

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

ROCKHAMPTON

..DATE 23/05/2011

..DAY 27

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.00 A.M.

1

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, I might just take Mr Ure's appearance for?

MR URE: My name is Ure, initials SM. I appear on instructions of King & Co Solicitors for the Local Government Association Queensland Limited on behalf of the Banana Shire Council.

10

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Apart from that, Mr Rolls, you are appearing for the State?

MR ROLLS: For the State, with Ms Brasch, yes.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman, you are appearing for the Commonwealth?

20

MS O'GORMAN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose for SunWater.

MR AMBROSE: With Mr Dollar.

COMMISSIONER: Is that all the appearances? Good, thank you. Yes, Mr Callaghan?

MR CALLAGHAN: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

30

Written records of flooding in Rockhampton date back to the very year in which Queensland achieved Statehood in 1859, and, of course, the area would have experienced flooding for countless years before that.

Rockhampton floods as a result of an accumulation of waters from across Australia's second largest river catchment. Covering about 140,000 square kilometres, this catchment stretches from the Great Dividing Range in the south and west to the Central Queensland coast.

40

The sheer expanse of the Fitzroy River Basin means that Rockhampton, which spans the Fitzroy River, can have time to prepare itself before the floodwaters arrive. This is just as well, for the floodwaters which did arrive on the 4th of January this year isolated Rockhampton for several weeks. Road, rail and air travel were all cut. This flood may not have been the highest on record for the city but its impact upon the local community, and, indeed, upon the whole State was profound.

50

Rockhampton is a major transport hub and its isolation caused major problems for anyone who was trying to move along the Queensland coast, or to move inland to central western Queensland. Barges, flood boats and helicopters all came into their own.

Precautionary measures were taken by the local authorities well before the peak arrived. For example, a major evacuation centre was established at the university; residents in low lying areas, like Depot Hill, were warned in advance, and efforts were undertaken to protect a number of properties at risk. Overall, the measures proved largely effective and major disaster was averted within the city. 1

The Commission will also hear today about the town of Theodore, which sits on the junction of Castle Creek and the Dawson River. After a major flood in March 2010, Theodore endured persistent rain towards the end of the year and then experienced multiple flood events throughout December of 2010. 10

The most significant of these events occurred on New Year's day when the Dawson River peaked at a record height of 14.7 metres. Additional flows from Castle Creek pushed water over the town.

The full population of Theodore had to leave. So far as we're aware, this is the first time in Queensland history that an entire town has had to be evacuated. Residents of Theodore had to wait at a difficulty fans for the floods to subside before the clean-up could begin. 20

Numerous other towns in the Banana Shire also experienced varying levels of flooding which affected the agricultural and mining industries upon which the region relies so heavily.

This Commission, pursuant to its terms of reference, is to provide an interim report which is due on the 1st of August this year. This report must address matters associated with flood preparedness, such that any recommendations may be implemented before next summer's wet season. 30

In order to inform the Commission about any such matters which might be relevant to this part of Queensland, we will today call witnesses from the Rockhampton Regional and Banana Shire Councils. They will discuss a range of issues. These issues include evacuation processes, the effectiveness of local disaster responses, and other concerns specific to their respective regions. 40

Mayor Brad Carter of the Rockhampton Regional Council will be asked to comment on the actions of the Local Disaster Management Group, the media response and future planning issues for Rockhampton.

Mr Colin Head, the Local Disaster Coordinator of Banana Shire will be called to discuss the shire's response to the multiple flood events within their region and the role of Local Emergency Coordination Committees, LECCs, of which the Commission has already heard in other hearings. 50

Councillor Vaughn Becker from the Banana Shire will also be called to give an account of the flood event in Theodore and the effectiveness of the response for local residents.

We will hear from inspectors David Peff and Marcus Hill, the coordinators for the Rockhampton and Gladstone disaster district areas respectively. They will be asked to comment on the effectiveness of the existing disaster management arrangements and communication exchanges between the local and State disaster groups.

1

We will also call Mr Ken Murphy from the Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation. Mr Murphy assisted graziers in providing fodder crops for isolated stock, and in resupply to outlying areas.

10

Burnett Joyce, a cattle producer from Theodore will give an account of the flood events and the hardships faced in response and recovery and the Commission will also call Mrs Fleur Anderson, President of the Dawson Valley Cotton Growers' Association. Mrs Anderson will give an account of the flood experience from the perspective of both her family and her industry.

