

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

EMERALD

..DATE 24/05/2011

..DAY 28

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.02 P.M.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Wilson. I might take the appearances once more. Ms Wilson, for the Commission. Mr Ambrose for SunWater with Mr Dollar. Mr Ure.

MR URE: For the Barcaldine Regional Council.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls for the Crown and Ms O'Gorman for the Commonwealth.

MS O'GORMAN: Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: That's the lot. Yes, Ms Wilson.

MS WILSON: On 31 December 2010, New Year's Eve, the height of the Nogoa River reached a peak at record level. The Nogoa River and the town of Emerald largely became the same. Water from the river stretched into and engulfed much of the town. A significant number of houses and businesses were flooded causing extensive damage and a loss of property and possessions.

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Sitting below the Fairbairn Dam on the Nogoa River, Emerald had faced serious flooding only two years earlier in 2008. Like other towns across Central Queensland the end of 2010 brought soaking rains to Emerald and the Nogoa catchment. On December 27, as the rains intensified, the Local Disaster Management Group was activated to respond to the likelihood of flooding along the Nogoa River. Eventually it became clear these floods would not only reach the levels seen in 2008 but would rise past them. The water was flowing over the spillway of Fairbairn Dam at a height of more than five and a-half metres. The main bridges across the Nogoa River were soon swamped and flood waters inundated a large section of Emerald residential and industrial areas.

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One thing should be noted. Fairbairn Dam is not a flood mitigation dam, its purpose is to hold water for drinking and industry. It does not have gates and the flow of water out of it cannot be controlled. When heavy rains hit the catchment above the dam, the water goes into the dam and then at a certain level flows over the spillway and down into the Nogoa. Extensive flooding occurred not only in Emerald but throughout this region. We will hear about some of the widespread flooding within the central highlands and central western regions.

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On the other side of the Drummond Range lies a small town of Alpha and Jericho, both of which were affected by flood events in late December 2010. Jericho first flooded on Christmas Day when the Jordan River overflowed and entered the township. The water subsided and the town escaped heavy flooding at that stage. However, continued rain saw up to 200 mils fall in the headwaters above Jericho and Alpha. The rain surged down from the mountain ranges from the south and east of the towns.

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By December 27, authorities realised the extent of the flood that was heading their way. Jericho prepared for a second flood peak that would exceed the last. Alpha residents were door knocked to inform them of the possible inundation.

On December 28 a disaster situation was declared around both townships. As the waters steadily rose evacuations occurred, houses were flooded, businesses were affected and roads and rail lines were damaged. The twisting and warping of the Alpha railway line graphically demonstrates the power of floods and the damage caused by flooding waters in this region.

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The township of Rolleston in the Central Highlands was already suffering from a series of flood peaks earlier in December. The low lying roads in the area were already in a perilous state after flooding events from the year prior and the town had been isolated on many an occasion prior to Christmas 2010. However, when 400 mil of rain fell on the Comet River headlands in a little over 48 hours, another flood event was on its way.

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The flood event that occurred this time was unlike any before it. So much so that the peak in Rolleston on 27 December exceeded the previous flood record set only 10 months prior by 2.67 metres, swamping cotton crops, grazing land and vital roads. This flood isolated Rolleston yet again. Flood continued into January 2011 and the area is still recovering. It will for some time yet.

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In this hearing the Commission will call witnesses. We will call witnesses from the Barcaldine and Central Highlands Regional Council who will discuss a range of issues. We will call Des Howard, the local disaster coordinator from Barcaldine Regional Council who will outline the overall response to the floods in Alpha and Jericho. Given the vast distances between towns, the speed and capacity of the Local Disaster Management Group to respond to extensive flooding within the council's region will be considered.

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Sergeant Jim Kelly, the officer in charge of Alpha, will provide a first hand account of the flooding in Jericho and Alpha.

Councillor Gail Nixon of the Central Highlands Regional Council will give evidence about the flooding in Rolleston, a town so often cut off by flood waters.

Mr Max Mayne, a Rolleston cotton grower, will be called to give his account of the response in that region. Using his own helicopter he responded to a distress call and was able to assist by providing supplies to local residents and properties isolated by flood waters.

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We will hear from Danielle Hogarth the Central Regional Manager for AgForce regarding fodder drops to local stock across the region. After receiving calls from members,

Ms Hogarth coordinated the fodder drops despite such drops not being part of AgForce's regular operations.

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We will hear from Alan Mann who lives in Emerald and who had to self-evacuate his family. A metre of water went through he and his family's house.

The Commission will hear from the Mayor and the Local Disaster Management Group chair of Central Highlands, Councillor Maguire, providing evidence about his role before and during the flood event and as well as the future direction of flood management in Emerald and the wider Central Highlands.

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The Local Disaster Coordinator Bill Wilkinson will also be called to provide details on the disaster response in Emerald and Rolleston along with the preparations made before the flood hit in December 2010.

These are the witnesses that we will call here in Emerald. It must be noted that the first task for the Commission pursuant to the Terms of Reference is to provide an interim report due on 1 August this year. This report will deal with matters associated with flood preparedness to enable early recommendations to be implemented before next summer's wet season. To that end we will examine practical or legislature changes that will contribute to a more effective response by government agencies. Madam Commissioner, may we now have a short adjournment before we call the first witness?

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COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn.

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THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 2.09 P.M.

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.13 P.M.

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MS WILSON: I call Sergeant Kelly.

JAMES RAYMOND KELLY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name James Raymond Kelly?-- Correct.

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You are a sergeant of police?-- That is correct.

You are the Officer in Charge of the Alpha station?-- Yes.

You provided a statement to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry?-- I have.

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

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 469.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 469"

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MS WILSON: Now, at the time of the flooding at the end of last year the permanent officer in charge of Jericho police was on leave?-- Correct.

How did that affect your role?-- Usually when the officer in charge of Jericho goes away Alpha takes over looking after Jericho division along with Barcaldine on the western side. They all look after accidents and stuff more to the western area and we do regular patrols through the town while that officer is away.

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How many police are in Jericho?-- Only the one.

Who looks after the town of Jericho itself? Would that be you or would that be the officer in charge?-- No, the officer in charge of Jericho looks after - it is a one officer station.

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Yes?-- Alpha being a two officer station. When that officer is away we usually obtain that vehicle so you have two vehicles in Alpha, if something happens up there and only requires one officer, one officer can go there and deal with it in that vehicle and we keep the other vehicle at Alpha.

On 24 December last year you were advised by Sgt Mason - and he was the Officer in Charge of Barcaldine police?-- Yes.

He said to you that he was at the Jericho police station?-- Yes.

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And he stated that he believed there would be a flooding issue in the Jericho township?-- That is correct, yes.

Information came from people who lived upstream of Jordan Creek and they provided information that there would be some inundation of Jericho, is that the case?-- There was water coming down Jordan Creek but also water coming off the western side of the range between Alpha and Jericho, rain that on the - on the 23rd there was heavy downfall there so it was filling Jordan Creek up, so with the information of what was in the catchment of the Jordan we believed it was going to inundate Jericho.

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I am interested how people who live upstream of Jordan Creek, how they would be aware there would be inundation of Jericho. Do they go on past experience?-- Mostly past experience.

Properties in the Alpha and Jericho region don't change hands all that much. There is a good lot of knowledge upstream of both towns and with what water was in the creek and what had fallen overnight on the - from those - the rainfall event, contacting them, them giving relative heights to where Jordan Creek had flooded in the major flood in '90 and a few other floods that I was aware of since being at Alpha, they gave heights of what they thought might come into town.

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Now, information from the locals and residents who lived on these streams, was essential in both of the flooding events that occurred in Jericho and Alpha?-- Definitely.

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After you got this initial information, more contact was made with other rural residence who lived upstream to gauge the possible water heights?-- Yeah, due to the number of small creeks and that that run into Jordan Creek and Alpha Creek, depending on where the varying rainfalls are people will tell you it - one property it is really high, next property we haven't got a lot there, depending on where the storm was or the rainfall was. You try and get as much information to gauge how much is actually going to come into the main channel.

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Then you piece that information together, for example, when one property owner says, "It is quite high here," and another property owner says, "It is not so high here," you know it hasn't reached that property and is still coming down the creek. Is that what occurs?-- You try and gauge how much water will come into the main town on the way if all storms, say, on the eastern side of the channel and not the western side, or if it is where the events happen was a major general rainfall over the whole area, you know you are going to get a lot of water into the mainstream. But if it is only storms that can drop say four or five inches you know you are going to get big flows in the creek but maybe not enough to do flooding. But if it was four or five inches over the whole of the district you know you are in strife.

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There is a measurement post at a property called Glencoe?-- Yes, Dick Jame's place, yes.

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How far away is that property from Jericho?-- Straight line, guessing probably about 30 kilometres.

In your statement you state that Dick Chambers was able to give the reading and advise on what heights are needed at that point to equate with an inundation of the Jericho town area and at this time it showed there was a water height that would impact on Jericho?-- Yes, that is correct.

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How does that calculation work out from the measurement post at Glenco and interpreting that measurement to the flood height at Jericho?-- When speaking with Mr Chambers he gave us reading heights of what were on the measuring posts there and it was - well, not calculated but known if it reaches that amount at Glenco and there is general rainfall over the areas as what it was in December, there was enough water that would

come in and inundate Jericho. Like I said, I wouldn't know how long Dick or his family has been on that property but he has been there quite long enough to know the heights of what that post will be - bring basically into town. I am not aware of that being calibrated to any measurements in Jericho where the river heights, the water heights for other measuring posts on the Alpha Creek are calculated in town but he gave readings of on that post - on the measurement post there and from those readings we knew water would come into town.

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So from all the information that you gained from talking to local residents upstream?-- Yes.

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Particularly the information that you got from the measurement post at Glenco, you came to the conclusion Jericho - floods were heading towards Jericho?-- Definitely, yes.

You state you took up with Jane Williams and she is in charge with the Knowing the Spiritus bush nurse clinic in Jericho?-- Correct.

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You state that is to whom most people turn when there is no police presence in town. How does that work?-- Again, not a resident of Jericho any longer but Jane has been around the area for - she was the DON at the local hospital and shifted up there to Jericho, a very competent knowledgeable lady, like, being in charge of the hospital. If people have got problems, not of a police nature but you know if they are worried about anything, they used to source Jane as a sounding board or for somebody to fix it. She would contact somebody else and - other police or council or whatever after that - but, yeah, she was the sounding board they would go to first and give her information or if they wanted some help with something they would probably go to Jane first.

