Disaster Management Plan, Exhibit 232.

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MR FAVELL: Then I withdraw the tender.

COMMISSIONER: It is the same thing you are talking about, is it? You might just check that.

MS WILSON: The question is has it been updated from the document that was tendered.

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MR FAVELL: Has it been updated?-- No, no.

Then I will withdraw the tender.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks.

MR FAVELL: Now, can I show you a document - could you identify that document for the Commission?-- This is the Goondiwindi Regional Council Urban Levee Bank Policy.

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Is that a document that has been adopted since the floods?-- Yes, that is correct.

23rd of February 2011?-- Yes, that is correct.

And that deals with the council's levee bank policy?-- Yes.

I tender that, if the Commission pleases.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 238.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 238"

COMMISSIONER: What's changed? Anything crucial for our purposes?-- We never had a policy as such. Now, this is the policy that controls what activities you can do on the levee bank and the inspections, and if you want to put a structure near the levee bank, this is the policy that controls that.

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Okay. It doesn't have any - it doesn't have the effect of legislation or regulation?-- No.

It is just what you think is a good thing?-- It is a council policy, how we deal with the levee bank.

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All right, thank you.

MR FAVELL: Your Honour, we understand it is a policy designed for maintaining of the levee banks and the structural integrity of it. May I show you a standard procedures register? Can you just describe to the Commission what that document is?-- This is our flood response procedure for the Goondiwindi local area.

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Now, was that in existence prior to the flood?-- Yes, that was.

Has it since been updated to the 25th of March 2011?-- Yes, it has.

What's it do?-- That outlines the inspection regime for all of our flood gates, procedures for putting out our flood pumps, routine inspection, when they are carried out.

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I tender that, if the Commission pleases.

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, that has already been tendered. However, it should be noted this is an updated version. It is on the tender list as.

COMMISSIONER: 228 which is a checklist. Is that the same thing?

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MS WILSON: That's the same thing. This is the updated version of that.

COMMISSIONER: All right. It will be 239. I will just make a note of its relationship.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 239"

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MR FAVELL: There is a letter that I would ask you to look at dated the 10th of March addressed to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. Do you have a copy of it with you? I understand this is going to be tendered through another witness, if the Commission pleases, but there is some aspects

I would like you to address, if you would.

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MS WILSON: This document will be tendered through the Mayor, Madam Commissioner.

MR FAVELL: We will come to the full contents of the document later, but if you go to paragraph 2, there is a heading Uniform Disaster Management System?-- Yes.

There is an expression that, "It is the council's view that all local disaster management groups be required to operate on the same management system (Guardian)."?-- Yes.

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Can you just explain what that is?-- The Guardian system, since my involvement with disaster management, I have seen the Guardian system operate a number of times throughout the States. It is a computer-based program that enables emergency management people, namely an LDMG, to run a disaster situation on a computer-based system. I believe, having seen this in operation, I believe that a system like a Guardian or a similar system should be utilised - a standard system should be utilised Statewide for all disaster management.

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COMMISSIONER: Other councils are using it, are they?-- A number of other councils in Queensland, Darwin and New South Wales are using this system, yes.

MR FAVELL: Does it allow access to data kept by other authorities and entities?-- It's limited there but the main thing is it can be linked to council's databases using their map info systems to readily access all sorts of databases that we have access to and we are required to use to obtain information from that would assist in management of a disaster situation.

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Is it readily obtainable?-- It is. It is a Queensland-based company. To my knowledge they are still based in Queensland and, yes, it is.

Is there any funding issues with that?-- There is a cost to it and an annual fee but, again, I believe it is something that the State Government should look at providing to each council to assist with managing a disaster event.

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Thank you. Now, you mentioned earlier an issue perhaps with cross border coordination and information distribution, this being a unique situation where water is coming not only from Queensland but from New South Wales. Is there a recommendation that you seek to articulate concerning that issue?-- It is in relation to - yeah, it is in relation to levee banks that are built on the New South Wales side of Goondiwindi that are built around agricultural properties for the protection of crops, and the crop in particular is cotton, where they put a levee bank around large areas to prevent inundation with water. Now, the levee banks over on the New South Wales side are controlled by New South Wales government departments. However, there is no requirement that Queensland

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or Goondiwindi, in particular, Goondiwindi council, be a concurrent agent when an application is submitted to construct a levee bank on the New South Wales side. If levee banks are constructed over - just over the border, they could have a very drastic effect on the flow of the river in the MacIntyre system that could potentially create problems for Goondiwindi, and therefore I would be seeking that Goondiwindi local government be a concurrent agent with any applications for development of levee banks that run along the Macintyre River.

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And is the data that you are seeking to have available just restricted to that or does it also include such things as dam release data, road conditions, road closures and weather warning information?-- Yeah. As well as the levee bank constructions, the releases from dams, we have - there are three dams, as was previously outlined; Coolmunda Dam and Glenlyon in Queensland but there are Pindari Dam in New South Wales, that is on the Macintyre River, that we have no information from - or I am not sure whether the Met Bureau get information of releases from New South Wales dams to take into account when they are planning for river heights. And in relation to the information on road conditions, as was outlined by the first witness here this morning, the problems that he encountered with obtaining information on road conditions and warning information, again, I would support his submission that there needs to be a national database available that would allow motorists and travellers from wherever they are in the country to access up-to-date and accurate road information.

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I think you were mentioning something about levees being constructed over the border or elsewhere. Would digital elevation mapping be of assistance to authorities such as this council in assessing flows and the like?-- Yes, again, it is my understanding that the State Government has, over the last couple of years, been successful in obtaining Federal funding to do digital elevation mapping along the entire coastline of Queensland, and the funding that they received to undertake that process, there is still some of that funding available. That was communicated to local governments to apply if they wished to have digital elevation mapping done of their areas, and we did apply for that, but that's some 18 months ago. Again, I would be seeking the support of the State Government in funding the digital elevation mapping of our entire council area, mainly because we have that 520 kilometres of river that borders Goondiwindi Regional Council area. That would assist us greatly with planning for evacuation routes, not only for Goondiwindi but for our entire regional area, as well as assisting us to prepare for - to have an accurate understanding of flow patterns of all our rivers within our area.

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COMMISSIONER: I understand why you might want State Government funding for that. What about the Guardian system; is that not within council's means? Why do you need State Government assistance?-- At the moment, with all budgets, it is an item that we will continually try and put on our budget,

in our budget deliberations, but I believe for a Statewide disaster function, the Guardian system should be put throughout the State.

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MR FAVELL: Finally, is there any benefit in coordination of land use planning in Queensland but perhaps coordination with what happens over the border?-- Again, yes, there is, but I believe there are other witnesses that will be able to address that.

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Right. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any re-examination?

MS WILSON: Just one matter. You referred to the 1996 report that council relied upon. Is council intending to get an updated report?-- On the?

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The 1996 report that the council relied upon. Sorry, the 2006.

COMMISSIONER: 2007.

MS WILSON: 2007?-- The Cardno?

Yes?-- That has not been discussed at this stage, no.

Thank you. I have no further questions. May the witness be excused?

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Kearney, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

COMMISSIONER: 2.30?

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MS WILSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: All right.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1.16 P.M. TILL 2.30 P.M.

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THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.30 P.M.

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MS WILSON: I call Peter Stewart.

PETER STEWART, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Peter Stewart?-- Yes.

Are you the chief executive officer of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- Yes.

You provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry in relation to the flood events of 2010/2011?-- Yes.

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

Is that document true and correct?-- Yes.

Do you swear that document is true and correct?-- Yes.

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 240.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 240"

MS WILSON: I'll give you a copy of that document. Have you got a copy there?-- I have, yes.

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If I can take you to two issues in that statement. Can I take you to 1B. There it states that the consolidated disaster management plan was finalised and adopted by the Goondiwindi Regional Council on 23 June 2010?-- Yes. I actually did ask for an amendment to that. Is that okay if I mention that?

Yes?-- The actual first consolidated disaster management plan from the three other councils was in November 2009. So there was a review. It was revised on 23 June 2010, and I've unfortunately mentioned the revised plan in that statement rather than the original disaster management plan for the Goondiwindi Regional Council.

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Do you want to amend that date then?-- Yes. That date should be November 2009.

While we're there, if you can keep that statement and your pen, can I take you to 12A of your statement?-- Yes.

It talks about the evacuation of the Goondiwindi Hospital and aged care facility were carried out based on predictions from the BOM. The evacuations were carried out some 24 to 36 hours before the expected flood peak. Is that another revision that should occur there?-- I'd request two revisions if I could, please. That "24 to 36" should be 12 to 15, and then the last - very last line, "voluntary evacuations were recommended to line areas", that was 12 hours rather than 24 hours.

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Can you please make those amendments where required. Can I show you these two documents, which puts you as the author as the disaster management coordinator. The first is 12 January 2011. That's an internal memo?-- To all staff, yes.

Can you - that is in relation to a media release from the Premier; is that the case?-- Yes.