20

Madam Commissioner, we have repeatedly emphasised that these public hearings are only one part of the Commission's process. One way to illustrate that proposition is to point out that the Commission has already obtained statements and documentation from the Gladstone Area Water Board which owns and operates the Awoonga Dam outside Gladstone, and received material from SunWater which owns two dams near Biloela that is the Callide Dam and the Kroombit Dam. That material, which includes Emergency Action Plans and flood event reports, has already been considered by Commission staff in preparation for these hearings. Relevant statements will be tendered in due course, and as such there is no need for this material to form a part of these hearings.

30

However, we do regard it as important that evidence of the kind we will hear today should be ventilated publicly and in a place close to the region to which the evidence relates.

I propose, after a short adjournment, to call Mr Peff.

40

COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn until you are ready to proceed.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 10.08 A.M.

50

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 10.15 A.M.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call David Peff.

10

DAVID WILLIAM PEFF, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Commission your full name rank and station, please?-- My full name is David William Peff. I am an Inspector of Police currently relieving as Acting Superintendent, District Officer, Rockhampton.

20

You prepared in the first instance a 13 page statement, is that correct?-- That's correct.

You have also referred to - or are aware of the final report of the Rockhampton Distract Disaster Management Group to the State Disaster Coordinator, is that correct?-- That's correct.

You also attended a meeting of the Rockhampton District Disaster Management Group - I think the date was the 27th of January, is that right? There are minutes of that meeting that you are also aware of, is that correct?-- That would be correct.

30

I will show you those three documents. That's actually a collection of minutes of that group, is that right?-- Yes.

I tender those three documents.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 458.

40

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 458"

MR CALLAGHAN: Inspector, can I just ask you first of all a question about preparation for the wet season?-- Yes.

50

And you don't seem to have a copy of your statement with you and you probably don't need it. I just wanted to ask you about a workshop facilitated by Emergency Management Queensland on the 14th of October 2010. You have referred to that?-- Yes.

-----in your statement, and you observe in your statement that "The potential gravity of the season was clearly articulated

to all attendees." That much has been said by other people as well, that the information from the bureau was well translated, but it has also been suggested that there was a fair bit of padding in that particular seminar that apart from that information, there wasn't much of use disseminated. Do you have a comment on that?-- That seminar, I attended the second half - I was actually in Brisbane that morning doing a performance review presentation to the Commissioner, and on my return I was there for the second half of it, so I don't really know about the padding that you are referring to.

1

10

That's okay. You weren't there for the whole thing-----?-- No.

-----so you can't comment, fair enough. You had to manage two significant flood events which were a long distance apart, about 250 kilometres apart, would that be right?-- 278, yes.

But who is counting? That must have had - or must have posed a significant set of challenges particularly in respect of just communication issues. Can you just explain to us how those challenges were met?-- Yeah, the communication obviously was the biggest difficulty. Rockhampton was isolated, obviously, by road and by rail. Air was the only means of transport out to Emerald. My communication throughout the - certainly throughout the response phase was done by way of telephone and teleconference. So if I needed to talk specifically, say, to the Mayor, I would do that on telephone. If it was if it was a one-on-one discussion I needed to have. Every day at one o'clock we would have a teleconference between the DDMG and the LDMG and that was all done over a teleconference set-up.

20

30

Was that all adequate so far as you were concerned? Or could you see how that might be improved?-- In terms of geography, that was as good as we could be. I mean, the reality is presence is going to be far better for communication, but that just wasn't an option. So what we had - looking forward in the future, video conferencing facility would certainly have improved. From where I sit as the DDC, you can glean a certain amount over the phone but some of the body language and just the level of energy displayed by an LDMG, if you can visually see it, it gives you some more comfort. So certainly looking forward, video conferencing would be of great assistance.

40

All right. That leads, I suppose, to the question of media generally. It would seem that you had a fairly well organised media strategy which included social media?-- Yes.

50

Would you explain to us exactly what you did in that regard?-- QPS as an organisation embraced Facebook towards the latter part of last year, and fortuitously I was at a conference last week in Brisbane where our media people presented on the Facebook hits and the number of hits that were on Facebook leading up to this flood event was - I think it was in the vicinity of 6 to 7,000 per day, and through the flood events and more recently with Yasi, I think it was about 180,000 hits

per day. So what we were able to do as an organisation was put out messages or kill the rumours, because a lot of our time was taken up trying to get over the top of rumours. The other thing we were able to do was provide timely advice. A lot of people seem to use Facebook in preference to the conventional print and TV and radio, media, so I think it is the sign of the 21st century and we certainly need to be embracing it, which is what we've done, and it helped us a lot in getting our messages out. Not every day, but on most days I would prerecord a message that was uplifted on to Facebook so people could click on that and they could find out what was happening within the Rockhampton and Emerald areas.