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So why did you go and see Jane?-- Just with the local knowledge there now and in my statement with her husband, Brett, he's been in Jericho quite a while and has been through flooding events at both Alpha and Jericho, so they have got good local knowledge of what level it would go and heights and stuff.

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Was it information, further information gathering as well?-- Yeah, with Jane we also had - with Knowing the Spiritus, you know, she would know a lot of people who needed to be evacuated if it needed to get there, what medical supplies they had in town, who was probably going to be in, you know, more the person that needed to be evacuated first and help us out in that respect.

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At this point in time you were aware there would be flooding but not to a level that would affect housing?-- That was the impression I got. It was going to come into town, going on the heights that Dick gave us from previous amounts and what I had seen in the flooding in Jericho since I had been in Alpha, I didn't think, sort of, get close to a couple of houses but the first inundation, yeah, it didn't get into any living areas, it only got into a few sheds and laundries under houses

but didn't get into anybody's living area.

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Didn't cross the floorboards?-- No.

Now, at this stage in this first flood event at Jericho?--
Yes.

You state that a number of local residents moved from their
houses to the town hall?-- Yes.

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Is the town hall used as an evacuation centre?-- Yes, a
central point people go to.

Do they know that?-- Yeah, they do. The local - most of the
people in Jericho and Alpha have been there quite some time so
they lived through - gone through these events before. As I
stated in there, a few of them just said, "We will shift in
the daylight and dry rather than in the wet and the dark," so
they didn't - they had been through shifting at night-time in
the dark when the water is in town and they didn't want to do
that again so they packed up early and set up camp in the
hall.

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The hall, that is used as an evacuation centre. Can you tell
me what the facilities are like? Have you cooking
facilities?-- There is a small kitchenette there, toilets - I
don't believe there is a shower there, I am not 100 per cent
sure on that but it is probably a bit bigger than this room so
you can fit quite a few people in there. Probably would have
been 25 people ended up in there, between mums and dads and
kids, being Christmas time there were a few people come back
for Christmas and at their parents' place or relatives' place
and they, yeah, took the opportunity, like I said, to do it in
the daylight and dry to shift out and set up camp there so
they would be ready for Christmas the next day.

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When you say around about 25, is that 25 people sleeping
there?-- Yes.

You state that water commenced to enter Jericho around
2 o'clock, 2 a.m. on Christmas Day?-- Yes.

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It was a slow process?-- Very slow.

Someone described it like a black snake?-- I thought that was
a pretty good comment. Just sneaks in, no particular order of
the streets it goes up unless you knew all the levels, turns
corners in the gutters and on the streets and slowly walks
through town.

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On 26 December, again using the network of rural residents
upstream, contact was again made and the information you were
getting was the water was commencing to drop?-- That is
correct, yeah, there had been no major rainfall overnight,
Christmas night.

Did you return to Alpha, did you?-- Yeah, I got back to Alpha
about 4 o'clock in the afternoon after checking with Tim

Mission at Barcaldine again and Inspector McKeys out at Longreach and made a decision that everybody was fairly happy in Jericho, just waiting for the water to go down. The road, the Jordan Bridge at the Jordan Creek was able to be used again by vehicles. The water was down on the western side of town and the river was able to be crossed again so.

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That night around about 8 o'clock you received a call from a fellow called Terry Gleeson who has a property called Rainmore 70 kilometres south-east of Alpha?-- Terry is a manager out there, yes.

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You state that he and others had observed a significant amount of rain in the area?-- That is correct.

Their concern was because of how much rain had previously occurred all this water was going to be run off water?-- Yeah, that is correct. Last year Alpha district had probably twice its usual amount so any rain that we were receiving probably from after September was all run-off. Nothing was soaking. It just didn't soak in any more. There was - the ground was up to saturation point and a small amount probably did soak in but the rest was basically run-off.

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So when you received this information did you have any concerns about the town of Alpha?-- Not at that particular time because we hadn't received any further information. We thought it might have been a storm over Rainmore sky and Cheshire where the other gentlemen lives. It is a fairly small catchment area, full of hills, it started to run quick but, yeah, in the statement too I said there was already five metres in the water in the creek at Alpha. We knew it would push it up but would take probably 30 hours to come down from their catchment in the town so we had a fair bit of run-off still within - run-off with the main channel at Alpha itself to get rid of that five metres.

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When you refer to five metres of water in the Alpha Creek that was in the afternoon of the 26th, is that the case?-- Yeah, I checked that when I come back from Jericho.

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You know that because the Alpha police do the reading heights in the Alpha Creek on behalf of the Bureau of Meteorology?-- That is correct.

There is a rain gauge on the railway bridge that crosses Alpha Creek?-- Measuring gauge, yeah.

How do the police then provide this information back to the Bureau?-- Via computer. Used to be the old ring up system but now we have a website we go to and place that on. We commence reading the creek once it gets over two metres.

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How often do you do readings of the creek?-- Probably not to their schedule because we get a bit busy sometimes.

What is their schedule? What is their expectation?-- If it goes over two metres it is 9 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

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9 a.m. in the morning and 9 p.m.?-- Yes and if it goes over the four metre mark it is every three hours.

Then?-- Yeah, just the three hourly ones, sort of thing.

Were you aware that the police at the time were able to do that during this time?-- We were sending reports. Like I said, we probably don't stick to their schedule a little while, with other things going on, but yeah, we would send one first thing in the morning, lunchtime, mid-afternoon and one late at night, probably don't get out of bed at 3 o'clock in the morning to do it.

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You state that you had discussions with Des Howard?--
Correct.

You state that he is in charge of the Jericho SES?-- He was
in charge, yeah.

How many people are members of the Jericho SES?-- There is no
members - there is no members actually in Jericho. He used to
be in charge of the Alpha SES, sorry.

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Mmm?-- Yeah. I think there were two members of SES in Alpha
at the time.

And that would cover both Alpha and Jericho?-- No, they would
only be there for Alpha.

Right. So if there were issues in Jericho that required
SES?-- There is no SES up there, unfortunately.

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So they - there is nothing that can be done from the SES?--
Yeah, no, that's correct. There is no current members up
there that I know of.

Has the Jericho SES got any resources or assets that can be
utilised?-- They have got a boat up there.

A boat?-- A boat, yes.

Is that a flood boat?-- I would imagine it would be used as a
flood boat, yes.

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Was that utilised during these flood events?-- No, I don't
think so.

Is that because there was just no-one there?-- Well, I think
they have got to be - if they are using SES stuff, they have
got to be qualified to use it and nobody up there is
qualified, so I don't think it was used. Not saying that it
probably wouldn't have allowed to be used but I don't think
there was anybody qualified up there at present.

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In your time in the area what has been the peak of membership
at the Jericho SES?-- Oh, I have no idea, unfortunately.

Has there been any members since you have been there?-- There
have been but I think they have just all given up or retired,
or there is a few properties shifted out of town. But I have
no idea of their numbers, sorry.

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Well, moving on, you had discussions with Des Howard and from
these discussions you agreed that there would be no inundation
of Jericho?-- Correct.

What about Alpha, are there any concerns in relation to Alpha
at this point in time?-- Yeah, definitely after we received
some early morning phone calls up at Alpha creek that the
water heights - a lot of people referred back to the 1990

event because that was the biggest flood that's happened there recently and a lot of people was indicating that there was water equal to or above those heights on their properties, and heading towards Alpha.

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There is a water height gauge on the property Rivington?-- That's correct.

That's on Alpha creek?-- Yes.

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That's a manual gauge?-- It was a manual gauge then. Now it is a - not SMS, you can dial it up, yeah, you can get an automatic reading gauge now.

Okay. So when it was a manual gauge who would go and read that gauge?-- Merv - I just can't think of his last name - it is in there - he is the manager out at Rivington. We rang him and he read it for us.

At around about mid-afternoon on the 27th you were informed that water had peaked at about 9 metres at Rivington?-- That's correct.

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What did that mean for Alpha?-- We believe - and it proved correct - that that gauge out there is calibrated to what the height will reach in Alpha. It peaked at nine metres at Rivington and it peaked at nine metres in town.

So if you are hearing that it is nine metres in Rivington you have got a fair expectation that that's what it is going to be in town?-- Yeah, that one proved right, yep.

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You state that the Alpha Golf Club was - it was a site decided to be used as an evacuation centre?-- That's correct.

It has been used previously in floods?-- In the '90 flood, yes.

How many people evacuated there?-- Probably in total about - probably maximum up there would have been about 40 at that time. It probably would have been about 15 people that came through - I believe came through "road closed" signs that said they didn't. They eventually got into town. We stopped them going any further west because they couldn't get into Jericho or couldn't get past Alice, probably to much of their disapproval, that they could do all sorts of weird and wonderful things. So we had them there until the morning of the 31st.

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Were they travellers?-- Yeah. They came through from - from the east.

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And was that because they weren't aware that roads had been cut off?-- So they tell me.

Okay. Well, was there any notification or signage on the roads to inform-----?-- I believe so.

You believe so?-- I do believe so. Going on what - I know that there was - RACQ site was up to date and the 13 19 40 site was up to date, and speaking with police officers there I believe there were signs on the outskirts of Emerald and Anakie saying the road was closed.

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What are the facilities for the Alpha golf club to house all these people?-- Probably - the only reason they are up there is the largest floor area that's available for people to sleep on, toilets, showers and a kitchen.

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On the 29th, the - sorry, the peak of the Alpha Creek was on the 28th, wasn't it?-- Yes.

At about - what did it come in at? About eight metres?-- No, nine metres.

Nine metres?-- Yep.

On the 29th, though, problems were identified with the water treatment plant?-- That's correct.

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There was a ruptured main?-- Yes, over in Dunning Street.

You identified this because the Alpha water tower was losing water?-- Yeah, I was informed of that by the council, yep.

How did that get fixed?-- They closed off all the mains leading to the eastern side of town - yeah, the eastern side of town, which is a floodplain, because we didn't know exactly where the leak was due to the water being over it and nobody going down into the flood area. So until the water dropped down and it was safe enough to go down into the area and start looking for it, a blowout somewhere in the soil, just the floodplain was cut off.

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And who eventually fixed it?-- The council.

And when was that done?-- That was done on the 30th, I believe.

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Now, Alpha is a septic tank sanitation area?-- Yes.

And this caused problems when the town flooded because all the tanks were now flooded?-- That's correct.

And there was a high probability of flooded waters then being contaminated?-- Water was flowing through fairly quick but it is still bringing stuff out of those tanks.

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So no person could be moved back into the floodplain until all the water had been cleared?-- That's what was decided, yes.