Can you tell me about that?-- Yes. What happened was - I would have to just check on the actual timing. But the Premier, through the media, was talking about the flooding in Goondiwindi - or the potential flooding that was about to occur in the town of Goondiwindi, and in that release that the Premier announced, she announced certain concerns about the situation in Goondiwindi at the time. We had a major response to that statement from our community in that our call centre which was set up - our call centre went - just had an enormous amount of calls basically within a very short period of time after that statement, and those calls that were coming in from the public, from our community, were concern to the point where what does this mean? Does it mean we have to evacuate? Do we have to leave? We felt it was appropriate that we got back. This one has gone to staff, because we felt it was important that staff had the right message. There was also information went out to the community at large. But this is internal to my staff.

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That information was then conveyed to the community. That's right.

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I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 241.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 241"

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MS WILSON: And if I can show you this internal memo from maps of low lying areas which you ordered, again dated 12 January. Can you explain to me what that memorandum is about?-- Again it's information for our staff. So I guess a lot of this is that the staff are a big part of our community. I wanted to make sure that as information was going out to the community at large, that all our staff were likewise aware of what was happening at any point in time. In this particular instance,

this is referring to low-lying areas that potentially may have been higher risk in the area in the town of Goondiwindi, and there are - there was a lot of information that appeared to be going backwards and forwards. I can't say it was rumours, but it was uncertainty about is this area at a higher risk than this area? What does this mean? What does that mean? We felt it appropriate at a certain point in time that we identified, as we had the information, what we saw as potentially areas that would more likely, if there was going to be an evacuation or any concerns, that would more likely be impacted. So it identified areas - peripheral areas right on the edge of our levy bank area that may have been more at risk. The importance of this was again that our staff call centre, or whoever was involved, were aware of consistency in how they responded to those questions.

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I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 242.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 242"

MS WILSON: If I can take you to 12C of your statement. That's where you refer to the use of a national emergency alert system?-- Yes.

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Is that the SMS texting?-- That's the SMS to the landlines and the mobiles.

You discuss in paragraph 12C that there was some concern in that the message was so abbreviated as a result of the limitation of the system that many were confused by the meaning of the calls to your call centre?-- Yes.

Can I show you two documents. The first document is the emergency alert, the pro forma?-- Yes.

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And the second is the text that was sent out?-- Sent out by-----

Can you look at that document - the second?-- The second?

Yes?-- Yeah.

That was the text that was sent out?-- Sent out from the State. Can I just explain the process?

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I'm wanting to know if that was the text that caused the confusion?-- I'm not sure, to be honest, because there were two. Let me look at the second one just to check which one it was. The two SMS messages went out. I'm just not sure if it was this one or the other one that caused the angst at that time, or caused again our call centre - that triggered quite a response from our community as to just what it meant and I

suppose some clarification what it meant.

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Did you use that pro forma when devising the content of the text?-- I think, if I recollect correctly, we certainly knew that the process - I don't think we realised at the time that this 160 characters, for instance, included spaces. I don't think we realised exactly what the 160 characters meant, which was the limitation. So I'm putting it together. I think we went over unintentionally because it included spaces that we hadn't assumed would have been part of the characters.

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Is this just an issue of just getting better at using abbreviated messages to get the message across, or do you say the text has to be longer?-- Well, the text that went out - one of the texts that went out, sorry. One of these two that went out certainly appeared to not have the clarification to the general public that I think it should have. So the draft that we sent was changed, and I think, if I recollect, it was changed - regardless of whether we had the right amount of characters, the wording that we sent and the wording that went out - which we didn't see again until it came on to our SMS system - was still different, even if you had have abbreviated it. It was still, I believe, slightly different. So our assumption at that point was we put what we believed was the right message, but we accepted that somebody at the State level, whoever has the jurisdiction to allow this to go out, had decided there was a better way to explain that. So we felt that okay, let's that's the system. But we felt we had explained it in the way we wanted to explain it, and it appeared from the reaction from the community that it certainly was uncertain exactly what it meant.

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So your point is the message that you devised you thought was - had more clarity for your community?-- Yes.

And the process meant that it had to be abbreviated down, and then it created some uncertainty?-- Yes, and perhaps it didn't come back to us to have another-----

To check it?-- To check it. I think that would help.

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So the message that we've got on - those two pages, the second page is a message that was sent to the residents of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- Would have been sent to a certain area of the regional council.

I tender those documents.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 243.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 243"

MS WILSON: If I can take you to paragraph 19, which talks about any measures being proposed, planned, or implemented to

prepare for or mitigate or manage future flood events. 1
 There's three points there. If I could take you through those
 three issues. You've now engaged a specialist consultant to
 analyse the integrity of the Goondiwindi levy banks?-- Yes,
 that's correct.

And the viability of the levy systems for Inglewood Town?--
 For another town, Inglewood; that's correct, yes.

Can I show you this document. Have you got any response to 10
 that?-- Yes, I could comment. Could I just say that I have
 been here quite a long time in terms of my position and some
 of the background with what's happened with levy banks and
 modelling over quite a few years - over the last ten years.
 And I've worked fairly closely with our engineers, who are the
 ones that give us advice. As information gets fed in, that
 advice goes from the engineers to myself and is fed through to
 the LDMG as a committee. And of course, one of the big areas
 was - you've got to realise there's a levy bank here for the 20
 town that protects the town of Goondiwindi, but we're on a
 flood plain that has hundreds of levy banks. So for many,
 many years since around about '85 we've modelled levy banks
 across our flood plains. Those levy banks are not just in our
 regional council; that's by satellite which takes into account
 New South Wales. Otherwise, the modelling doesn't do much
 because it's simply looking at a half of the equation. One of
 the areas we look at, of course, in our modelling, is the
 various aspects of any particular levy bank in terms of its
 size, its likely direction of which way water will flow, how
 to fix the national flow of water courses. It was all built 30
 around originally the development of cotton and the cotton
 industry in this area. This particular levy bank here
 obviously has enormous strategic - because of exactly where it
 is. We felt that although it had held up in this particular
 case, it was the first time - or in the last probably six
 months, it was the first time it had been inundated; in other
 words, a lot of water had gone into the levy bank. It was the
 first time it had been tested at this height, and of course
 there was a small amount of slumping. There are a lot of
 piping systems that go through that levy bank in terms of 40
 flood - in terms of stormwater piping. There is a lot of
 vegetation in places where you might have a lot of tree roots,
 and there's also - the actual construction was a long, long
 time ago in terms of the material that used and what was used.
 So we felt it was important firstly that independently there
 was a professional in this area that would look at what is
 this levy bank like today in terms of is it still as sound and
 as solid as it should or could be.

Could I pause there. Did you engage SMK?-- No. SMK were 50
 engaged way back in about the 1980s, early 1990s to review a
 lot of levy banks. They actually some of the original
 modelling. I would have to check the name of the consultant
 that we've just engaged. That actually hasn't started yet.
 It starts this month.

Okay?-- The other-----

Can I just show you this document. And this document is dated 21 January 2011?-- Yes.

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Are you aware of that document?-- I have seen the document. I'm not aware of this particular diagram.

If you can return that. Can I show you this document. This is a brief to investigate levies?-- Okay.

Is this the document that you sent off to the consultants?-- I'd have to honestly say I think so, but I certainly - it would have been through our engineering department.

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You've now engaged a specialist?-- Yes.

We can safely say you've now engaged a specialist consultant. It's been investigated about - the structural integrity of the levies in Goondiwindi is being investigated?-- As one point. The other point was what about something like Inglewood.

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That also is included in this?-- That's part of the brief, yes.

The purpose of this is to determine what areas may need further maintenance to ensure the structural integrity of the levies?-- Basically, yes.

Okay?-- Yes.

You haven't had any result - you haven't had any report back on that issue?-- No, because it starts next week.

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And how long will that take; have you been advised?-- I can't recall exactly. I know the cost, and I know - I imagine it's over a few weeks.

Can I return those documents then. Then can I take you to paragraph 21. And that talks about having some issues with the coordination of activity across the State border?-- Yes.

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Then you provide an example there?-- That is an example, that's right. Do you want me expand on that?