1

10

I was going to ask you later but I will ask you now about that topic of rumours because in your statement at page 6 you refer to the panic buying which was apparently generated by some media reporting, is that right?-- Yeah. The Mayor quite rightly did a media release and spoke to the media about the need for people to provision themselves appropriately, and that was the correct advice that he gave. Invariably, what happened was that the - and the media reported it correctly, but the community received that message incorrectly and then we found that we were having to try and catch up to, I suppose, stop the panic buying, essentially. Anecdotally - and this is not a fact - but anecdotally I was advised there was that much milk in town that the major food suppliers were put in a position where they looked like they were actually going to have to throw the milk out. We just weren't in a situation where resupply was an issue but because of the community's perception, they panic bought.

20

30

I was going to ask you about that because you do say in your statement that resupply was never in doubt or at risk?-- No.

What's your source of information that allowed you to be so confident about that? I mean, you have given one example, but-----?-- Feedback from the LDMG - I obviously relied on the LDMG - and the retailers fed into the LDMG, and the information from the retailers to the LDMG was that resupply for Rockhampton was never in doubt, was never an issue. There were, of course - and I probably need to clarify - there were always resupply considerations for isolated pockets in the communities, such as Alton Downs, and the like, so - but we were able to meet those resupply requests - or the LDMG, rather, were able to meet those resupply requests locally, but the bigger whole of Rockhampton community, Rockhampton/Jeppoon, there was never a resupply concern that was raised with me.

40

Is that the sort of rumour that the Facebook social media thing can be deployed to-----?-- Perfectly. And I honestly couldn't tell you whether we addressed that through Facebook, because obviously that was a bit of a hectic time, but that's a perfect example of a really good application for Facebook.

50

And before we leave the media and its significance behind, a challenge for someone in your position as a DDC by the media demands in a situation like this, how did you deal with

that?-- Product of strategy. Very early in the piece it became apparent to me that this is going to be a significant event attracting significant media attention. I contacted the QPS media branch in Brisbane and made arrangements through them to have a dedicated media officer flown into Rockhampton, a person by the name of Chris Loy, and he handled all of my media requests, so he become the central point of contact from the QPS. The council also has dedicated media people. So Chris Loy and the council media people worked hand in hand working on joint statements or messages that needed to be put out. I might just go back to November last year where we held the DDMG meeting, and the Mayor and I discussed what we would do in the future for media - sorry, more broadly the DDMG itself, and it was agreed by the membership of the DDMG that across all topics, that myself and the Mayor would be the central point of contact for the media, and any speaking parts or anything provided for the media would be done by those two points instead of fragmenting bits and pieces of media. However, it was also agreed that if a request came from the media - and I will use Transport and Main Roads as a good example - every day there was requests about road closures and the like. The representative from TMR would provide that information specific to their area of expertise. So essentially, TMR could talk about road closures or myself or the Mayor, but what we were sure not to do was avoid other government agencies being asked to speak on areas that weren't within their area of expertise, and that worked quite well. The media briefings, we had a set program 10 o'clock every day, the LDMG would meet at 8 o'clock in the morning. I would attend those meetings so I could remain informed on the progress of the LDMG. The Mayor and I would then have a discussion prior to the 10 o'clock briefing and then we would be responsible to the media. In part - in my personal view, the community is looking to two main sources, that's being the Mayor and a figure person from the police, to assure the community that they're safe, that we're looking after their welfare, and that whatever happens we're going to address it. So it was a deliberate strategy to do that on a daily basis. It helped keep the media informed, and personally I found working with the media far better than trying to work against the media. It was a better result all round. If asked to do an event like this again, I don't think I would change any of my media strategy at all. I would certainly be open to suggestions, I am not saying that I would exclude that, but I am not aware of anything or I didn't see anything else in the State where I thought, "Oh, gee, I wish we had have done that."

But I suppose the proactive securing of Mr Loy was part of what you are talking about?-- Oh, absolutely.

What you wouldn't change?-- What that did was it gave me more time, which is obviously critical to the role of the DDC. So he handled all of the media, he did the filtering, if you will, of information and he was able to provide one point of information to a variety of outlets at the same time, and he had pre-existing relationships with the media anyway, because that's his substantive role, as a media liaison person, so he

was very critical to our media strategy. As I say, he worked hand in hand with the council. So it wasn't a case where we had media - a media liaison person and the council didn't. Both lead agencies had media liaison people and they worked hand in hand together. There was joint statements. The message that consistently came out was on song with each other. There was no division between the two groups. As I say, I am very comfortable with what we did.