There was issues with electrical power?-- We just wanted to make sure that everything was safe. The electrician that was in town who was working for the council, him and another electrician, that was holidaying at home, flew him in, went and checked everything for us, and then once we made as sure

as we could, by their checking, that the houses were safe, we had water into the houses, and it was safe for people to come back, we started letting people back in.

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Unlike the 1990 flood, on this occasion Alpha did not lose power?-- That's correct.

Do you know why?-- Couple of powerlines up at Alice River didn't get washed down. 1990 it was a metre more water in Alpha than what there was this time. There was a lot more water up in Alice River and it washed out a couple of power poles up there which cut the power supply into Jericho/Alpha districts there.

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On 31 December residents were allowed back into the flooded area?-- Once most of the houses were checked and safe, yeah, we started - about 11 o'clock, half past 11 started letting people back in at that point.

You state that there was one small blemish in relation to the provision of tetanus and hep B vaccinations, and the arrangements were made by the DDC, District Disaster Coordinator, to have them collected and transported and an officer of Queensland Health complained that it had gone through the wrong protocol. Can you tell me about that?-- Information was received from the DON at the hospital that after somebody had gone to pick up those hep B and the tetanus shots that it shouldn't have been done that way, but my inspector was right on it and organised for it to be transported up overnight. It had to be transported out to the airport and put on a plane to be out there overnight and then the - I think he might have actually flew down in the helicopter that brought it back - brought them all down and they were dispersed between Jericho and Alpha so people could get their shots if they required it.

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So the provision of those shots happened efficiently in the end?-- Yeah. Everybody in both towns was advised that they could attend the Alpha Hospital or they could attend the Spiritus clinic, if you wanted to, if you thought it was a good idea to get tetanus or the hep B shots, by all means go and get them, they were there to be had.

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You state that the Bureau of Meteorology website was a good tool used by yourself and many others during the flooding, but we've listened to the evidence about that a lot of the information that you got about when these towns would flood came from residents upstream. What were you getting from the Bureau of Meteorology?-- More than nice, pretty coloured diagrams to show the amount of rainfall. Get on there and with the varying colours that they use on their radar, we could see that there was light rain, heavy rain, or very, you know, depending on the colours, from reds to the whites, we could see what sort of indication that the rainfall was happening in that catchment area. By checking it fairly regularly, you get an idea of how much is falling up there over a period of time. So you knew the catchments were still getting heavy rain and it was going to stay up for a while.

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And the suggestion that you provided is that you would like to see the provision of some more automated reading stations along the water courses as some properties that you usually contacted were unattended due to it being the holiday period?-- From finding out stuff about this flood and the '90 flood, there were a few creeks that caused major problems in the '90 flood, didn't get a lot of water this time, just where the rainfall is. Both Glencoe and Rivington now are automated sites that we can get readings on straight away without people being there, but the more the merrier. We've got a reading station on the downstream side of Alpha, going up the Belyando River, and there is one further up the Belyando, but we have only got the one reading station on the upstream side in a fairly major catchment area to have a look at for both Alpha and Jericho, that the more information we get, the better prepared we can be.

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Can you identify any areas in particular that you would benefit from by having automated reading gauges?-- Probably - some of just the major smaller creeks that run into - the smaller, yeah, creeks, I suppose, that run into Alpha Creek. Like, there is a number of them there, just depending on when they get the rainfall. If we got an idea, even if it is a measuring, just a normal measuring board, if it could be put down, correlated to what might happen in town, the property owners there are only too willing to go out and have a read and say, "It is reading this, reading this height", and - you know, I have got one fellow that reads it off a large gum tree that I hope never falls down. He has been using that for years and it can give you fairly accurate readings off that, because we can tell him what it measures in town and he remembers what's on that tree. So he will say, "It is probably going to be this much", or his readings help us on the Belyando River for when the river closes the road. So we know how much is coming down there. And just good rapport with our locals. If they can give us a height rather than, "Oh, it is a foot under 1990", if they can give us a measurement, it would be great.

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Thank you, Sergeant. I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Yes, Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: We have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

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COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: We have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions, Commissioner.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Sergeant Kelly. You are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

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MS WILSON: I call Desmond Howard.

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DESMOND ALLEN HOWARD, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Is your full name Desmond Allen Howard?-- That's correct.

You are the Local Disaster Coordinator for the Barcaldine Regional Council?-- That's correct.

10

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

Can you have a look at this document for me, please?-- Yes. That's my statement.

Is that your statement?-- Yes.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

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COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 470.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 470"

MS WILSON: This morning you provided the Commission of Inquiry three documents?-- That's correct.

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Two of them are referred to as the Galilee Gazette?-- That's correct.

Can you tell us what the Galilee Gazette is?-- That is a householder type production that the council put out monthly and circulated to all the residents in their council area.

Can you have a look at these documents, please? We have got a Galilee Gazette on October 2010?-- Yes.

40

And one for December 2010?-- That's right.

And where were these distributed to?-- They were distributed throughout the whole of the Barcaldine Regional Council area.

Every resident?-- Yes, yes, that's correct.

And did you address issues of flood preparation in these documents?-- That's correct, yes. The final page of both those documents.

50

Yes. And also you provided to the Commission of Inquiry today a public notice "Be prepared for possible flooding". Do you have that document there?-- Yes, that is correct.

And when was this public notice issued?-- That was circulated on council's website as well as throughout the communities via

email or whatever means possible and on noticeboards on the 23rd and 24th of December.

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Thank you. Madam Commissioner, I tender those documents.

COMMISSIONER: The Gazettes and the notice will be correctively Exhibit 471.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 471"

MS WILSON: Thank you. Now, Mr Howard if I can take you to your statement, and if I can take you to the issue of SES in your region?-- Yes.

And you address this issue in item 5 of that statement. Now, in relation to the SES in Alpha, you state that members were limited due to one member being out of town and the LC, which is the Local Commander position, being vacant?-- Yes, that's correct.

20

So how many members were on duty and able to assist during the flood events?-- There were - other than myself, there were three members.

So four?-- Yes.

30

At the peak, how many members does the Alpha SES have?-- Usually approximately six members but they come and go with transfers and various things. At the moment it is very lower numbers.

Now, you state that advertisements calling for members were published in the Galilee Gazette-----?-- That's correct.

-----which you just referred to. Did you get any responses in relation to that advertisement?-- We had one response and - which since a new Local Controller has been appointed, and there was some interest for - to become members.

40

And the Jericho group was not active?-- Jericho, no, Jericho has some non-active members and that's it, yeah.

Non-active members?-- Non-active, yeah, members that aren't currently trained up and there have been older members that are just in the community still.

50

You state that "The SES equipment is basic", and you are referring to the SES equipment in relation to the Jericho group - "and the boat which was not utilised is not fully functional or suitable for shallow floodwaters in town"?-- That's correct. It is a basic kit that is in Jericho, and the boat that is there is the old style SES flood boat with a deep V and a motor that is unreliable.

So you wouldn't even attempt to put it out in such conditions?-- Previous floods it has been found that it hits - bottoms out, and can only be used to ferry people if people can walk beside it.

1

Now, the Alpha SES has trained flood boat operators?-- That's correct.

How many?-- Two at the moment, I believe.

10

At the moment and hoping for more?-- Yes.

Does the Alpha SES have access to a flood boat itself?-- It does.

How many?-- One flood boat.

And one of the issues that you raise in relation to the SES is the issue of training, and you state that that is difficult because training courses are usually held in locations which require members to travel. Is that just not seen as an attractive option for your members?-- It is difficult to do a flood boat course. For instance, it usually involves the members being away from home for two, maybe three to four-day weekends, and that's really difficult if they have got to travel hundreds of kilometres to do it.

20

Is that what you say is prohibitive; they don't even entertain getting trained for such a specialty because of the time and distance required?-- I think it is difficult for many of them, given some now work in mines and shift work and other places, and that they - most of these members are also members of lots of other organisations, so for them to provide that time, it is pretty difficult.

30

And what is the answer to that? Is it more training in the regions that is closer for these members to attend?-- I believe that would be a big step forward.

And where would that be in relation to the membership of Alpha, for example?-- I guess it depends on the type of training. If it was flood boat, for instance, yes, it could be in Emerald or maybe the lake just north of Emerald.

40

COMMISSIONER: Is there any sort of allowance - if you go away for training do you get an overnight allowance?-- Yeah, there are some fees, accommodations paid for, yeah.

And is your Local Controller in Alpha paid?-- Sorry?

50

Your local controller, is he or she paid?-- No, they are not paid, no.

Nothing at all?-- The Local Controllers only receive an out-of-pocket allowance, and I am not sure - I think at the moment maybe \$300.

Thanks.

MS WILSON: In terms of the Barcaldine Regional Council, does it fund SES in any way?-- It provides - assists with the provision and maintenance of equipment, yes.

And can you give us any indication of how much that actually is?-- No, it is probably - it is usually what is in excess if they don't - if they come forward and ask for equipment, council then looks at it based on what it is, but generally the equipment there is good.

10

This is right across the region, so if any SES local controller comes to the council and says this is the further equipment we need, then the council will consider that?-- Would certainly consider that, yes.

Have you had any discussions with EMQ about the protocols about who should be supplying the equipment?-- Normally EMQ provide most of the equipment and council props up what they don't, yes.

20

You can't give us any idea about the level of funding that that would be from council's coffers?-- No, I can't, no.

In terms of the information that you got about weather and flood forecasts, you state there was limited advice available from the Bureau of Meteorology prior to the event because the - some of the recording stations were manual, automatic flood recording stations at Glencoe and Rivington were not operational because the previous rain had delayed that installation to make it automatic?-- That's correct.

30

Now, they are on line now?-- They are.

They are automatic?-- They were completed in - I think it was late January. They were - the contractors tried to install them in early December but were - the early rains didn't enable that to happen.

You state that these measuring stations had been shown to be accurate?-- Yes. At a recent rainfall event we were able to carry out some significant checks with them and, yes, they - we believe them to be very good.

40

Now, a lot of the information that was received about impending flooding events was received from property owners, residents on the creeks, on the rivers phoning in the information and saying what the water level was at that point. You state that this was - it was accurate and proved accurate. Do you advocate, though, for more gauges on these creeks?-- I - certainly we would - we are currently looking to provide either manual measuring posts so that they can convert their information to a measurement, which we can also with the flood recording stations so far upstream. This will give us some knowledge of what's happening closer to the towns.

50

Has the council been in any discussions with the Bureau of Meteorology about where these gauges should go?-- Council is

in the process at the moment of applying for more flood stations, automated flood stations and, yes, they will consider.