Yes, please?-- In that particular instance, our hospital had been - the hospital wasn't operational where it normally is - in the town of Goondiwindi, sorry, I'm talking about again. We did have a makeshift setup at the airport. That hospital caters for patients or a community that's not just in Queensland. A lot of the catchment for that hospital, like a lot of our other services, capture quite a portion - quite a population in situation. And in this particular instance, a town just to our - just upstream - it's barely to our south, but upstream 10 kilometres away - was evacuated because of flood heights. That wasn't under our jurisdiction. That was in New South Wales. That town was evacuated. What happened was then that town came back - or that population of that town then came back to that - to the community. Our concern was, we serviced that community with, for instance, in this case a

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hospital, yet we really didn't have that capacity because our hospital system was on, I guess, a system of minimum operational - operations-----

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COMMISSIONER: That's Boggabilla, isn't it?-- Yes, sorry, that's Boggabilla and actually - and Tulloona just - as well was in a similar scenario. We felt there needs to be some discussion on this. That population is coming back, yet we don't have the capacity to look after them. Couldn't they - couldn't we at least work out who is coming back, and if there are patients that are high care, or elderly, or whatever it might be, we really going to struggle. So it was a case of let's-----

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MS WILSON: Have you got any suggestion how this issue could be resolved if it occurred in the future?-- It's not easy. I suppose over the years we've had a lot of attempts to look at cross-border opportunities, and there are a couple of examples where it works fairly well. So as councils we have what's called a ROC, Regional Organisation of Councils. Regional organisation includes councils on either side, three or four on this side, Southern Downs is one those, and then four councils on the New South Wales side. So yes, it's been discussed several times, whether it's with the police, whether it's with health, whether it's with SES, whether it's with ambulance, as to how we can best cooperate and coordinate. There's a case, for instance, with the ambulance where an MOU has been agreed to at State level, and that seems to be working fairly well with the ambulance. But there's-----

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Just stop there. How does that work?-- I don't know the in-depth detail, but basically if there's an accident 5 kilometres out of town but in New South Wales, the ambulance offices or the ambulance station here in Goondiwindi has the ability to go over and assist without any - with an arrangement where they can recover some - in some manner the costs involved with an arrangement where if something doesn't go wrong - something does go wrong, they are covered. So there's a memorandum that recognises a partnership where one can go over and assist. You go to other potential agency areas, and they've struggled for many years to be able to come up with solution at the local government level. Crime prevention is a classic that councils have been very involved with. But to try and get an agreement, it involves Premier departments in both State levels. So we haven't been able to get some sort of a memorandum of understanding that might work into how the police can work with crime prevention in two communities that are 10 kilometres apart. So I think there are opportunities but it requires three levels: it requires federal, State and local at the very least, and obviously across those agencies, and to try and get that, we have not been successful. As a ROC, as the Regional Organisation of Councils, we have not been successful in being able to get around the table and get any sort of forward movement on any of those issues.

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In terms of the Boggabilla example that you raised, is that a simpler solution in the sense of that Boggabilla should

contact Goondiwindi and say we're going back in there. What are the resources that you can provide in terms of medical assistance?-- Boggabilla would be directed by their LDMG, which is based in Moree, which is 100 kilometres away from Boggabilla. So yes, I suppose what I'm - I'm not saying it should have been the Boggabilla people. It should have been the system that operates in that area, which would have been governed from Moree.

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Thank you. I have no further questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

MR ROLLS: No questions, your Honour.

MR DOLLAR: No questions, your Honour.

MR FAVELL: No questions, your Honour.

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

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Graeme Scheu.

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GRAEME SCHEU, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Graeme Scheu?-- Yes.

You are the Mayor of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- Yes.

And you provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry in relation to the flood events of 2010/2011?-- Yes, I did.

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Can you have a look at this document, please?-- There are two typos I've made in that that slipped under the barrier.

Certainly?-- If I can take the opportunity to amend those?

Yes. Can you tell me what they are?-- In 2A, Monday the 18th should be Monday the 17th, and Tuesday the 19th should be Tuesday the 18th.

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If you can make those amendments, please. Do you swear that the contents of that statement is true and correct?-- Yes, I do.

I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 244.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 244"

MS WILSON: Were you in Court this morning?-- I was. I've been here all day.

Did you hear the evidence of Inspector Morrow?-- Yes.

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And did you also hear the evidence of Rick Kearney?-- I did.

The issue that has been - one of the issues that has been raised is in relation to the evacuation plan that had trigger points that was devised at about six o'clock, 6.30 on Monday the - sorry, on the 13th of January?-- Yes.

Inspector Morrow says in his statement that at the time he believes that the Mayor, Mr Scheu, was confident in the integrity of the levy banks. He had sound knowledge of previous flooding events of the river, and he knew that the levy bank was higher on the Queensland side of the river, forcing excess water to the south?-- Um hmm.

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Do you recall that type of evidence being given here this morning?-- Yes.

Now, an evacuation plan with trigger points was done by the

Goondiwindi Regional Council on that day?-- Late that afternoon, yes.

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Do you first of all, do you accept that it should have been done at that point in time?-- I agree with Councillor Kearney. We had our points worked out for the Kaloma and the evacuation which had already commenced on that day, but I am of the same belief that he is, that these trigger points - every flood is very, very different. I've lived here 34 years. I moved here with the stock agents in 1977. Back in that time, the stocking station agents of the area used to look predominantly after the rural flooding that occurred in the areas, and every flood is very, very different. This one was a different flood event again. And the 10.95 and the 11 measure of stages 2 and stage 3 would have to vary, and could vary considerably, as stages - as Penni Roberts gave in her evidence. You know, we could have a much lesser flood with a big rain event over the top of Goondiwindi and be required to act and evacuate places at an earlier stage than those trigger points. So I agree with Councillor Kearney.

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Do you believe there's any worth in having an evacuation plan with such trigger points for the Goondiwindi region?-- Well, the State wanted it and demanded that we did do that, so that is what we devised. We came up with the three-stage plan. I do wonder whether it's going to be of use in every particular flood. But again, it would have to be reassessed as each one goes along.

Is it being reassessed?-- We have adopted the stage 1. We're currently working through levels with experts our CEO mentioned and work with Kaloma and a lot of other place as to devise - we haven't firmed up stage 2 and 3 at this stage, but we are working towards it. It's a work in progress.

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Did you have any trigger point in mind on the day of the 13th?-- No.

As to when those stages would be activated?-- Not fully. As the LDMG chair explained, everything that we had was convinced to us and we were assured with the Cardno Report and everything else that was there that it would not get past the 10.7, and thus we wouldn't have had to - those other two triggers points wouldn't have become activated anyway.

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Did you not think that such a plan, though, to have some plan about when trigger points are activated that evacuation should be processed?-- Sorry, did you?

Did you not think it was worthwhile to have an evacuation plan with trigger points?-- We hadn't considered that at the time, no.

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Now, would you consider that as a necessary part of your future disaster management?-- Well, as I said, I don't believe it is necessity because of the varying factors that occur with each floods. However, we obviously do have to have these stage events so we will be looking at that in the future.

COMMISSIONER: But you essentially don't think it is as simple as saying the river heights is going to be that, there is more to it?-- I really don't because I have seen - this particular flood - we had only had an inch and 40 of rain. We had cotton irrigators in the middle of a flood irrigating their cotton because it was so dry. We had potential bushfires with the massive winter season that had gone on. So this particular flood was very, very dry here. The 16 inches came from all this New South Wales areas that we referred to, of which are on the map down there, and I just think there is too big a variance in it. I think there is a danger in living and dying by the sword by those three trigger points.

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But I suppose as the last resort if you got to 10.95 you would be doing mandatory evacuation, wouldn't you?-- If the predictions were to 10.95, which I stress the BOM was 10.85 plus, so we don't know what that was. However, our predictions we were reassured of the 10.7. I think it is dangerous to live and die by those three trigger points. I think there has got to be variants. We have got to take into account the local knowledge of what happens in each area.

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I understand that. I am just looking at your plan, though, that says at a river height - not a predicted one but at a river height of 10.95 you order - the DDC orders a mandatory evacuation. That would be rational, wouldn't it?-- I agree with that.

It is just that-----?-- Look, I must confess, we had about 45 minutes to prepare this thing at the time because it was something - look, it was overlooked, or whatever it may have been in the process. However, I remain very, very confident, as you know, with all my statements that I have made.

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All right, thank you.

MS WILSON: Now, can I take you to your statement that you've made, and if I can take you to paragraph 2A? And that talks about that the council encountered some issues with the coordination of activities across the State border and that talks about the issue of Boggabilla?-- Yes.

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You have - it is your view that "Local emergency services coordination across the New South Wales-Queensland border is implemented and the inability of emergency personnel to access and address relevant information issues across the two States in a disaster situation poses serious threat to life and property." I will hand you another document, which is a document that you provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry which sets out that concern?-- Yes.

This is the document that you sent to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry?-- It is, yep.

Okay. Now, there you say, "All emergency services require reciprocal rights and a buffer zone at least 35 kilometres either side of the Queensland-New South Wales border." You state that this arrangement should be in effect at all times, not just in disaster events?-- Sorry, which number are you referring to there?

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B. 3B?-- I thought you said 1, sorry. My mistake. Look, as all of our people have mentioned, our cross border things are a problem here. They have been for a long, long time and always will be. I think our CEO highlighted the exceptional work of the ambulance and our local member at the time who got an MOU in place to acknowledge that. So we have all sorts of problems from right down to the likes of fishing licences, where you have got to have one on either side of the bank here, from Queensland and New South Wales, gun licences. Look, it just goes on and on across border things. In our particular flood case here, the hospital - the people of Boggabilla with our hospital facility here, which our CEO highlighted previously, but the 35 kilometre - look that was just an arbitrary figure that come out from - and I believe from the police force from years gone by, there was a - that 35 kilometre was a figure that was used as an arbitrary figure. I can't say whether it should be 30, 35, 40, 45. But certainly during these flood periods, and also all the way through, I think - I honestly believe we need to have that so that we can service both sides - so that the emergency services we have here can service both sides of the border. We're not like the Tweed and Coolangatta which have got population to back up what they've got. We don't have the population. We need cross border things so that services can be delivered to both sides, whether they be emergency services or police enforcement, or whatever.

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If you were wanting to make arrangements or have discussions with agencies on the New South Wales side, did that have to go through the LDMG of those regions?-- No, no. On this occasion, you mean?

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On this occasion of the flood events?-- No, because the - most of those are handled by those agencies within their thing. Like, the emergency services would contact the emergency services and they would deal with it wherever that may be. So, no, not on this occasion.

