Ben Christiansen

From: Daryl Brown [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, 13 October 2011 10:51 AM
To: Info Flood Commission
Subject: Brisbane River Bank Flood Damage - Karana Downs

Dear Commissioner,

In the days following the flooding in Jan 2011, our section of the river bank (as well as others) was found to be severely damaged and decreased in area by more than 300 square metres. We have been reading flood related press articles with much interest, but little has been written about the damage to the river itself, the possible causes and most importantly who has responsibility for the condition of the river, its maintenance and the responsibility for the effects of releases from Wivenhoe Dam.

Our concerns about water releases began in mid-October 2010. At that time, water releases measured at Colleges Crossing ranged from 4m to 9m over a period of about 10 days. However, on the night of the 19th October, the water dropped dramatically from about 5m to tide level in less than 18hrs. On the 20th October, substantial parts of river bank at our property, collapsed into the river - this was not erosion, but collapse of the embankment that was so saturated, that it could not hold its own weight. This effect is know as 'Slumping'.

Again, on TUE 21 Dec 2010, another release saw the water rise at Colleges from 4m to 8m in just 12 hrs and to 9m over the next 24hrs. Again, the water level dropped suddenly on the 24th Dec. On the 26th Dec, another section of riverbank had collapsed (Slumped) into the river under its saturated weight.

However, worse was yet to come. After the bulk of floodwater had receded by FRI 14 Jan 2011, the river height was maintained at about 16m (MtCrosby) for the following ten or more days. This had the effect of saturating much larger and higher sections of river bank. When the Wivenhoe was lowered to '100%', the gates seemed to be shut very quickly (supported by BOM online records) - the water receded in less than 12 hrs. This resulted in large sections of riverbank, including a large number of river gums, collapsing into the river the day (and the day following) the river reached tidal levels.

While we have only limited river height data to work from (primarily BOM online data), other agencies must have a more complete set of height data to see the rates of height changes. The point of this email is to establish why is it so necessary to reduce the releases into the Brisbane River so quickly - one would expect that if the releases were reduced slowly, then the instability of the banks and vegetation would have some time to become less saturated and therefore become less damaged, or at least be able to resist the effects of large releases more effectively.

Later in March, College's Crossing was closed for 10 days in order that water from Wivenhoe could be released. The bridge (crossing) was not under by very much, although the flood damaged River Height Station is still in-operational. With 10,000 cars per day using the crossing we do not understand why the water could not be released over a longer period at a slower rate, in order to keep the crossing open. Over the 20+ years we have lived at Karana Downs we have not noticed any significant improvement in the control of water and resultant water heights at College's. The plotted graphs of the releases that we followed on the River Height Monitors from October to January reflected a management in panic and indecision.

We know that you are a very busy person. However, we would like to invite you to inspect some of the damage caused by the series of releases from Wivenhoe in 2010 and 2011.

I have attached just one image, of many river bank sections, that demonstrates the point, that the worst damage to the river bank was not caused by the height of the floodwater, but the slumping effects caused by the sudden recession of water from saturated river banks. Since March, it has proved very difficult to determine which authoritie/s have responsibilities for the effects of riverbank damage illustrated here. Indeed, it has also been difficult to find help and assistance about how at least some of the damage can be mitigated or stalled from getting worse during the next wet season.

The essential content of this email was initially provided to Bruce Flegg MP, with copies to Jeff Seeny MP and Councillor de Wit on 22nd March 2011.

Any assistance, advice and in particular, a visit by your representative would be most welcome.

Yours faithfully

Daryl & Geraldine Brown

[redacted]


22/01/2011