1

When you say applying for more flood stations who are you applying to?-- Sorry, the Meteorology funded - or assisting with funding with the previous stations that were installed.

Are you in discussions with the Bureau of Meteorology about supplying more?-- Yes, we're in the process of that now.

10

You referred to the Jericho flood levee in your statement?-- Yes.

And that work is continuing on the Jericho flood levee. Can you explain that?-- Yes, I think it is the third stage of the flood levee works. Approval - final approval was granted in January of this year which - approval of additional funding was in January this year and that work will continue as soon as it is dry enough to work.

20

And what will ultimately that provide the Jericho flood levee?-- We believe that the December/January event of this year should not have entered the town, Jericho, with that type of levee.

So you are hoping for it to keep the town dry?-- That's correct.

One of the matters that you raise is that the size of the council area and distance between communities should be of concern should a disaster be spread across the whole area. Has the council given any consideration to how this can be best resolved dealing with large areas and distances and isolated communities?-- Yes. Council certainly looked at it in the way they have now set up individual groups for the outlying areas so that hopefully it can be - it is probably a major event across all areas, should it happen at once, would certainly tax the resources that council currently has.

30

When you are talking about setting up groups, can you tell us about those groups?-- Yes, as in subcommittees of the subgroups of the local disaster group.

40

Okay?-- Reporting back to the local-----

Where is the council considering setting up these groups?-- In each of the - the council currently operates as three areas, which happen to be the old three old council areas, and they will be based on that same area.

50

And what would be the roles and responsibilities of these groups during, say, any flood event?-- That would be to provide feedback to the LDMG.

What about any organisation of the community? Do they provide a hands-on role in work to be done during a flood event?-- Yes, I think that organisation would operate all the local

stuff within their communities.

1

Who is envisaged to be on these groups?-- It is envisaged that it will be chaired by a councillor in those areas and the area managers would take a coordinating role. Other than that it would be the local police or ambulance, whatever is in those different communities.

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Has the council considered establishing any terms of reference to define and determine the roles and responsibilities of these groups?-- No, not as yet.

1

Is that something the council will consider?-- Certainly the council's considering it.

What does the council sees the benefit of having such a terms of reference?-- I think it is just to give council an indication of what they can really get out of it.

10

You refer to the fact that Jericho has no high ground and the airstrip is subject to inundation therefore helicopter is the only method of transport. Has any thought been given to protecting the airstrip from floods?-- Not as yet. The Jericho airstrip is an earth strip, it is not sealed.

Yes?-- And in a flood event of this recent event it was inundated.

20

Is it the only way to - the first step towards flood protection would be to seal it?-- If it was sealed it has to be lifted as well or leveed in some way. It will be outside of the levee area.

Those steps are not within council's consideration at this point of time?-- Not at this time.

Is that because of funding?-- Funding, yes.

30

Finally, you state that while no particular difficulties were encountered, consideration of SMS messaging being used more often. Do you find that SMS - did you find that SMS was a good tool to be used in terms of warnings?-- Yeah, the SMS messages was only used the once early on. There was just some uncertainty as to how well it worked so rather than use it further we find it much easier to do a door knock and we also know - we have small communities we can door knock within a couple of hours, or less in some cases, and that way we also know who is there and who is not.

40

You also state that it would be intended to use the council website more to disseminate information?-- That is correct.

Do you - what type of information are you intending to place on this website to assist in the future flood events?-- We hope that we can put on a flood mapping and also up to date information on the expected flood heights or peaks and times.

What about where evacuation centres are, is that something that the council is happy to go on the website?-- Certainly, yes.

50

Does the council have predetermined evacuation centres in the event of flood in all of those regions?-- Yes, in all the regions, yes.

Would the community know where those evacuation centres are?--

I believe so.

1

Why do you say you believe so? Where would they have got that information from?-- They have all come from their previous Local Disaster Plans and the communities are well aware of those.

Does the council make any distinction for evacuation centres, say, for flood or fire?-- The - in the Alpha area the evacuation centre is - would not normally be for most functions, it could be the town hall or in the case of flooding it is certainly the golf club.

10

Thank you, no further questions.

MR AMBROSE: We have no questions.

MR URE: I have nothing.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

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MR ROLLS: Just one question if I may. Could I trouble you about the Galilee Gazette which I think is Exhibit 471? What was the response by the members of the community to the urging to prepare emergency kits by council, on the back of the October and December 2010 gazette?-- We are aware that people took notice of it but we are - we have no evidence to say whether or not they did actually carry out some of that stuff that is suggested.

30

So you don't really know whether or not it was effective?-- No, uncertain as to whether it was effective.

I have nothing further.

MS O'GORMAN: I have no questions.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Mr Howard, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Max Mayne.

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GERALD MAX COLVERN MAYNE, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

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MS WILSON: Can you tell the Commission your full name please?-- Gerald Max Colvern Mayne.

You are a farmer and own a farm, Mayneland?-- That is correct.

10

Mayneland is 12 kilometres from the town of Rolleston?-- Yes.

You provided a statement to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry and attached to that statement is some paragraphs?-- Oh, cool. Photo?

COMMISSIONER: I think that's what Ms Wilson is hoping you will say?-- Lovely, nice photographs.

MS WILSON: Are they your photographs?-- Yes.

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document along with the photos.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 472.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 472"

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MS WILSON: Your property Mainland, that's a mixed farming, cotton, wheat, about 7,000 acres?-- Yes, that is correct.

It borders the Comet River - eastern boundary borders the Comet River?-- Yes.

The Meteor Creek cuts through the middle of the property?-- That is correct.

40

At your farm, notwithstanding the 10 years of drought, how often would you expect flooding?-- Big? Little? We normally get a flood event every year but not a big one.

Mmm?-- As it says there, we pump water so we expect to be able to harvest water certainly every year.

In the drought?-- Yes.

50

You still have a rain event of some-----?-- Of some significance, yes.

Okay?-- There is only one year we haven't which is about '74 I think, '72.

Now, as part of your business you own and operate a helicopter?-- Correct.

If I could take you to the flooding that occurred around the 22nd - started on 22nd December. Rolleston got cut off at that point in time?-- Yes.

You state you were self sufficient because of your helicopter?-- We were high and dry.

Now, the Bureau of Meteorology website is a tool you use to monitor the weather?-- Correct, yes, very handy.

10

You state, though, that the site is not specific to your area?-- That is correct, there is not enough rainfall gauges in our area. It has been really well recorded in the Nogoia catchment because they got a caning a couple of years ago. There is nothing much up our area.

When you look at the Bureau of Meteorology website are you looking at whether it is the intensity of the rain as shown by the radar?-- That is about the only way we tell, yes, by the radar because there is no gauging stations up above us.

20

On the 27th of December you - early in the morning you state you received a phone call from a local who lives 20 kilometres upstream?-- Yes.

Do you recall what she indicated?-- She said there was a big Womaganga coming, mother of all floods.

COMMISSIONER: Is there a spelling for that?-- I went to grade 10.

30

MS WILSON: And?-- She suggested there was a lot of water coming. It was higher than she had ever previously seen.

This network of people upstream ringing other farmers or other residents downstream about water that might be coming, does that occur regularly?-- Every time.

That's the network you rely on?-- Yes, great network.

40

Right?-- Until the phones go out.

Then what do you do then?-- Smoke signals, very hard though in the wet. Two-way radio.

The - when did the flood hit your property?-- 27th was the big one.

What time did you - you could see it coming, could you?-- We could see it coming. It was hosing down all day but you could see the water coming over a ridge which we thought was impenetrable about 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon and it - we knew it was a big one.

50

It was coming from the west, was it?-- Well, that is correct. It reached our airstrip which was a pretty high spot on our property and inundated towards the east. That's from the

Meteor Creek.

1

Did you lose any property?-- Everything. No, house and sheds and everything is fine but all the farming country and machinery went under water.

All of your property was covered with water?-- No, we have 100 acres around the house which was good.

The home paddock, effectively, was secure but the rest was covered with water?-- Yep.

10

How high did this flood compare to other floods you had seen since you had been at your property?-- We have been there 30 years and it was, on my place I reckon a metre and a-half higher. On the gauging station at the lake it was probably three metres higher-----

Okay?-----at the government gauging station.

20

On the 28th of December you went up in your helicopters to see what the flooding was like?-- And the 27th, yeah.

When you went up on the 28th was there a break in the weather-----?-- Yes.

----- So you could get up. When you went up there, you received a distress call from a group of people?-- Mmm.

Is that the case?-- Yes.

30

They were flooded in the Arcadia Valley?-- Yes.

Can you tell us about that?-- It was a comedy of errors, we happened to be in the right place for them and the poor buggers had got stuck on a creek and there was a flooded river behind them with a dirty great big tree over it so they couldn't go backwards and the Comet River in front of them and they couldn't move.

40

They had been there for two days?-- Two and a-half days.

How many people were there?-- Mum and dad and daughter.

So you picked them up in your helicopter and took them back to their property?-- Yes, I knew where they lived.

You state that over the next few weeks your property was pretty much isolated?-- God, yeah.

50

Any access - the only access from the helicopter?-- No access, only from the helicopter.

You used your helicopter to assist the community to get supplies?-- Yes, on a limited basis.

What do you mean on a limited basis?-- I can't - didn't ferry heaps of tucker in.

No?-- If I was going past I would grab something.

Did you know - did people come and ask you to pick up supplies for them?-- No, not really. When I went to Rocky yes, I did offer to bring some personalised equipment back but you couldn't find anything in Rocky. She was ransacked.

Was there any other assistance to get supplies?-- Not that I am aware of. We have a big bitumen strip, too, would have been nice for people to drop some tucker in.

10

Was that bitumen strip dry?-- Yes, all weather.

Fixed air wing could have got in?-- Yes, night-time, daytime.

How long does it take to go to Rockhampton in your helicopter?-- An hour and 10.

You went to Rockhampton how many times?-- Only twice.

20

Was that to pick up supplies for yourself?-- No, I got a mercy call from a friend that wanted to have a kid and we flew him down. He didn't want to have a kid, his wife did, sorry.

So there was a pregnant lady that needed to go to hospital?-- Yes and they couldn't access no-one so I was the nearest help and that was about an hour away.

So you took this couple to Rockhampton to go to hospital?-- Yes.

30

Were you picking up supplies for yourself when you went there?-- Too right, we were doing - we were hungry.

You say when you went to Rockhampton there was no avgas?-- No, that was pretty disappointing but the SES or whoever it was, the emergency response crew had commandeered all fuel and we had to make our own provision to pick up fuel so we could fly back again. I had a one-way trip. I cannot get back on the fuel I cart with me.