Okay, well say, for example, there is a request for, say, SES-----?-- Yeah.

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-----on the New South Wales side and it comes through the Goondiwindi LDMG. It comes through that. How is that then actioned?-- Well, I think in the evidence supplied by the LDMG chair this morning, he gave an example of that where the - where there was an actual request, I believe, from - they rang the EMQ, from the Queensland side and found out it was a

resident of the New South Wales side and then cancelled it later on. So that would be the process, I would imagine, how it is done. It is just, you know, in that particular case I believe the person was left there for quite a while waiting on a roof waiting for it to happen. And it is exactly those types of things that we need to cut through the bureaucratic nightmare.

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You talk in paragraph 3 as also the information distribution of the cross - and this is an issue that comes under cross border coordination - that "located along the Queensland-New South Wales border, Goondiwindi Regional Council and its residents experience great difficulty in acquiring relevant flood information including dam release data, road conditions, road closures and weather warning information"-- Uh-huh.

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How do you think that this could be more streamlined? Have you got any practical suggestions now or is it just an issue that needs to be addressed?-- It is one that certainly needs to be addressed. You know, I don't know about the BOM situation and all that of how they actually work interstate, and the road - as you heard from the first person this morning there was obviously problems there. So a national network would obviously address that. You know, as far as the river heights go, we have got a very long skinny council area, 522 kilometres of border region. So we have got a lot of river and border to cover in that area. Some of those people in the east end up close to Mingoola on the Riverton end, Texas end, only have six hours notice. So if they are only getting - and 99 per cent of our water comes from New South Wales side. So it is coming across there. So if we need more - we obviously need more time or shorter time to address that.

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One of the issues you address in this letter is at point 6 which talks about the aged health liaison and disaster event?-- Yes.

And it talks about that the Goondiwindi Regional Council supports improved communications and cooperation between Queensland Health and aged health care facilities in preparing for potential future disaster events?-- Yep.

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You state that, "Clear guidelines in relation to responsibilities will serve to avoid any unnecessary confusion."?-- Yes.

Is the guidelines that you were seeking in that letter, are they the guidelines that have been addressed by Ms Roberts this morning?-- They are. They are the same thing as the fact that there is people in makeshift facilities were not returned before people in established facilities.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document, which is a letter provided to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry, dated the 10th of March 2011?

WITNESS: Can I just make a comment on there? In section 1 there, we haven't mentioned that.

MS WILSON: Yes, I will get to that?-- Sorry.

COMMISSIONER: Yes. 245.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 245"

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MS WILSON: Which I will get to now, the use of unregistered vehicles during flood events. You think that the Goondiwindi Regional Council - that local authorities should have the authority to issue temporary road use permits for vehicles?-- Something similar, yeah. I believe in the past - in the bush fire brigade system, that people who wanted to attend and assist could use unregistered vehicles to go and attend. Where this was highlighted was in Texas this year, as the flood had peaked there there was a silver mine at Texas - Twin Hills silver mine, they have ample machinery up there but obviously it is not registered. They offered their services of that to council to help in the clean-ups and recoveries and anything like that that needed to be used. And in the time-frame we had, we just didn't have the ability to be able to get permission to get that done. Whereas if all councils had an option that we could say, "Look, this is" - it is declared a disaster, once it is declared a local disaster, council has got the ability to authorise the use of those for those particular clean-ups, I think.

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COMMISSIONER: Have you got the capacity to make sure that what you are authorising is safe?-- Well, that is something we would have to sit down and negotiate through. I would think in this particular case, with something like a silver mine where they have got Workplace Health & Safety issues and things like that and up-to-date information, it is not just getting an old Massey Ferguson tractor from the bottom of the shed and going down and using it.

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I imagine you might want to use local agricultural equipment sometimes, too?-- It would be very advantageous, particularly in this particular case.

Mmm. Do you see any way of, I don't know, liaising with the police or somebody who could provide machinery inspection service, perhaps, to do something quickly where you couldn't be as confident as you could with that mine about the safety of the equipment?-- Look-----

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In other words, if you had the local farmer offering his tractor and you needed it, is there any quick way of making sure the thing is roadworthy, safe?-- You know, that's hard to say because in most of those cases they probably would just be going to the farm next door, which probably doesn't really matter. This is a case where they had to come 15 kilometres into town along State road to clean up around the town. So it was just a little bit more complex than the issue that you are

talking about and a bit more complex than what I stated in fire service.

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I am interested in what you say because in another area, there has been the question raised about four-wheeler bikes and things being used to get from place to place when people couldn't be reached otherwise, off-road type vehicles and whether they should have been given some sort of temporary-----?-- In this particular instance, I know I am harping on something that I know would have been right, but our council vehicles were busy doing all the things that they had to do. We needed extra vehicles which you couldn't just - you know, getting contractors and extra things at the moment, you know, for the next two years is going to be near impossible. So this was just a short term thing for two or three days which could have made the situation a little bit easier. It wasn't the end of the road, it is just something that I believe needed to be raised and an answer - it may be sitting down with the police and working their way through it. I can't answer how you would have someone issue a roadworthy or for want of a better - for what you are asking.

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Right, thank you.

MS WILSON: Thank you. If I now can take you to 6A of that original statement that we started with? And that talks about "The regulation and maintenance of the levee bank system"-----?-- Yep.

-----"within the Goondiwindi Regional Council in comparison to adjacent local government areas." You say that, "Some of the regions' levee banks are regulated under the Waggamba Shire Council local law number 26, levee banks 2004, that the jurisdiction under this local law only regulates the construction and maintenance of levee banks within the former Waggamba Shire Council."?-- Yes.

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"That area is predominantly rural and agriculture. It does not include the levee bank protecting the town of Goondiwindi."?-- No.

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Should the regulation of levee banks be extended to cover the whole of the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- Actually, we have just - we're discussing this at the moment as to whether this should apply in local or whether it should go to our planning scheme.

I didn't quite get that?-- Sorry, we've currently been discussing this as to whether this should stay as a local law or whether it should be adopted through our planning scheme. Basically, the floodplain - the major floodplain area is what was the former Waggamba Shire Council area, which is all to the west of us here, and I don't see that the inclusion of the town levee bank's going to have any bearing on that at all. As the CEO mentioned, it has been here since 1957 and it stood the test of time, and it has been extended and added to since its original construction, but I don't see that that's going to be of any benefit to anyone to include that.

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What is under analysis by council, is that the construction of private levee banks by landholders?-- Private landholders have got to have permits of which goes through the process system, they apply for it, looks at whether it is blocking floodways, whether it is blocking off natural watercourses, et cetera, et cetera. It is all related to the agricultural side.

Are there any areas in the Goondiwindi Regional Council jurisdiction that should have regulated levee banks but don't because the Waggamba Shire Council only - that area only covers the Waggamba Shire Council and not-----?-- As I said before, the previous Goondiwindi town council was only 15 square kilometres. It was a very, very small town council. There was no point having any - the Inglewood Shire - the council that came into it, I don't believe is applicable for what the - monitoring the situation that the former Waggamba shire set up to try and monitor these levee banks and keep accurate description of what floodplain is being blocked.

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In your view, is it important for the Goondiwindi Regional Council to be able to monitor the building of these private levee banks?-- I think it has proved itself to be - I think there is only two councils, I believe, that could do it. Emerald and Goondiwindi are the only two that have done it. The rest have left it up to the device of the States and whatever. It causes awful conflict, I would think, on the way through. This elaborates all that. And you have got an accurate description of what's going to happen so that you do know with water where - well, you have got some sort of assumption of where water is going to go.

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And could you give us any example of how many applications you get for the building of more private levee banks every year?-- Currently there is very, very few because there is embargo on it now. Over the years I couldn't tell you how many there was. I could find out for you. There was quite a few over the years but obviously as - as the construction of them goes on they don't get - they do get renewed but they don't get a reapplication.

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And why is that?-- Because it is existing, it is already there.

Okay, what about - you said there is an embargo?-- Well, stopped building them.

Is that something that's come from the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- No, no, that's a State.

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Now, one other matter that I wish to raise with you is the media releases-----?-- Yeah.

-----that were issued by the Goondiwindi Regional Council. I have got copies of these?-- These would be some of them. Certainly not all of them.

There was more?-- I would think, yeah.

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I tender those documents that you have seen.

COMMISSIONER: 246.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 246"

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MS WILSON: The Goondiwindi Regional Council, was it the case that also used a Facebook account?-- Sorry, do you have questions on these?

No?-- I am sorry. Yes, we used a Facebook account as well.

And how did you find that as a tool for communication?-- Exceptionally good. It was a very, very well accepted - very, very well accepted by the community and the people from near and far. I have got some - it was a very resourceful thing that was staffed by two people, 24 hours a day for the three days it operated. Between - three days it operated, between January 11 and January 24. 18,978 visits to the Facebook site from 7,622 individuals.

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From the comments you've received though, did people find it useful or did-----?-- Had nothing but favourable comments from it and where I think we found it very, very handy is when you get into smaller towns, rumours and innuendos are your biggest killer. By activating this, if someone put a ridiculous statement on Facebook, you correct it and rectify it straight away.