1

You were able to balance the need for information to come from one central point against the other demands on your time?-- Absolutely. You know, there was specific requests - by way of example, the Sunrise program wanted a six o'clock live cross there one morning. So there were events that I did in isolation, and I took the view that I would allocate my time based on the exposure that it would provide. Not to me as a media person, naturally, but about getting that message out. So I didn't do - or didn't meet every single request that was put to me. I really assessed the worth of the media request on the message that I could then relay to the community, and that's obviously a subjective and judgmental test bases on a case-by-case basis.

10

20

All right. Can I take you to page 11 of your statement? If you don't have it there it is just one line I can read to you. You say, "All equipment, including communication systems utilised during the flood event, were adequate for the needs of the district, although it was only to a minimum standard." Can you elaborate on that?-- Yes, certainly. Within the Distract Disaster Coordination Centre, most specifically our coordination centre, by necessity, was set up away from the police station. - Rockhampton Police Station simply isn't big enough to run this event conjointly with normal operation or policing responses. So it was set up at the Department of Public Works building on North Street, which meant we had to move mobile communication equipment, ie network stuff, such as emails and file servers, and, forgive me, I am not the most technically-minded person, but what it meant was that the speed with which we could access data at the police station was nothing the same as this remote DDCC. It was very, very slow, frequent dropouts, which really hindered the process for the people in the DDCC. And probably a really good example was when Emerald realised that they were looking at flooding in the vicinity of 80 per cent of their town, they did up a - they had a map drawn up and it had pink shading over the areas that were going to be affected, and it was - I think it was about a three megabyte file.

30

40

50

Now, the council emailed that into the DDCC so the DDMG could actually graphically see it up on a screen when we met at 2 o'clock. It took an inordinate amount of time for that one file to come in. For me I wanted to send that off to the State so that the State Disaster Coordinator, Mr Stewart, could graphically see what I was faced with in Emerald. Again, it took an inordinate amount of time. We were able to achieve it, yes. That is why I say it was a minimal standard. Is it optimum, absolutely not. Is it critical to life and death, no, not on this occasion but there is always that possibility in the future.

1

10

Is this one of those issues which I think you go on to talk about which you say has been addressed in the debrief?-- Not address, it has been identified in the debrief and we are now looking at alternative sites. If we were to have a disaster occur in the short term we would still be doing business exactly the same because that obviously hasn't been fixed yet. It certainly has been identified and the Executive Officer has been tasked with looking at other government buildings. The problems with other government buildings will still be the QPS network. In the short term we would be working on a mobile facility. If we were able to identify a suitable government building we could look at putting in the public safety network dedicated lines which would fix it up but that is, sort of, more in the medium term not in the short term.

20

On page 11 of your statement you talk about being able to task some military assets directly including Blackhawk helicopters. Was that through a liaison officer?-- Yes, it was.

30

Explain how that was done?-- The normal DACC arrangement is to put it up through State and State through Canberra. Obviously that process, the normal process takes time. What happened was that ADF had set up - and I get lost in their acronyms but they had set up a decision making cell, I suppose for want of a better term, in Brisbane. They also set up another decision making cell in Rockhampton. It is the only one they did in the State. So they had one in Brisbane, one in Rockhampton. What it meant is if I had a request for assistance which couldn't be met by the civil assets I was able to liaise with the military person at my DDCC, or DDMG as the case may be, and make a request through that person direct to Lieutenant Colonel Martin Borquin, I think, who was in charge of the assets within Rockhampton or Central Queensland, so I did make that request direct to him and that was for things like the Blackhawks and there was other military assets, unimogs, in liaison with the DDC's - sorry the DDC from Gladstone I was able to advise them Rockhampton had a water purifying - thing that could make water, sorry.

40

50

"Thing", I think, is the word you are looking for?-- Essentially had potable water which was an issue for Theodore. Because we had the liaison on the ground locally we were able to task that or Lieutenant Colonel Borquin was able to task that locally without having to go through the slow process historically or normally to Brisbane then to Canberra and back. It made a significant difference.

Good. On page 12 of your statement you refer to the fact that a separate logistics cell was developed in order to ensure appropriate taskings were carried out both in Rockhampton and Emerald?-- Yes.