40

Your helicopter only has enough fuel for you to go to Rolleston to Rockhampton?-- It won't get back again safely.

How did you get fuel to get back?-- Through the grace of God. I've got a couple of good friends to pick up a drum of fuel, we scrounged - everybody scrounged enough to - the second trip I took it with me because I couldn't buy it down there.

50

No avgas was able to be provided to non-emergency aircraft?-- That is correct, that is what they - Mr Fisher said, you make your own provision if you come into here. It was well organised down there, there is no doubt about it, but you just - it was pretty poor you couldn't access juice. We could access juice at Gladstone and I could get people to run it back to Rocky but then you weren't allowed to bring it back across the creek in a boat because of the rules and

regulations.

1

You state in your statement that as soon as word got out you had a helicopter you were asked to get supplies from Emerald and Rockhampton?-- Rocky, yes.

These supplies included mainly bread, milk and fuel?-- Not so much fuel; bread and milk.

When you went to Rockhampton did you fill your helicopter up with bread and milk to supply the residents?-- Yes, we just loaded it up. That was a mission in itself because the shops were empty and the people wouldn't sell it to you because no, you only are allowed to take two. Even though you explain you have to take back for a lot of people, that's it. There was - the people in town would only, every shop you went to would only sell two bottles of milk and two loaves of bread.

10

How much milk did you take back?-- Two crates and I don't know how many loaves of bread.

20

How many in a crate?-- I don't know, 20, 10, I don't know.

You state that you also assisted the community by picking up pets stranded on their properties and starving?-- Not really, that was a glorified way of saying it. I did - we have - were sick of feeding - these people had gone away and it was a bloody nuisance to go up there and feed them every day.

You brought them back?-- Threw them in the chopper and took them to the RSPCA.

30

What sort of pets were they?-- Dogs, big mongrel dogs.

In terms of the fuel issue. In your statement you state that you believed you were performing an essential service to the Rolleston community?-- No, I didn't say that. That policeman who interviewed me he put that down. On numerous occasions he kept telling me that.

40

What did you think about that. Let's see what you think about it?-- There was no fuel there. I had some very good neighbours donating fuel to me to keep me in the air, it was terrific. We couldn't access fuel from Emerald because there was, one, there was a load limit on Meteor Creek and the roads were cut anyway.

Mmm?-- There was just no - there was no dump of fuel in - I didn't have sufficient stocks for myself.

50

One of the issues you raise in your statement is the issue of amalgamation. You say the new regional council is too large. "The council only bought in a bag of potatoes during the time of flood." Were you aware of the work that Councillor Nixon was doing?-- She did a marvellous job.

Was that assisting and providing food to the community?-- I would assume so, yes. That was put in by one of my friends.

About the bag of potatoes?-- Mmm but it was very helpful. Look I don't live in town, ma'am. I live out of town so I don't know what went into town.

Okay. In relation to the warnings, the only warnings you relied on came by word of mouth?-- Yes.

That is the method that you receive warnings since you have been there?-- That is correct.

10

One of the issues that you raise is that there should be more gauges in the creeks?-- Not so much the creeks but rain gauges. We have more understanding of the water flood events if we have a rain gauge upstream and there is very few rain gauges upstream.

So if - you have a better understanding of how the creeks work if you understand where the rain guess are?-- That is correct, where the rain falls and as long as they stay on air, or - another thing is we can only access that by the internet and if your Next G goes down you are stuffed and that happened for about four days.

20

Is there any way to resolve that issue? Going back to the old system of-----?-- I have no idea. I have no idea. I am not a tech, I punch the button and it says there is the weather. There was no Next G service so we couldn't access that.

Just in relation to keeping an eye on each other in the community; did that occur. Did everybody know if each other was okay?-- Of course, yes, it was terrific.

30

That is just people getting on the phone and telling each other, "No, I am fine," and people ringing up and making sure each other was okay?-- That is correct.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

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MR AMBROSE: I have no questions.

MR URE: I have no questions.

MR ROLLS: Unfortunately I have no questions.

MS O'GORMAN: I don't have any questions either.

COMMISSIONER: That seems to be it, Mr Mayne. thank you very much for your time.

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WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Danielle Hogarth.

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DANIELLE ANNE HOGARTH, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Danielle Ann Hogarth?-- That is correct.

10

You are the Regional Manager for AgForce Queensland?-- Correct, Central Queensland.

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

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

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Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 473.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 473"

MS WILSON: Now, AgForce Queensland, you state is a non for profit organisation representing the interests of primary producers in Queensland. Your region covers Central Queensland?-- That is right.

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Can you tell me the extent of your region?-- It goes from north to Mackay across Mount Coolon, Belyando, Alpha, Jericho, just north of Injune, just Theodore and then down to Monto and Miriam Vale.

40

Can you explain to me the role that you perform as the Regional Manager of AgForce in that area?-- AgForce is a lobby group for producers which supports three commodities, sheep and wool, grain and cattle. Central Queensland is predominantly grain and cattle and all to do with supporting producers and members in Queensland with legislation and policy surrounding their business.

You state that AgForce is not involved with the LDMG, the Local Disaster Management Group and not designed as a relief or emergency organisation?-- No, it is not.

50

On the 20th of December you were at your - at a family property?-- That is right.

That is southwest of Emerald?-- That is right.

All road access was eventually cut to this property?-- Yes.

But you still had phone and internet access?-- Yes.

Now, you received a phone call from Ken O'Dowd's office. Can you tell me who Ken O'Dowd is?-- Ken O'Dowd is the MP for Flynn which covers most of Central Queensland, my area, and they wanted to put out a press release to inform land holders about the fodder drops and who to phone for fodder drops. I was on leave at that time and basically questioned who else she had contacted. She said she had phoned the LDMG of Banana Shire, Emerald Council and Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation, also known as DEEDI.

10

DEEDI?-- And all of those organisations said that they weren't handling it.

Okay?-- So I then spoke to my CEO and President of AgForce to explain what was happening and, yeah, then acted in a role to facilitate the fodder drops.

20

You received this phone call from Ken O'Dowd on 30 December?-- Yes.

The issue of fodder drops, had AgForce considered the issue of fodder drops before you received this phone call from Mr O'Dowd's office?-- In the 2008 floods AgForce worked extensively to facilitate fodder drops and supplies to producers but it wasn't - AgForce do not see that as our role and that is the role of government, so we had spoken to DEEDI previously, early December, about fodder drops and the issue and DEEDI, I guess, couldn't facilitate anything until they saw a need for it so there was no process put into place.

30

When you say in the previous occasion when fodder drops was required, you worked extensively with - who did you work extensively with?-- I was not employed with AgForce in the 2008 flood but AgForce, I am aware, were involved with it.

Now, in relation to DEEDI in the discussions that occurred in early December, you talked about that they would only do it when a need arose?-- That is right.

40

Were you a party to those discussions?-- No.

Where did you receive this information from?-- My - the president from AgForce, Brent Finlay, he phoned to say that, yeah, that that was the conversation he had with DEEDI.

So, was it settled at that point in time in early December that DEEDI would be the lead agency in relation to fodder drops?-- I guess. I can't - I can't say, I am not 100 per cent sure. I wasn't involved in the conversation. I simply said to Ken O'Dowd's office we would - that AgForce would do the fodder drops because everyone else was passing it so.

50

When you say everyone else you contacted the LDMG?-- The LDMG.

This was on the 30th as well?-- Yes.

1

Yes?-- And that was the only conversation that I had was with the LDMG in Banana Shire whereas Ken O'Dowd's office said they had been to various organisations.

You state that then you received a call from a representative from DEEDI?-- Yes.

Do you know who that person was?-- Paul Walmsley.

10

Can you tell us about this conversation?-- Paul was in New Zealand at the time so he was trying to do as much as he could and he said that Ken Murphy - who I know very well, I have worked with Ken a lot and he would be also acting in the role to facilitate fodder drops.

When did you get in contact with Ken Murphy to work out what your roles would be?-- Pretty much straight after the phone call with Paul.

20

What was your role in relation to organising fodder drops?-- Producers were phoning me and basically just-----

Could we stop there? How did producers know to phone you? When we are talking about producers, are these the people that need the fodder drops?-- Yes.

People who needed fodder drops were phoning you?-- Phoning me and simply requesting - I went through the details of what they needed and I knew where a lot of them were so I then could organise a helicopter in that region and a hay producer in that region to get the fodder drop done.

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So there was three steps. One, a request coming in from a farmer or producer saying, "I need some fodder"-----?-- Yes.

-----"could you organise a fodder drop?" The second step was accessing the fodder and the third step was obtaining a helicopter to be able to transport that fodder ?-- That is right.

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Now, that would require three different sources of information?-- Yes.

I am interested of how the producers and farmers knew to ring you in relation to - that you were the person organising the fodder drops?-- Initially I guess a lot of them were members so they knew to phone AgForce for a lot of these types of things. However, the press release that had come from Ken O'Dowd's office on the 30th listed my name and contact number along with Ken Murphy's name and contact number.

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Right?-- So, how that got out to everyone - I think it was on the ABC Radio and things like that.

But it did because the requests started to come in?-- That is right.

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How did you know where to access the fodder from?-- Just, like, local knowledge and knew producers who knew people that produced hay in different regions and areas and, yeah, just local knowledge.

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And the helicopter, were you to be able to access helicopters?-- Again, local knowledge, I knew a lot of helicopter pilots around Central Queensland.

Was it a case of marrying up where you could get a helicopter closest to the farmer or producer who needed fodder?-- That's right.

Was that a difficult task?-- A lot of - a lot of the helicopter companies and hay producers were phoning to explain to me what they had on hand, like if they had - how many Jet Rangers or Long Rangers or even Robinson helicopters, or what types of hay they had on hand and how much. So from that, Ken and I had a running spreadsheet that we listed all the hay so we could just easily marry up the choppers and the hay and the producer that needed it. 10

Did it get to a stage that what you and Mr Murphy were doing was a bit of a double-up; there was a duplication of tasks?-- No. 20

Did Mr Murphy become the central coordinator for the fodder drops at any time?-- No, I don't believe so.

Okay. And how long were you organising the fodder drops for?-- Around-----

Still doing the process of those steps that we talked about?-- Around two weeks was - yeah, for Central Queensland, and then once it was out of my area, I was still getting phone calls from down south. 30

When you say down south, what do you mean?-- St George.

Yes?-- And even further. And I simply did it because I knew my region and I knew the area, I knew people and I was able to do it.