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And how much resources did you have to have to monitor that to ensure-----?-- As I say, we had two people 24 hours a day, a senior communications staff. I was there the whole time, the LDMG, the CEO as well as the staff we had. It was quite intensive but I think - from the comments received I think it was really, really worthwhile.

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Were those two people only tasked with looking after the Facebook or were they tasked with other issues as well?-- Basically.

Basically?-- Basically. The majority of it was tasked to those two people to do that.

Can you have a look at this document I have been provided?-- Yes.

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Which is the January 2011 flood communications list?-- Yes.

Does that have a more fulsome account of the media releases that were issued by the Goondiwindi Regional Council?-- It does. It has got a full display of everything we attended to, where we did it. We - we used ABC Southern Downs. I think

during that time I did over 200 media interviews and that was during the two to three peak days, and during that time there was only one call that I made out and that was to the ABC, the rest were all incoming calls. We also - it was interesting from your first person this morning, we managed to take over the FM 88 station and we relayed all our media releases on to that. We had circuit emails going out from four central people in town, the Care Goondiwindi, Goondiwindi Hospital, Border Rivers and our local Chamber of Commerce. So all of those - every press release was also on an email circuit out to that, the website you have covered, the Facebook. We had a fully manned phone system at the office that our CEO talked about. We had poster displays, because I said in small towns the other place you can always curb a few rumours and innuendos was in the pubs so we had posters go up in every hotel and every supermarket every time they went up to keep the people updated with that.

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COMMISSIONER: Can you just tell me with the FM 88 you mentioned-----?-- Sorry?

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With FM 88 you mentioned before, who runs that and how did you manage to-----?-- The young fellow in the office called Mattie, who is a bit of a whizz on it, he contacted the people that operate it.

Is it a private outfit or what is it, do you know?-- To tell you the truth, I really don't know. All I know is I had to speak into the computer and it came out on the radio, and it was a very, very helpful tool because people could get to hear, that do tune into the 88 FM were able - how he managed to get the messages on there, I am not real sure. But it was - all of these things were part of a tool to get the one - and our media releases were the same ones that went to everybody, whether it went through the email, the website, the FM, the ABC, any of the TVs, everything was exactly the same so that there was no mixed messages.

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MS WILSON: Just on that issue, was it communicated to the residents that if you are wanting information, this is the radio station to tune into?-- Yes. I believe some of these-----

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The point is that it is well known?-- ABC and the FM we included as to both because there would be hourly - during the major night of it, the ABC offered to ring at every hour and 15 minutes past the hour, right through and give a total update. So the public were aware of that and I do believe a number of people listened to that.

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Okay. Madam Commissioner, I tender that document. That document should be perhaps joined with the other document of media releases.

COMMISSIONER: Do you want them as one exhibit?

MS WILSON: Yes, I do.

COMMISSIONER: It will be part of the media releases, exhibit 246. That's the full extent of the media releases?

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MS WILSON: And we will tender the Facebook feeds that perhaps can be a separate exhibit.

COMMISSIONER: 247.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 247"

MS WILSON: Finally, I have been given this document which is a map that the Goondiwindi Regional Council prepared. Have you seen this map before?-- That's the photograph map that was done at the time during the flood?

When you say at the time, what time are you referring to?-- I don't think it is actually on this one. I think it was the 13th. Late in the evening. I can't tell you if it is 2 or 5 o'clock.

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COMMISSIONER: Some prompting from the back.

MS WILSON: It appears it may have been the 15th. What does the black indicate?-- The black indicates the water. Can I-----

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Yes?-- The black indicates the water - that's the township there of Goondiwindi. So you can actually see how the levee bank system protects the town. That's the river that goes through and the levee bank's there. This is the Whalan Creek where the water goes out here and then it goes on the floodplain here from Goondiwindi as well. What water doesn't go off through the south goes round to the Brigalow Creek area. North-east of the town around the town. You can see the airport out here. That was the showgrounds there - sorry, that's the racecourse there. The showgrounds is here. Right beside the airport and it is protected by that levee. So the water goes out that way and just joins up and comes through the Collandoon system and this water goes down through the New South Wales system.

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So the airport is always protected by the levee bank?-- The levee bank actually stops right here. You can just see there where it stops. The area that - of Brigalow Estate that you questioned-----

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Yes?-- I think Deputy Mayor about is that area there where you can see the water. So on this occasion the airport was open the whole time, and it has been, I think, to my knowledge, most of the - all of the times that it has been here. So it is in the higher area now that the levee bank does come around to protect it.

I tender that map.

COMMISSIONER: 248.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 248"

MS WILSON: Mayor, just in terms of that last line of questioning about the airport, has it been considered by the Goondiwindi Regional Council to extend the levee to ensure the security of the airport?-- We're looking - that will be part of the study. I am sure it will come up in the future.

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Thank you, Mayor. I have no further questions?-- Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar?

MR DOLLAR: No questions.

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MS McLEOD: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: Just one can I trouble you with. Mr Mayor, with respect to your proposal for the use of unregistered vehicles, have you or anyone in council spoken to officers of the Nominal Defendant with respect to that proposal?-- Officers of?

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Of the Nominal Defendant with respect to that proposal?-- No.

Have you - would it be anticipated that the council would offer compulsory third party insurance in relation to the use of vehicles while being operated on a temporary permit?-- Look, I must admit I haven't put that much thought into it. We were thinking along the lines of something like the dealer plate type situation or the permit. You know, I am sure if we were able to use somebody else's machinery in an emergency, I am sure the payment of the third party would probably be the least of the problems.

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Perhaps not if someone's injured while such vehicle is out?-- I thought you were questioning whether we would pay the insurance.

I am just curious as to what proposal you have to ensure those vehicles when they are being operated are insured. Does council intend to offer that compulsory third party insurance or make arrangements with someone else?-- We haven't got to that point of discussion at the moment. But, as I said, if that was the sticking point, I think you'd find it would be game for any council to say they wouldn't participate in that.

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It is not something that the Goondiwindi Regional Council at this stage has made any consideration?-- To be quite honest, we haven't advanced that particular section because we have had other issues that are more pressing at the moment we're trying to get underway.

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Nothing further.

MR FAVELL: No questions, thank you.

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

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Scheu, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Rodney Phillip Ferguson.

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RODNEY PHILLIP FERGUSON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Rodney Phillip Ferguson?--
Correct.

And are you the Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Downs
Regional Council?-- Yes.

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Are you also the Local Disaster Coordinator for the Southern
Downs Regional Council?-- Yes.

Have you provided a statement to the Queensland Flood
Commission of Inquiry detailing the planning preparation and
response and recovery of the Southern Downs Regional Council
to the flood events of December 2010?-- Yes.

And January 2011. Can you have a look at this document,
please? Is this the statement that was provided?-- Yes.

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Do you swear that the contents are true and correct?-- We
have one alteration - no, that's changed since I last - that's
okay. It is correct, sorry.

I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 249.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 249"

MS WILSON: You have also provided some other documents to the
Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

This is a letter dated 11 April 2011. Can you look at this
document, please? That's a document that you provided?--
Yes.

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And addresses some other issues, additional information that
was requested?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: 250.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 250"

MS WILSON: A document was provided - a letter was provided by
you on the 1st of April 2011 also providing information in
relation to the Southern Downs response and recovery planning

and preparation for the flood events?-- Yes.

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Could you have a look at this document, please?-- Yep.

Is that the document dated 1 April 2011 that was provided to this Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 251.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 251"

MS WILSON: There has been another document that you provided to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry dated 10 March 2011 which also highlights some issues in relation to the Southern Downs Regional Council in relation to the floods?-- Yes.

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I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 252.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 252"

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MS WILSON: The Southern Downs Regional Council has a disaster management plan?-- Yes.

Is that in final form or in draft form?-- Draft form.

When do you expect that to be finalised?-- I would expect the next three months we'll finalise that plan.

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Can I show you this document, please. That is the disaster management plan?-- Yes.

And was that the disaster management plan that was in draft, but being utilised during the flood events?-- Yes.

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 253.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 253"

MS WILSON: The Southern Downs Regional Council provides

situation reports?-- Yes.

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And you provided these situation reports to the Warwick District disaster coordinator?-- Mmm.

Who authors those situation reports?-- One of our officers prepares them, and I sign off on those reports.

Perhaps I'll do this in two ways. Can I show you these documents of the situation reports on 28 December 2010 to 30 December 2010?-- Can I just say in regards to that event I wasn't present at the time, and our acting CEO would have sign off on these documents.

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But they are a council documents and you're aware of those documents?-- They are a standard document for them, yes.

And those situation reports are relevant to the first flood event that the Southern Downs Regional Council dealt with?-- Yes, the December ones, yes.

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I'll tender those documents.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 254.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 254"

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MS WILSON: And then situation reports were completed in relation to the second flood event?-- Yes.

And if I can show you the documents starting on 10 January 2011 to 20 January 2011. They are the situation reports in relation to that second flood event-----?-- Yes.

-----that the Southern Downs Regional Council dealt with. I tender those situation reports.

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COMMISSIONER: 255.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 255"

MS WILSON: Are you aware that the Southern Downs Regional Council did a report in relation to Stanthorpe and the urban flood inundation that occurred there?-- The January event?