Could you assist down south as well?-- I couldn't. 40

Because it is important, is it, for the person who is organising it to have some form of local knowledge?-- To an extent I believe that it worked a lot better knowing - knowing the area and knowing things, because it just happens a lot quicker.

Well, why couldn't you assist in the St George examples that you provided?-- Well, I was told that it wasn't our role, essentially, and it was DEEDI's role to do the fodder drops and coordinate the fodder drops, so I basically was just helping even though it wasn't our role in Central Queensland. 50

You were helping - when were you informed that it was DEEDI's role?-- At the start.

But-----?-- But I still didn't want to sit there and do nothing because it was still a lot of confusion. So I made

sure that everything was done in my region.

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So essentially if you got a request for fodder you organised for that fodder to be dropped?-- Yes.

Did you work with Mr Murphy and coordinate so there wasn't any double-up?-- Definitely, all the time. Ken and I were on the phone a lot and-----

How long were you on the phone to Mr Murphy for?-- Oh, throughout the day there would have been at least a dozen calls, I guess, and emails back and forward just-----

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And for how long did that last, that level of communication with you and Mr Murphy?-- I guess-----

You said you did this for about two weeks. Did that go throughout that two weeks?-- Yeah, it did, and then because DEEDI staff were only allowed to work six days in one lot and then they have to have a day off, then, yeah, Ken had to turn his phone off for a day and I handled everything for that day and then sort of kept going. And then, yeah, Ken and I got back in touch, like, on the eighth day. So the seventh day he was to have off and so the eighth day we touched base again and continued on.

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Okay. Did you receive any requests from the DDC, the District Disaster Coordinator?-- No.

So the only requests you were receiving were from the farmers and producers themselves?-- That's right.

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Now, from your experience and observations during this period, have you got any suggestions how the issue of fodder drops can be better organised for any further wet season?-- There were a number of producers after it, I guess, concerned. There were some producers that were supplied fodder for free while most producers up here had to pay for it. They also had to pay the invoice for the helicopter to drop it. Also, I believe there needs to be a set process and a contact, like whether that's DEEDI or who it is, to contact in the event of a flood for fodder drops.

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And for that information to be disseminated to the farmers and producers so they know what to do in the next wet season-----?-- That's right.

-----is that what you are saying?-- Yes. And Ken and I had a spreadsheet of, as I said, the hay producers, the helicopter pilots and the - I guess the producers that were requiring it would change, as would the helicopters available and the hay producers, but just to have that information on file would be a starting place in the next - in the next event, I feel.

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Is there any merit in, before a wet season, doing a call around to fodder producers so that you know what supplies they have and could be used during any flood event?-- Yeah, I think that would be good.

And confirming the contacts and the contact numbers so that you have got an up-to-date contact list if required?-- Yeah.

And when would you think that would be the best time to do such a task?-- I guess it depends on the season beforehand, too, so-----

Why does it depend on the season beforehand?-- Oh, if it has been a dry season and if they have used most of their stocks, or a lot of them would be still selling a lot of stuff. If it hasn't been a dry season and they have got a lot of hay on hand, then some of them would be prepared to donate a lot of it, too, so I am guessing probably in September.

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And that is just to find out as much information as you can at that point in time and the status of the hay that you have got, make sure the contact details are up to date. Would that be a useful exercise in your experience?-- I believe it would.

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And which agency do you see as the appropriate agency to coordinate any fodder drops?-- DEEDI.

COMMISSIONER: Ms Hogarth, is Agforce prepared to have any role at all, or does it just think it shouldn't have one?-- I-----

Because it seems to be something of a central point for the producers contacting?-- I can't answer that.

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When you say you can't answer it, do you think you are not in an appropriate position to answer it or-----?-- That's correct.

Fair enough?-- I am happy to - like, I was happy to help facilitate, but, yeah, I can't answer what Agforce is prepared to do and not do.

Right. Just while I am asking you questions, there is reference in your statement to food drops as well. Were you involved in the organisation of food drops?-- Just - yeah, there were some Agforce members on properties that had no phone service, or their phones were cut off and they didn't have mobile service. They phoned their parents who then tried to organise supply - household supplies and food for the household, and just couldn't get anywhere. So they phoned me to try and find out who they should contact to get these household supplies.

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And were you able to help them?-- Yes. I previously - well, knew sort of the start of the flood event because I was out on a property, a number of people in the area - there were a few young babies and things like that and they were sort of stressing about whether - like, how long we would be cut off or out there, so what to do if they need more supplies for the baby and the household and things like that. So I then made a phone call to the Emerald council and found the best contact

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and the name of the lady to contact for - to pass that information on to producers that-----

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Did it essentially go through the Local Disaster Management Group then, the council's-----?-- Yes.

All right, thank you.

MS WILSON: And another issue that you raise in your statement is the issue of provision of fuel for helicopters?-- Yes.

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Can you tell us about that?-- A lot of producers had to get cattle out of floodwaters, and even trying to get them out before the floodwater came. The provision of gas for these helicopters was a very difficult task to source and just the locality of the supply wasn't - there wasn't enough.

Was it a case that there simply wasn't enough fuel-----?-- No.

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-----or was it a case that there was fuel but because there was no authority given for the helicopters to - that were doing these fodder drops to use that fuel?-- There wasn't - there was enough. There wasn't enough locations of where they could get this fuel.

I understand. So helicopters often have to travel some distance to be able to get fuel and then come back and then-----?-- That's right.

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-----do the fodder drop?-- Yes.

And so that could be solved by just having more fuel dumps, so to speak, in more areas?-- Correct.

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

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: We have no questions.

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COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have no questions thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

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MR ROLLS: Just one. Ms Hogarth, we have seen the Barcaldine Shire extolls its citizens to make provision for themselves by preparing emergency kits to keep their family safe, instead of giving government another task, that is DEEDI another task. Do you see any difficulty with encouraging your members to make their own provision to identify their own stock suppliers and their own helicopter pilots in their own district so that

they have made adequate provision for themselves and their animals in the forthcoming wet season, rather than having government run around and keep a list, which may or may not be accurate by the time it is to be used?-- I think that's a good point. Not all people requiring fodder were Agforce members, but I definitely - I see your point. I think that would be a good idea to.

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Because local knowledge is paramount in these things?-- That's right.

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And government can only do so much. And local people, knowing what's available in their own area, are better equipped to make provision for themselves and be a bit self reliant, rather than just hoping government might help them out. Would that be right?-- Yes, I agree, yeah.

No further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Were they taken by surprise, do you think? Why weren't they better organised?-- Because the water in - especially around the Moura, Baralaba area, people there were just shocked at how the water - the path of it. It didn't - it has never taken that path before and the amount of it just hadn't been like that before through their - the initial - the initial set-up of, I guess, the fodder provider, the helicopter pilot and the producer requiring it was all that it took in a lot of it, and then from that initial set-up of putting those people in touch with each other, they then continued on to get fodder as they required. A lot of producers were able to move stock and be better prepared than others.

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What were the circumstances; you think you have got this pasture and you have got your stock on it, then it becomes inundated, you haven't got enough to feed your stock? How did it all come about for people? Why were they needing fodder? What's your typical situation?-- Because their country was just underwater, so there was no-----

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And it wasn't something predictable?-- No, that's right. It wasn't something predictable. The levels and the flow wasn't predictable in a lot of places.

All right. Thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions, thank you, Commissioner.

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

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COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much, Ms Hogarth, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Gail Nixon.

GAIL ELIZABETH NIXON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Is your full name Gail Elizabeth Nixon?--
Correct.

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And you are a councillor of the Central Highlands Regional
Council?-- Correct.

And you are the Deputy Chairperson of the LDMG?-- Correct.

You provided a statement to the Queensland Floods Commission
of Inquiry?-- I did.

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Can you have a look at this document, please?-- That's it.

Is that your statement?-- Yes, thank you.

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document. I have just
provided you a copy of that so you can refer to that.

COMMISSIONER: That's Exhibit 474.

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ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 474"

MS WILSON: Now, you state that the activities undertaken by
you during the floods were often a combination of your role in
the LDMG and as an SES member. During the flood events where
were you located?-- At home in my own-----

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Where is home?-- My business office in Springsure.

Were you also performing your roles with the LDMG at the same
time?-- Yeah, I was in contact touch with the LDMG in
Emerald. I sent Sitreps over on most days.

On most days?-- Yes.

And as an SES member, which group are you an SES member?--
Springsure.

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Can you tell us the membership of Springsure SES?-- Yeah, it
is about nine, I think, and there would have been eight
probably on duty at that flood time.

What about Rolleston?-- Rolleston has a lot more members but
probably eight or nine in the town proper on duty.

As a lot more members has got members in outlying properties?-- They have what is called an ESU. They have a combined SES and Rural Fires. That's called the SEU - ESU, I should say.

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ESU?-- But the SES members are trained in flood boat operation and they were the ones that were assisting.

And when you say they have a lot more, is that taking into account the additional members of the ESU?-- Yes, yes.

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But in terms of members who have been trained for flood boats, it would be around about the eight mark?-- Probably about three in Rolleston and two or three in Springsure.

Okay. Is there any demarkation in relation to the roles that the SES perform in Rolleston and the - being part of the wider ESU group?-- Oh, they have different roles, they have different training, yeah, and the SES are more into the flood situation.

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Now, last year the organisation of the SES was restructured to some degree, is that the case?-- Yeah, well, not really. We have still kept our own individual SES groups in each community.

Was it the case that there was four local controllers and now there is one and three deputies?-- Yeah, we're still sorting through some of those things in this region, but in the main each SES group has remained virtually the same.

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So there was a restructuring, but the effects of it really remain the same?-- Yeah, yeah.

Have you got a local controller in the Springsure SES?-- Yes, we did.

In the Rolleston?-- Yes.

And what is his or her relationship with the one local controller that it seems now to be appointed?-- We haven't actually got that one appointed-----

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Yet?-- -----yet for the whole region because we're all acting individually at this stage.

Well-----?-- Springsure and Rolleston work together.

With reference to the experience and observations that you saw of the SES working in Rolleston and Springsure, what do you think is the best system to have the one controller with the three deputies or for each organisation?-- We have an acting controller over the region for the moment but no appointed one at the present.

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Was there an acting controller appointed during the flood event? Was that structure in play?-- Through the - yeah, in between the flood event, yeah, around that time.

So that acting controller, the one overarching acting controller, was that position in operation during the flood event?-- Well, yes, but in different areas. She was overarching the lot but The Gemfields were probably acting individually.

Springsure was?-- Springsure and Rolleston, yeah.