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Yes?-- Yes.

And that report outlines the issues in relation to Stanthorpe?-- Yes.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is that that document which relates to the Stanthorpe urban flooding inundation?-- Yes.

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And it's dated in February, I think, 2011?-- It's actually dated 15 March.

But it relates-----?-- That's the report.

-----that relates to the January-----?-- Yes.

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I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 256.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 256"

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MS WILSON: Now, after the flood events the Southern Downs Regional Council Local Disaster Management Group had a review about what worked well?-- Um hmm.

And what didn't?-- Yes.

And there was an action plan that was also devised?-- Yes.

Can you have a look at these documents, please. The first document is headed up "unconfirmed meeting minutes"?-- Yes.

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Is that in relation to looking at the broader issues of what - the broader issues that arose during the flood events?-- Yes, that was a meeting of the Local Disaster Management Group, so involved all the agencies involved during the flood event and the recovery following and just allowed each agency group to comment on issues they saw as needing improvement or where things went exceptionally well, to make sure we put that in place for future events. So it was a follow-up, debrief type thing.

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There was also an action plan that's attached to that?-- Yes.

And what is the function of that action plan?-- The intent is to make sure that the issues raised on that day of that meeting are actually followed through and dealt with. So our council's governance officer would take responsibility for making sure each agency is contacted in a reasonable space of time to see if they are following up and make sure they are following up, and if not, at the next LDMG meeting we will raise those issues again.

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And at that meeting will you be able to determine what has been followed up and what may be out standing?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 257.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 257"

MS WILSON: In that same vein, there was also a Warwick flood debrief on Friday, 21 January?-- Um hmm.

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Held at the Warwick Police District office conference room?-- It was held. I wasn't present at that meeting. But yes, I'm aware of it being held.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Have you seen the debrief meeting-----?-- I haven't seen this document.

You haven't seen that document?-- No.

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Give me that document back then. Were you aware that the Stanthorpe subgroup had an incident control debrief?-- Yes.

And that occurred on 17 January 2011?-- That would be correct, yes.

Can I show you this document. What was the purpose of this meeting?-- Stanthorpe - during the January event we had both flooding in the Warwick area and also the Stanthorpe area, so we had two separate disaster coordination centres operating and recovery centres. So it was specifically targeted towards the Stanthorpe community and again just to recognise how things went, where can we improve on things. As noted in my submission, one of the issues we have recognised post amalgamation is that while we have one central system of governance now, we finished up with having two separate disasters going on at the same time. So we really hadn't planned for that, so this was a debrief at the Stanthorpe area following that event down there.

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We'll talk about that amalgamation issue later on?-- Okay.

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But that document records the issues that were raised at that meeting?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 258.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 258"

MS WILSON: And there was also a flood debrief on 6 January, and that relates to the flooding that occurred at the end of December 2010?-- That's correct, yes.

And the same purpose is it's just to sit down and work out what occurred?-- Yes.

What happened, and what can be done better?-- That's it.

Can you have a look at this document, please. Is that the document that relates to the December 2010 floods, and the meeting occurred on 6 January?-- Yeah.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 259.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 259"

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MS WILSON: Now can I ask you some questions in relation to your - the communications that occurred between the Local Disaster Management Group and SunWater?-- Yes.

You've raised an issue about the Leslie Dam and water from the Leslie Dam cutting off road access on a highway west of Warwick?-- Yes.

What communication did you receive in relation to that there was going to be discharge?-- We had advice from the DDC, Inspector Morrow, that he had received advice from SunWater saying that they intended releasing water from Leslie Dam. Received two emails to that effect, but I think it was only, as far as I'm aware, when the mayor made a phone call to SunWater on probably 10 January - Monday the 10th, expressing some concerns about the amount of water being let out. At that stage I think they had five or six of their seven gates open on the dam. Following that discussion, we had regular contact from SunWater - or I personally had regular contact from SunWater. They would phone and keep me updated as to how much water they were releasing. Prior to that particular time, though, I hadn't had any personal contact with SunWater myself. That's in the second event, because I wasn't there for the first event, and I don't think in the first event the Leslie Dam was an issue at that time anyway. It was quite low prior to that December event.

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Did you get any contact from the DDC, Inspector Morrow, in relation to releases from the dam?-- We received two emails which were advice he passed on from SunWater that they intended releasing water from the dam, there could be downstream effects in the sense of flooded roads or flood inundation of properties.

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Now, communication between the LDMG and SunWater has continued after the flood events?-- Yes. I was approached for a meeting with the mayor and myself with the regional manager and manager of operations for Leslie Dam to meet and discuss just

post event as to what happened and can we do things better again. At that point in time we invited SunWater to become part - a member of the LDMG so that we don't have these - this what we perceived as a lack of communication in the future.

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COMMISSIONER: Can I get some context. Had you previously had an issue about releases from the dam, or is this the first time that SunWater really became important?-- I think this is the first time in 20 years the dam has been full. I've been there for seven years in Warwick, and this is only the second time water has been released. The previous time it had risen to 25 per cent storage. It is basically an irrigation storage dam. 15 per cent is reserved for the Warwick urban supply, so once it got to 25 per cent, they release 10 per cent out within a matter of a week, I suppose. So there really hadn't been any significant release of water in that - from that storage for at least 20 years.

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So you just hadn't got to where you were talking to each other that-----?-- I can only imagine change of staff. Like, 20 years ago I don't think SunWater existed either. It would have been Water Resources Commission controlled water storages across the State. SunWater is a very different operator to Water Resources Commission, being virtually a commercial entity compared to a State agency. So it really hadn't been an issue for us before.

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Thank you.

MS WILSON: If I can take you to paragraph 52 of your statement?-- Yes.

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And that refers to the communication between government agencies in relation to road conditions and closures could be improved?-- Um hmm.

And you state, "During the first event in Warwick it is believed a large number of people, possibly up to 300 individuals, were in the southern evacuation centre who had travelled from New South Wales, only to find the roads cut at Warwick." What is your suggestion to improve this better communication?-- Just as the Goondiwindi representatives mentioned, this is a cross-border concern that the Southern Downs Council has as well. If there had been improved communication at a State agency level between Transport and Main Roads Department in Queensland and whatever the agency is in New South Wales, we believe appropriate signage would have been erected possibly as far south as Tenterfield warning people that they could not get past Warwick. Out of those 300 individuals we had in the southern evacuation centre - Warwick, once it floods, is split in two. So the southern evacuations, we had one operating south one of the river and one operated north of the river. Out of those 300, there might have been 20 local people who had been evacuated from their homes and couldn't find accommodation elsewhere. The other 280 people were simply travellers who had been travelling north and got to Warwick, and realised we can't go any further. And they are suddenly there, our motels are

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full, and we had very large demand on our evacuation centre there. If the departments could - the agencies could communicate better and put up - make travellers aware much further south that there are road blockages at Warwick, we don't think we would have half as many people in the evacuation centres.

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Indeed, at a later stage the police in Stanthorpe were doing that?-- Yes. Once we informed the police at Warwick of all these people coming in, they set up some operations in Stanthorpe to forewarn people don't bother going any further. Find accommodation here in Stanthorpe. Stay overnight. It will be an overnight type arrangement. That certainly improved things, but really we had so many people coming. That was the December event I think it referred to. That was the day after Boxing Day. Boxing Day holiday, so a lot of people starting their annual family holidays. Far more than what we would normally have in the Warwick area. Certainly well and truly the greater number came from travellers more so than our own residents in those evacuation centres.

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Before you were discuss being the amalgamation issue, and that amalgamation issue deals with the - deals with Stanthorpe?-- Yes.

And the flooding that occurred in Stanthorpe?-- Yes.

If I can take you to paragraph 63 of your statement?-- 63?

63?-- Um hmm.

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That talks about dealing with the dual event?-- Mmm.

And your statement states that fortunately there was experienced council staff in Stanthorpe who were really able to step up and take control of the disaster management?-- Yes.

And you mention Senior Sergeant Mike Ireland of the QPS who assisted?-- Yes.

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What steps has the Southern Downs Regional Council undertaken to ensure they can deal with a dual event like what occurred on this occasion?-- We've commenced interim planning to make sure we have the proper resources set up in Stanthorpe, as we have in Warwick. A good example of that experienced staff, one of those staff who were there in January, senior engineer, been on council there for 22 years with Stanthorpe Shire Council, he's now since left the organisation and moved to another council. The other engineer who was in Stanthorpe had only been there for a couple of years. So all of a sudden, the major one of those experienced staff members that we had for flood type situations, being the senior engineer, is no longer there. So we really have to look at planning better to provide experienced staff from across the region. It's something quite different to what we've had in the past. But we'll be looking at making sure we have, as an example, a senior engineer who will be able to travel to Stanthorpe and set up a coordination centre down there and monitor the events

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within that local area. Ideally we would have people who truly understand the local area. That certainly has come out in the review of the debrief we did in Stanthorpe. It's very helpful to have local people there to understand local issues. But if we don't have an experienced engineer on deck, as an example, we're going to have to make sure we have someone who is sufficiently trained within that small community to go down there and be that senior engineering type officer.

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In other regions we've heard evidence of communities outside the major hub setting up their own group which then can report back-----?-- Yes.

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-----to the LDMG?-- Yes.

Like a local emergency coordination group set up on the ground. Would you be considering something like that for the Stanthorpe region?-- It's one of the options we are considering. I won't say it will happen. Warwick and Stanthorpe are only 65 kilometres apart. They are both - they are not small country towns: Stanthorpe community is about 5,000 people in the township; Warwick's about 12,000. It's not the only option we're considering, but it is one of the options we're considering.

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The future measures - the plans for the future are discussed in paragraphs 59 to 62 of your statement?-- Um hmm.

You're in the process of completing a flood study?-- Yes.

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Has that been completed?-- No, I would say it would be 85 per cent completed now. A consultancy firm has been engaged to carry out that work. That's for the Condamine catchment only; it doesn't cover Stanthorpe. You may have noted in the submission we're looking at Stanthorpe and Leyburn communities as well. The Warwick Shire Council - it could have been the Warwick City Council as it existed - had a flood study done for Warwick city area back in the early 70s, apparently. But outside of that, there's nothing further in the Condamine catchment. So Southern Downs Regional Council took on that task, and it should be completed this year - this calendar year and adopted. It will form part of council's new planning scheme then as an attachment to our planning scheme.

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That is your disaster management the plan?-- It will form part of the disaster management plan as well, but one of the main concerns with the flood study is currently we have no way of preventing people from constructing infrastructure on what is assumed to be flood-affected land. So you can go and build a house in a rural area on what, to an experienced person, would be flood-prone land. Without the flood study, we can't stop people doing that.

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So it's going to be a land planning - it's going to assist in land planning?-- As well, yes.

You say at 61 that the council and the LDMG have conducted reviews?-- Um hmm.

And continues to implement changes into plans, policies, procedures training?-- Yes.

What sort of changes have been undertaken since the flood events?-- They are subtle in how we operate coordination centres, improving on how we coordinate our communications centre. Until you actually get into a disaster event and realise the full demands on your resources, it's difficult to put it down on paper. Once we'd been through it, though, we recognised we really do need, say, an officer completely responsible for our comm centre, making sure it's staffed and there's always someone there, and the right messages are going out to the people who are phoning up. Goondiwindi had used Facebook. It wasn't something that Southern Downs used during this last event, but it's certainly something we'll be taking on board and introducing in the future. We had looked at the SMS messages. Had discussions with Ian McHugh about that during the January event and decided not to proceed with the SMS messages for a couple of different reasons. So they are very subtle changes in how we go about doing things, just trying to improve how we manage these disaster events.

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Perhaps I can take you to Exhibit 257, which is the unconfirmed meeting minutes, which was the review of the flood events and then the action plan that is attached to that. We'll get you a copy of that?-- Thank you.

You've got one there?-- No.

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We'll get you a copy of that. This - the action plan is separated into essentially three columns: what went well, what didn't go well, and suggested actions?-- Yes.

If I can take you to page 3 of that action plan?-- Yes.

The first issue is, "Local radio coverage could have been improved"?-- Um hmm.

Did the council use a dedicated local radio?-- No. There's two - well, ABC obviously, two commercial radio stations which are based in Toowoomba but broadcast across the Warwick community and Stanthorpe community, one local FM station - community-based FM station in Warwick, and a similar station based - I think it's at Tenterfield that broadcasts to the Stanthorpe community.

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Is the Southern Downs Regional Council contemplating dedicating one radio station to, that is, where residents can access information?-- Not as of yet, no.

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No?-- It hasn't been suggested by anyone before. I'm not sure whether that would be available in our community.

When you say, "Local radio coverage could have been improved", is that meaning more of it, or better use of it?-- A bit of both. Certainly we're aiming to improve our relationship with the local FM station. We would have liked to have made better

use of that. They have their own needs and demands on their time. So we would like to improve that. That's through communication with them. Generally, ABC are the station a lot of people go to in rural communities. In the first event, I think it worked quite well; in the second event there was so much happening across the State, people - we had complaints after the event that people were - listened to the ABC, but couldn't get the information they needed about the Warwick or Stanthorpe community. That was simply because of the scope of the disaster across the State more so than not providing information to the ABC Radio. So I just don't know how you can deal with that.

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The information that needs to be provided to the radio and conveyed to the residents needs to be more localised so they understand what's happening in their region?-- Yes, if it's possible.

One of the things you talk about on page 3, which is the next point, is that you did not use SMS alert system?-- Yes.

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Did you not use it because that was a deliberate system, or you weren't aware of it?-- No, we're aware of it. For the second event in Warwick we discussed use of it for those on the Condamine catchment and Condamine floodplain. We rejected the idea in discussions with Emergency Management Queensland. We rejected the idea for a couple of reasons. One is it is limited. As mentioned before, the 160 characters limits the message. Our main concern was the Condamine floodplain is a relatively small part of our overall region of the Southern Downs. We didn't want to panic people into thinking there was wider flooding than what they would normally expect. So in the end, we decided not to use the SMS in this event.

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One of the suggested actions is to prepare a draft SMS alert message for various situations?-- Yes.

And gain advice from EMQ?-- Yes. It depends, I think, on the event. A bushfire could be completely different to a flood event. In the Warwick area - flooding is not an unusual thing in the Warwick area. Bushfires are short, sharp and furious, so SMS probably has more benefit there than during that flood event we went through.

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But certainly you're going to advice from EMQ to determine the appropriateness about when to use it?-- Yes, certainly.

One of the matters that didn't go well was the national SES phone number had problems due to the number of calls. If you look at the third-last line, "what didn't go well"?-- That must have come out from our SES coordinator, I would say. I'm not truly aware of what the issues were there with that particular-----

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In terms of the deployment of SES, did you encounter any issues?-- No. SES staff did a fantastic job.

And can you give me any indication of the numbers of the SES

that you've got in the Warwick region?-- In Warwick, to the best of my knowledge, it runs at about 30 members. Very professional organisation in the Warwick area. In Stanthorpe it's slightly smaller. I would say about half those numbers, and again run at a very professional level. We have, since the event, had requests from smaller communities such as Leyburn and Karara, I think it might have been, seeking to establish SES in those areas. It's not as easy as simply saying, "We'll set up an SES." There's quite a deal of training involved and responsibility. There's liability issues to deal with, and there's obviously equipping those units if you do decide to set them up. So council at this stage is dealing with EMQ about those requests from those communities.

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The one other issue that I wish to take you to on this page is the last action and suggested actions, which is investigate the use of a siren as a community warning in Killarney?-- Yes.

Why is that?-- Killarney sits right at the base of the Great Dividing Range. It is virtually built on the base of the mountain. When a flood event happens in Killarney, it happens awfully quick. Unlike Warwick, where it was some six to twelve hours later. So it was obviously raised through - I think it was December where Killarney copped the water again, and the indication is maybe an audio signal, as in a siren, will assist residents in that community.

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And how would that be anticipated to operate? Would it go on gauges?-- No, we haven't done any investigation into that option at all at this time.

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You state that at the next LDMG meeting there's going to be a follow-up on this action plan?-- Yes.

Can you provide to the Commission a report on-----?-- Yes.

-----the status of all those matters on the action plan?-- Certainly can do.

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Thank you. I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Dollar.

MR DOLLAR: Mr Ferguson, you've mentioned your relationship with SunWater and the positives and that SunWater will participate in future Local Disaster Management Group meetings?-- Yes.

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I just wish to ask you first of all, though, a few questions about your local disaster management plan, the draft plan that has been tendered before this Commission?-- Um hmm.

Now, are you aware that the Goondiwindi Regional Council has included SunWater as a specialist advisor within its regional man?-- Only from what I heard this morning, yes.

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Is that something that you see some benefit in; SunWater being included in some sort of capacity as a specialist advisor within that draft plan?-- We have, since the event, invited SunWater to become a member of the LDMG, which they have accepted. Gratefully, I would think. It's simply a way of improving communications between agencies.

Now, you're one of the listed persons or entities within the EAP, which is the emergency action plan for Leslie Dam, and that's a document that contains quite a deal of information in terms of how those dams are operated and the reasons for which they operate?-- Yes.

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And through that document a wide range of contact details are available?-- Yes.

And they include things that you're aware of such, as the mobile number of the CEO?-- Yes.

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After hours contact numbers of the dam operators, really all of the essential personnel that could be potentially spoken to during a flood event?-- Yes.

And are you aware of whether your council received advice from SunWater on 26 November 2010 whereby that emergency action plan contact list was updated?-- I'm not aware of that email being received, but it doesn't mean it didn't arrive at our organisation. It would have gone through the officer responsible for that plan. I'm assuming it's been received.

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So that would be something that would be filed away with the relevant emergency action plan and updated as it came through?-- Yes.

And you're aware, aren't you, of SunWater's 24-hour call centre contact that can be utilised by the council?-- Yes.

As well as its website, by which information relating to Leslie Dam storage information can be obtained?-- Yes, we have accessed that website, yes.

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Now, at paragraph 57 of your statement?-- Mmm.

You make a comment there that I would like to explore with you briefly?-- Yep.

That "Communications were an issue in regards to the Leslie Dam as council did not have an established contact with SunWater at the time."?-- Mmm.