I am just trying to work out the relationship that the overarching one has of these local SES organisations?-- Well, normally if it wasn't such a widespread flood, I guess they would have more control and be in touch more often, but because it was such a huge area that was covering the flooding, I think we just all did what we had to do individually.

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Each group just bunkered down and did what it had to do?-- Yeah.

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Based on its previous structures?-- Previous structures and previous knowledge, yeah.

Which comes back to my earlier question: based on your experience and observations of what you saw, what do you think is the best system for this area?-- Well, we probably haven't given it a really good enough chance to have a look at that, but certainly we need - I think we need those individual on-the-ground controllers because they know their areas, they know the people and they are volunteers.

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In terms of funding, does the Central Highlands Regional Council provide any funding to the SES organisation?-- Yes, yeah.

Can you give us any idea what that funding is?-- I wouldn't have figures available but it would be considerable because the SES have been in major operations over the last probably 12 months.

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We talked about that overarching local controller, is that a paid position?-- Yep. I believe so.

Full-time paid position?-- No, not full-time, I wouldn't imagine.

Okay. What about the local controllers on the ground?-- The local controllers only get a pittance for out-of-pocket expenses.

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In terms of training, does the regional council have any input into training?-- Not really. The EMQ do that and we've - we've had lots of flood boat operations here in Emerald on the lake out here and Springsure and Rolleston people come to that, as do The Gemfields and Emerald.

So the training is done in this region?-- Yep, yep.

And is that seen as an advantage to have the training so localised?-- Oh, people couldn't get there if it wasn't. People don't have the time and the expertise, and also the thing is they are volunteers and you can't expect people to give up, you know, every weekend to go training for certain things.

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Was there ever an occasion when the training wasn't as localised and that your members had to travel some distance to get to their training?-- Only for certain things. Mostly it has been delivered on site. Like, even in Rolleston they have training, and in Springsure we have training.

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On the ground in Rolleston?-- On the ground.

And in Springsure?-- Yep.

If I can take you to some matters that you have raised in your statement-----?-- Yep.

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-----one of the issues that you refer to is the Guardian software system?-- Yep.

Now, can you give me any idea of how it worked from your own experience?-- Well, unfortunately I never had Guardian in my office.

Because of-----?-- Because it was in my laptop and my laptop was in Emerald.

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Right?-- So I never had access to Guardian.

Do you know from other people's experience how Guardian performed?-- I have been trained in it. I have done a few days' training in it.

What do you think of it?-- I think it is good.

What are the advantages of having it?-- I think it keeps everything in order. I think that - like, if some information comes in-----

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Can you give us an example, like some information?-- Well, if someone has, say, in a storm a tree falls down and that is related to the Guardian and then it is allocated to the appropriate person, like to the SES or to Ergon Energy, who is our power supplier here, and then there is a record kept. So it is very good, because then whoever carries out that job comes back and signs off on it so that it is the full circle.

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One of the issues that you raise - and in fact in your final paragraph of your statement - is that "the flood highlighted the need for better contact information in Guardian, and/or a register of personal contact details obtained by council"?-- We're looking at that now to get - like, one of the things that happened was that when I tried to get helicopters to drop food drops, they wanted the GPS readings, phone numbers, number of people on properties, number of houses, and all

those different things. Well, we never had that in Guardian at that time because we have only been on Guardian, what, six months, I think. So all that information we gathered that - I gathered lots of that at the time and lots of the shire did gather that information and that will go into Guardian. So obviously next time if something happens and Joe Bloggs rings up and has something happen, we will know. All his information will be there to know where to go.

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So how did you know the GPS coordinates to provide-----?-- Well, I had my son sitting with a computer going into Google Earth and it is slow. It was dreadfully slow. So then after about three days, Telstra came to the party and came and sat in my office and they can actually pinpoint the GPS reading coordinates from the telephone system.

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How long did Telstra come and sit in your office for?-- Oh, not very long. Probably a few hours.

And did that solve all the issues that you had?-- Not all of them. Some people had lines to their phones and they can't get them. It is only for the radio-controlled ones.

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Who coordinated for Telstra to come and sit in your office?-- LDMG.

Okay. The issue of food supply is addressed in your statement?-- Yep.

If I can take you to that?-- Yep.

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It is at paragraph 12 on page 2?-- Yep.

You state that you arranged the resupply of food to residents in the area. Did residents personally contact you and request food supplies to be dropped?-- No. I - probably because I have been in local government for a long time, and especially in Springsure-Rolleston area, in the old form Babinda Shire-----

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You were the Mayor?-- Yeah. And so I think I get phone calls about everything. Most I can't answer or don't try to but, yeah, I had lots of phone calls come in and I actually emailed - I have a fairly comprehensive email list in my computer and also I used a lady in Rolleston. I have that mentioned in there as well in my statement, Trina Patterson, who had all the Rolleston area covered with email addresses. So I sent out all my contacts, numbers, my phone number and email address and everything to everything.

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In the area?-- So we had blanket cover and asked anyone who didn't have emails, they phone through, or text, or whatever.

And that's how residents got your-----?-- Yeah.

-----contact details; either email or telephone number?-- Yep, yep.

Then would they contact you?-- Yeah.

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Seeking-----?-- I sent out an email to say that I was going to have one point of delivery for all supply/resupply, and that was the general store in Springsure, so that it was all coordinated. So they actually worked very well with me and they took in the orders for Rolleston and all the property owners, and they combined it and got it altogether for me.

Now, were you working with the LDMG at this point in time?-- I was reporting back to them but most of it I was just doing, because Emerald, by this time, was getting pretty busy themselves.

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Okay. And where were you getting the food from?-- From the local general store in Springsure. We had that resupplied twice, on the - oh, 31st was the first drop and on the 4th of January or - yeah, the second resupply.

Did you have any issues in relation to the supply of food for the area?-- Not for the first one.

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What about the second?-- The second one took a bit longer.

Okay. Would you contact - would you ring up someone and say, "Look, we need some food in"-----?-- LDMG - EMQ and LDMG in Emerald here.

So can we just go slowly through that process so I can understand that?-- Yeah.

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If you were aware that you needed more food, then how would you process that?-- Well, I would ring up and see if I could get it through. Actually, the police actually delivered my list to the LDMG.

What was on your list?-- The Spar order, and they ordered it from Brisbane, their normal suppliers, and LDMG arranged for plane to bring it to Emerald.

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And what was the interplay of EMQ in this process?-- Well, they were very helpful.

What did EMQ do? Did they - how did they participate?-- They - well, they were controlling all the helicopters and also approving everything, and also I had to fill in big lots of forms every time I wanted anything.

Okay?-- So, yeah, that was good. It was well done. Actually, yeah, I would like to commend them on the job they did here. It was great.

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So in terms of the food resuppliers that you were putting through the LDMG, you put it through the LDMG and the LDMG then actioned that?-- Yes, they did.

The first one didn't take long for that to be processed but the second one took a little bit longer?-- We were a bit more

on our own in the first instance. The second instance Emerald had been flooded, everything was, you know, just - I probably used a few words that Max could use, but, anyway, yeah.

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How long did that process take? You say it took a bit longer?-- Only a couple of days.

You put the process - put the request in, a couple of days?-- Yeah, yeah.

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Now, one of the issues that you raise is the issue of getting helicopters through EMQ?-- Well, it was - yeah, what happened, there was some helicopters on the ground but you couldn't access them. It all had to go through a process. Like, LDMG had to go - there was a group out at the airport handling who went where, and it was really difficult, especially if you wanted them in a hurry. So I ended up asking EMQ if I could just get a helicopter on the ground in Springsure so I could get it - all the food delivered, the food drops.

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So that was the food drops to properties that couldn't come into town?-- Yes.

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To go to the general store?-- Some people had already been cut off for 16 to 8 days prior to that flood.

How were you aware of the needs of these people?-- They rang me. There was a process that I told them that whoever needed anything had to ring me first and then ring the grocery shop to order what they wanted but I had to know who was doing it, so we had a process and it worked very well.

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The request for a helicopter on the ground in Springsure?-- Yes, done, yes.

So a helicopter arrived?-- I might have been a bit insistent to a few people, but yeah.

Who were you insistent to?-- A couple of fellows sitting in this room from EMQ.

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From EMQ, can you tell us who they were?-- Glen Bell.

They facilitated a helicopter to be on the ground in Springsure?-- Yes.

Do you know-----?-- It was a locally based helicopter.

How long was the helicopter on the ground for?-- I used it five times.

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Over how many days?-- Probably over 10 days. It didn't just sit on the ground in Springsure. It did one food drop - I also used private helicopters going past to take medications out at various times.

Was that just by luck you would be able to get them or was arrangement made-----?-- Just like ringing around all the helicopter people.

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Asking them to come back?-- Asking if they were going through Springsure, where they were heading, west of Springsure or out towards Rolleston. One of the things was there was no insulin in Springsure at the hospital which was a concern. There is quite a lot diabetes in the area and-----

Where were you accessing that from?-- We had to come to Emerald to get that.

You got that through a helicopter?-- Yep, we actually had to get a helicopter that day to bring a person in from west of Springsure and then he had to fly over here to get the drugs.

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You state that a local helicopter pilot voluntarily assisted with some food deliveries. Is that Mr Max Mayne?-- Yep. Max did a great job.

Now, one of the suggestions or one of the issues which you

combine with a suggestion, is that if you had authority to order a helicopter directly as a Local Emergency Coordinator these problems could have been avoided?-- Yep, just for that timing.

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Which brings up the issues of local emergency coordinators. Is there any such groups that exist within the Shire?-- Well, the - I had up the LDMG based in Springsure. The - we can only have one LDMG as such.

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That is right?-- But we have these satellite groups in the old original Shire boundaries.

So within - we will use your example in Springsure - you had the local LDMG?-- Yep.

What does that role, what do you do for that local LDMG?-- We meet and get information together from the police and the SES and National Parks, all those people based around Springsure, Rolleston.

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Who participates in the local LDMG?-- All the people I named, police from Springsure, Rolleston, National Parks, we have huge amounts of National Parks, fire services and rural fire brigade. Yes, probably a dozen - council.

How often do you meet?-- We meet quarterly.

During the flood events how often did you meet?-- We didn't because there was nobody home, only three. There was the police in Springsure and they sat in my office with me every day and they actually went and looked at the roads and came over to Emerald sometimes with drugs for me. They checked on a lot of people for me. We checked on all the people in the region to make sure they were safe, especially where there was a person living alone. They did that. Yeah, they were most helpful.

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What do you see as your role in heading that up?-- I am going to be missing next time.

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The question is, is your role and responsibilities defined in any way or do you take on any issue that comes through the door?-- You just take on any issue. I mean, there is people out there and when they turn to someone in need you look after them, don't you?

The-----?-- The LDMG, the chair of the LDMG in a previous occasion when only Rolleston was flooded and not Emerald-----

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When only Rolleston was flooded and not Emerald?-- -----I was coordinating the whole thing for Rolleston in Springsure. This time I think it was that I had done it before so I would do it again so that's what happened.

How did the - this local LDMG work with the LDMG structure based in Emerald?-- As I said, I sent SITREPs over and I sent so many emails I annoyed half the staff in Emerald.

What is your view of having these local LDMGs?-- I really think they are necessary. I think that they needed to have a bit more authority. Like, there was - the time frame, like, if you could just order things yourself and have the authority to do things without going through the whole framework with the red tape it would be a lot quicker and safer for people on the ground.

What about the issue of the LDMG having an overarching role and knowing where resources are?-- It has to, yes.

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How would that fit in if you had the ability to-----?-- Yes, I think you have to be under those guidelines but with more power to do things under those guidelines. I mean, you know, it is not as though you go outside those guidelines but just power to act and then refer rather than wait.

So the question is when you put in a request, say for a helicopter up through the LDMG you have to wait until that has been actioned?-- One is available or something and it is a long time yes, sometimes.

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Whereas you would prefer to tell the LDMG you are requesting a helicopter and for you to action that yourself?-- Mmm.

For the LDMG, I suppose, to approve or not-----?-- Approve of.

-----approve of that action?-- Yes.

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Is that how your understanding of how you think that should work?-- I think it would be safer for people on the ground and-----

Why do you say it would be safer for the people on the ground?-- Quicker.

Quicker?-- Yes.

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Can I take you now to the information that was - that you received in relation to weather forecasts? You refer to this on page 4 of your statement. You state that you had little official data and that a large area had been affected by upstream rainfall resulting in a flood of unexpected magnitude. The next matter you raise are there are very few gauges in this region. Those two issues should be read together?-- Mmm.

Did the fact that you had such few gauges in this region affect the warnings that could be provided to members of the community?-- I don't - I would like to see them there but on that occasion they probably would have been washed away, to be quite candid, because the rainfall was so heavy and extreme that, like, it would have been a fairly good river level and would stay there. I know I say the gauges could have been easily washed away because it was so forceful. That was one of the problems with that whole flooding in this region was

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that the rain fell so heavily and, like, you know, the people where they got the three or 400 mils that night, they are the ones that had no warning. They just would never have dreamed that kind of rainfall would hit them that night.

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So are you saying that even if you had those rain gauges that you suggest it wouldn't have provided any extra warning?-- No, wouldn't have helped the people that were immediately hit with flooding.

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Have you got any suggestion for any-----?-- Yeah, I think we should try to get more gauges and, like, also like I suggested mobile phones for the Rolleston area because a lot of that area out there hasn't mobile coverage so you can't send an SMS. I know that, like, the LDMG is now planning to have different sections so we can send SMSs.

What do you mean the LDMG is planning on having different sections?-- Well, Telstra will send them to a post code number.

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Yes?-- So we are dividing the whole Shire up into areas of post codes so everybody gets the warnings through SMS.

What about - one of the issues that you raise is that there is very little mobile coverage in these areas?-- That is right, we need to look at that as well.

So those SMS messages will have little impact in the areas?-- That is right, that is why they weren't used in that area because there is not enough mobile coverage.

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Do you know whether the council is taking any steps to-----?-- I think we have been talking about that for years and years.

And?-- No results.

Who have you been talking to?-- Telstra over the years.

In terms of the gauges, you provide suggestions where gauges could be installed. Do you know whether the council is undergoing-----?-- Yes, they are.

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-----communications with the Bureau of Meteorology?-- Yes.

About getting more gauges?-- Yes.

Can you tell us about that, please?-- They have got sites, lots of sites picked out since this flood.

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Who has lots of sites?-- Bill Wilkinson could probably tell you about that tomorrow.

That is something being moved forward?-- It is definitely something moving forward.

You state that the roads around Rolleston are inadequate in routine flooding events?-- They are not seen, they are under

water by metres.

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How can that be improved then?-- Lots of money.

To do-----?-- It really needs - there is a huge big area outside Rolleston and it is a really vital trucking link from north-south and it just goes under water at the drop of a hat. It is a terrible area.

So for these roads to be flood-proof they have to be raised?-- Raised significantly. At the moment Xstrata have put funding into looking at where the road could be shifted or how it could be raised. Xstrata Coal have done that and also with the council and we have consultants looking at that at the moment but the word from Main Roads is we haven't the money to do it.

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One of the issues in conjunction with the poor roads, is getting that information to the public that roads may be cut. You state that the roads - road reports issued by the RACQ are of no help?-- They are often wrong. Quite often wrong.

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Is it because they haven't up to date information?-- Yes.

Do you know whose responsibility it is to provide that up to date information?-- I believe the police give it to the RACQ but I don't know whether anyone ever updates their websites because it is one of the complaints that has arisen in this area quite often.

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When flood waters isolate Rolleston and council road machinery is unavailable, is that that to fix the roads?-- For the land holders, for those people that can't get access out of their properties, council machinery is usually based in the main areas like in Rolleston or in Springsure and there is no way you can get out to maintain the roads for the community.

So is that on private roads?-- Private roads and council roads. Mainly council roads.

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There is no way the machinery can get out there?-- No.

Then you say that such road repairs have to be carried out by local residents?-- That is right.

Are local residents carrying out road repairs on public roads?-- Yes, council got permission and authorised they take - the land holders take photos first-----

Yes?-- -----do the repairs necessary to actually access to get out of their property and then take other photos and the council refund them for the work they have done.

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Do the residents have to seek approval?-- Yes.

Before they carry out the road repairs?-- Yes.

How do they get that approval?-- Email and-----

They email the photograph and say this is-----?-- Yes.

-----look at this?-- Yes.

"Look at the state of the road. I want to repair it-----?-- It wasn't a huge amount of area but lots of wash out, creeks and things that they couldn't access with 4-wheel drive to make it suitable to get a 4-wheel drive out of their properties.

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What sort of machinery do the residents provide to fix these roads?-- A lot of them have graders and loaders and basic machinery they use on their properties.

How is quality control maintained by the council to ensure it is up to standard?-- It is checked later on and most of these people are long term residents and know a fair bit about grading their roads and things.

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You say the council reimburses them for any product or resources used?-- Yes, any costs.

COMMISSIONER: How do you assess that?-- Sorry?

How do you assess what to reimburse?-- They send in an account and, yeah.

For labour or just whatever materials were needed or what?-- Mainly they never use materials, just their machinery and how long it took them to actually open up their access road.

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You pretty much take their word for it?-- Yeah, I think most of them are pretty honest people. They are mainly long term residents.

Thank you.

MS WILSON: How does that system work?-- Well.

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How often would residents be fixing roads?-- Only in major events like that.

After this flood event how many occasions did local residents have to step up and fix roads?-- Probably a dozen. I wouldn't really know how many. Probably about in that vicinity.

You state that, "The community responded quickly"-----?-- Yes.

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"And precisely to all the needs of its citizens having been used to the experience of flood in the past."?-- In Rolleston, yes.

To that end you knew from accurate local information the likely extent of the flood?-- Yes.

Where was the sources of this local information?-- All up the river. I had photos.

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How did this network work?-- Bush telegraph, but I had photos on my computer on the 27th before the flood actually peaked to show the damage done to a lot of the rural residences and also the height of rivers and the amount of rainfall all around from the Carnarvons through Rolleston and also down, there was flooding basically the whole of western part of Bauhinia Shire, ex-Bauhinia Shire was really flooded badly.

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Is it the case that the bush telegraph just works? They just phone down the creeks and phone down the rivers?-- Very much so.

They just phone one down and the next one phones the rest?-- Yes, yeah. Like emails were something that was pretty - spreading fairly quickly. In some places houses were inundated and they never had access to computers or phones, they usually went to neighbours and we got neighbours to check on them and make sure they were right.

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You had trigger points for a response?-- How do you mean?

Well, you state that, "We had trigger points for a response and had the capacity to implement an appropriate response."-- Just with the rising of the water, just, you know, knew how high it was going to come and went in and evacuated the people at that time.

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What were your trigger points? When it reached a certain level?-- Yes.

Did you have that level particularised by a number?-- It was only the local Rolleston people knew, like, from all the information that was coming in where it had been last time and where it looked like it would go this time and, yeah, they just-----

The trigger points weren't really relying on any actual number but relying on past experience?-- Past experience and local knowledge and also the fact that Rolleston is a very small community and everyone kind of watches for each other there.

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We discussed the issue of LECCs or LECs as the - that you would be the coordinator. That is one of your suggestions for improvement was to be one single LECC for each of the Springsure Rolleston Emerald and other districts. From your evidence that seems to be the case although it may not be referred to as an LECC is these sub LDMGs?-- Yes, that is right.

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Is there any distinction you are wanting to provide?-- No, just as I explained previously.

But when you say a suggestion for improvement is for there to be one single LECC with each of these areas?-- With the authority, the LDMG authority I explained before.

Because presently you do have a sub-LDMG?-- Yes, we have had.

You want it to have more authority?-- Just more authority.

And a name change?-- I don't really care what you call it.

Finally, you state that one point of confusion was fodder drops to stranded livestock. What was the point of confusion in relation to fodder drops?-- I only had one person actually looking for fodder drops but when I phoned through to the LDMG they said, "No, it isn't LDMG council responsibility." They thought - the person I spoke to thought it was AgForce and I rang AgForce and they said no, it was DEEDI. So then I immediately sent out an email to tell everybody it was Ken Murphy, I think is his name, Ken Murphy from DEEDI who would organise the fodder drops.

So the confusion was land holders or-----?-- Obviously didn't know.

-----producers didn't know where to go?-- Yes.

That can be resolved by better planning and preparation?-- I think so. Wouldn't be hard at all.

What about for farmers and producers to be prepared themselves by having more fodder on their properties?-- That is probably easier said than done because I don't think anybody expected the magnitude of flooding that happened last year.

Thank you, no further questions.

MR AMBROSE: We have no questions.

MR URE: Might I go last?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, of course. Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions.

MS O'GORMAN: I have no questions.

MR URE: I have no questions.

MS WILSON: I have nothing further. May the witness be excused?

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, they are the witnesses that we had planned for today. We have more witnesses tomorrow. Perhaps we can now adjourn until 10 a.m.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 4.22 P.M. TIL 10 O'CLOCK THE FOLLOWING DAY