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Now, you would agree, wouldn't you, that SunWater has made available numerous means and methods by which it can be contacted through the emergency action plan contact list, as well as its website and 24 hour call centre?-- I will say that sending a list to the council in comparison to making contact with the council and actually creating a communication link between the two organisations are very different processes and that's why I think we have entered this next phase of bringing SunWater into the LDMG.

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Are you talking there at paragraph 57 more about establishing personal or individual relationships between members of your council and individual people at SunWater?-- From an LDMG perspective it is about having that person attend our meetings so all agencies, including council, can create that link with SunWater.

And, indeed, on the 9th of February a meeting occurred-----?-- Uh-huh.

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-----for that very purpose?-- Yes.

Between yourself as well as two members of SunWater, Barry Jeppeson, who is General Manager Infrastructure Management, and Peter Collett, who is the Area Operations Manager?-- Yes.

And the purpose of that meeting was to discuss opportunities for improving the relationship between SunWater-----?-- Yes.

-----and your council?-- Definitely.

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And improving the communications between those two organisations?-- Yes. I will say that was instigated by SunWater to have that meeting to - obviously a few discussions went on during the January event, from the mayoral perspective, he had some discussions with SunWater reps, but I think in the end the positive outcome will be their involvement in the LDMG.

Indeed, that was something that was specifically agreed to by both organisations-----?-- Yes.

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-----during that meeting. So that will involve direct involvement by SunWater staff in those LDMG meetings?-- Yes.

Now, were SunWater also invited to participate in a future debrief in relation to this flood event?-- No - oh, a future debrief?

Yes?-- Sorry, I was thinking of an existing debrief. Yes, SunWater has been involved. It will probably be the next meeting of the LDMG to come along and be involved in that.

And what's the purpose of that?-- I think there is a lack of education, a lack of knowledge in the general community and amongst agencies about how SunWater operates these water storages. Again, it is a way of improving our own knowledge of what will happen in the future.

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And is that the reason why the council has invited SunWater to a meeting with council officers to explain the physical characteristics of the dam and the operational requirements for the dam?-- Yes, it is more of an information session for our elected members and general community as to how does SunWater operate.

Because there is some problem in the Warwick area - or did you hear rumours in relation to things that turned out to be false about the dam, such as cracks appearing in the dam through the January flood event?-- I think every water storage in Queensland was cracking during the flood event. Certainly we had - we had phone calls from people in regards to Leslie Dam and two other water storage units that council operates. Glenlyon dam is another one. Just a rumour mill going around that things were - because they were full or overflowing, they were going to break.

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So this false information rumour mill is some type of problem for council during flood events?-- Well, it is just another - just another distraction, I suppose, of the general community who have enough problems without worrying about major water storage collapsing.

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In terms of other issues of concern of the Warwick community, you mention in your statement at paragraph 43 that discharges from the dam can cause the Cunningham Highway west of Warwick to be cut?-- Yes.

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Now, you have mentioned that the Local Disaster Management Group received contact from the District Disaster Management Group's DDC in relation to potential releases from the dam?-- Yes.

And generally you would agree that it would be the district or Local Disaster Management Group's responsibility to coordinate between various government agencies?-- As far as I am aware the DDC would have that responsibility as far as disseminating information from another agency such as SunWater.

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Certainly that's what occurred during the January event; as information was passed to the DDC or the District Disaster Management Group, that was passed to you or the Local Disaster Management Group?-- Passed on, yeah. Can I say there, though, that the information that's passed on is very generic in nature, in that the information we received from DDC said that SunWater have advised that they intend to release water

from Leslie Dam and there may be some inundation of roads or inundation of properties. There is no detail provided as to the amount of water that is being released and there was never any studies done as to what impacts releasing X amount of water out of Leslie will have on the road and properties downstream.

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Now, in terms of determining the impacts upon roads downstream, these roads that you are talking about would be within the local council area of your local council?-- Within Southern Downs, yes.

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If I can take you back to the Local Disaster Management Plan, the draft plan that has been prepared, on page 13 of that plan they have set out a number of different responsibilities of the Southern Downs Regional Council during flood events?-- Yeah.

One of those is the collection and interpretation of flood data. The second of those is the issuing of local flood information warnings?-- Uh-huh.

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So would this type of information that you are talking about, about assessing the downstream impacts of releases from Leslie Dam, would that fall within those types of topics listed within your Disaster Management Plan?-- Not directly, no, because the road that everyone is concerned about is the Cunningham Highway so it is a declared State road. Southern Downs has no authority over that road. Certainly, in media releases we do or information back to other agencies we let them know the road is blocked. The local roads that council has control over, we have no real concerns about that as far as releasing of water goes. It really was the blocking of Cunningham Highway that created the problems.

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Now, during the event, are you aware of whether a meeting occurred between Mayor Bellingham and Peter Clegg on 6 January in relation to the request being made of SunWater to communicate directly with Main Roads in relation to releases from the dam?-- I wasn't aware of that, no.

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You weren't aware of that?-- No.

Okay, I won't ask you any further questions about that. Now, you earlier mentioned some misunderstandings in the community in relation to the way in which Leslie Dam operates. You are the person who receives the Emergency Action Plan?-- Mmm.

And has contact with SunWater and the storage operators. Are you aware of whether Leslie Dam has an active flood storage capacity or not?-- From reading recent information I am aware if doesn't have active flood storage.

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So that means once the dam is full, the water essentially needs to be passed through the dam?-- Yep.

And is that to ensure the safety of the dam and the downstream communities from the dam, is it?-- I can't comment on that.

Now, if - one other issue that you do raise in your statement at paragraph 44 is in relation to the releases from Leslie Dam backing up the Condamine into Warwick?-- Yep.

Or causing the floodwaters in Warwick not to recede as quickly as possible?-- Yep.

Now, we're all aware that Leslie Dam is in fact downstream of Warwick?-- Uh-huh.

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So its releases don't pass through Warwick?-- Yep.

But this issue of back-up is that something you have heard concern of in the community, is it?-- It was an issue that the Mayor had raised with SunWater I think on the 10th of January, the Monday. We're fully aware that there was major flood coming down the Condamine again and we were fully aware that SunWater were obviously releasing water from Leslie. The concern was that a substantial release from Leslie Dam would not allow water to flow out of the Warwick city area. It is not based on any flood studies or engineering studies carried out. It is probably experience more than anything, but that request was made, I know, from Peter Keogh's report to the Commission, the timing worked well, the release was cut back before the peak hit Warwick, which is what the Mayor asked for, but I think it is more in relation to the amount of inflow and the release - cut back on that release more so than the Mayor's request. What we don't know is if the peak had hit at the same time as that major outflow from Leslie.

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In terms of talking about the timing of these peaks I would like to ask you your knowledge about a few different matters?-- Uh-huh.

Is it true to say the Condamine peaked at about 8 p.m. on the 11th?-- Yes.

And that there is approximately a one hour travel time from releases from Leslie Dam to the junction with the Condamine?-- According to Mr Keogh, yes. I don't know.

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Are you aware that the - at that time, the peak of the Condamine at 8 p.m., releases from Leslie Dam was - were only 120 cubic metres per second?-- From Mr Keogh's report, yes.

From that same report are you aware that at that particular time the flow in the Condamine was 10 times greater, approximately 1,200 cubic metres per second?-- Yes.

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So that's a much, much more significant flow coming down the Condamine than being released from the Leslie Dam during the peak of the flood?-- Yes. Look, I don't have any question about Mr Keogh's comments. What we don't know is what happens if the opposite occurs, you know, the peak at that point is the same time as the major release of water from Leslie Dam. From memory, at one stage either - probably the 11th

of January, advice to me from SunWater was the gates - all seven gates were open and they were releasing water to the extent equal to 70,000 megalitres per day. That storage only holds 100 thousand megalitres. That was, in their mind, the amount of water coming in. So there has been no studies done. I think if anything comes out of - comes out of the Commission's review, if there is some way of SunWater working with the community to identify what does happen when water is released from those major storages, even in the more rural areas such as Warwick.

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And this would also be something that falls squarely within the management plan of your local council under the areas of responsibility?-- Well, I would call it probably a joint responsibility. If SunWater is releasing the water into our community, it is not council saying "open the gates", it is SunWater as the entity that it is. There is obviously a complex issue there. You can get around that.

And that's, indeed, something that's been - or is being worked towards through this 9 January meeting?-- Yes.

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Improving the communications between council and SunWater?-- Certainly.

Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Ms McLeod?

MS McLEOD: No, thank you.

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MR ROLLS: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Favell?

MR FAVELL: No questions.

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

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: There are no further witnesses proposed to be called this afternoon. Madam Commissioner, I have received a statement today of Kathryn Margaret Jefford. She is the Director of Nursing and facility manager at Goondiwindi Hospital. I propose to tender this statement, although this statement should be circulated amongst the parties. Would it be possible to do that as a matter of housekeeping tomorrow morning when we resume in St George?

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COMMISSIONER: All right. So you will serve it later tonight and tender it tomorrow, is that it?

MS WILSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: What time will we resume in St George?

MS WILSON: 10.15.

COMMISSIONER: So do you want to adjourn now?

MS WILSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: The Inquiry is adjourned until 10.15 tomorrow.

THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 4.16 P.M. TILL 10.15 A.M. THE FOLLOWING
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