Can you explain a bit more about that?-- You will notice in my statement earlier in the piece I identified the significance of this event and identified that I couldn't perform the role of the District Officer as a District Disaster Coordinator. I therefore stepped away from the role of District Officer and become the District Disaster Coordinator in its true sense as a coordinating role. The operational response to policing within Rockhampton and Emerald was maintain by the person who backfilled me as the Acting District Officer and he did that in liaison with our Chief Superintendent and Assistant Commissioner. So it become a true operational response that I isolated myself from only in terms of line of control. I maintained a keen interest naturally, and certainly influenced what I wanted to achieve as the DDC. But, that logistics cell was responsible for all of the taskings, you know if they needed more police in Rockhampton or needed more police in Emerald that logistic cell did that. As you know Rockhampton was isolated so that meant it become more challenging getting police in and we still had the fatigue side of things to look after. Something as simple as uniform. There was images of our police officers walking through flooded waters. Now, those uniforms were soiled and had to be destroyed. Police officers were flying into Rockhampton with short notice. They only brought small amounts of uniform with them so this logistics cell sourced additional supplies from our logistics branch in Brisbane. In essence, one of the rooms in the Rockhampton station there looked like a uniform supply store. There were all items of uniform there that could be replaced. All that was done, as I say, in isolation from me but with my full knowledge and it just helped drive and direct our operational response.

Was there any need for a formal arrangement between you and the logistics cell. Did you have schedule meetings at a set time every day or you kept it on a-----?-- No, there was a scheduled meeting at midday every day. In essence, my day was 8 o'clock in the morning was the LDMG meeting, 10 o'clock was the media briefing. 11 o'clock was the State teleconference, 12 o'clock was the meeting with the assistant Commissioner and the operational side of things, 1 o'clock was the LDMG meeting with Emerald, 2 o'clock was my DDMG meeting and 3 o'clock was the sit reps and then I would take a breath and look at what else we had to do. It all worked well. Because it was structured and regimented I could stick on task. It made me more responsible so I couldn't sort of lose track of where I was going. So, in essence, no, to answer your question there wasn't anything written as such but it was very well understood and Chief Superintendent, Assistant Commissioner and the other acting District Officer were accessible to me at any time. I didn't have to make appointment or schedule meetings.

On the operational police side of things you make the point that there were no property offences committed of which you were aware anyway?-- That is right. Now, some could criticise and say it wasn't my role as the DDC to speak to the media about the property related offences because it was truly an operational response. However, I go back to my statement before about myself and the mayor being the central points of focus to the community. It was incumbent upon me to assure the community that looting wasn't going to be an issue. It was something that the media and this is the only - not criticism but the media obviously were looking for that story about someone being looted. I was very much aware that would be an issue if it occurred so right from the outset we needed to make sure we had sufficient resources there that we could actually deliver on the promise there would be no looting. So, in terms of the staffing and that, a lot of close liaison between myself and Mike Curtain who was Acting District Officer to make sure that didn't happen and make sure we had sufficient resources.

That's whether it is a District Officer or DDC achievement is something you are obviously pleased about?-- I had three objectives going into this. No loss of life, no serious injuries, and no looting. We achieved all three. I will say there was - there were property crime offences still being committed in Rockhampton but they weren't being committed in flood affected areas. One of the things I said to the media was the people who choose to vacate their homes have entrusted to the QPS the security of their home and it is incumbent upon the QPS and me as their representative on this occasion to do all we physically and humanly can to maintain that security because if you lose the trust of the community, if you don't achieve that objective, and you have an event in the future your ability to have people make decisions to evacuate is going to be affected by the lack of trust because you haven't done the job right previously so it was for me very important to ensure that the trust wasn't betrayed.

That leads us neatly, I suppose, to the whole question of community expectations and community responses which is something you also address at page 12 of your statement and you make a point along these lines that, "There are community expectations which have developed by reason of the history of flooding that this area has endured." I think you go on to point out that that's not a basis for planning for the next one. Could you elaborate on that, please?-- One of the true frustrations for me personally was the "it didn't happen that way in 1991" response. It was a daily response from various members of the community. I will say small amounts but they were still a vocal part of the community. A really good example of what I am trying to say there relates to electricity and the reason or the need to disconnect electricity supply to a house. In 1991 - this is not just Rockhampton, this is across Australia and probably worldwide - but in 1991 the number of air conditioners in houses was small and they were box air conditioners mounted in the wall. In 2011, because of the cost of air conditioners is so cheap and Rockhampton obviously being a rather warm place, a lot of

homes had air conditioners and they were split system air conditioners where the compressors and all the electronics were placed on the ground. The decision that Ergon had to make in terms of when to disconnect power supply was impacted by the number of air conditioners. So the community was saying, "We didn't have power disconnected in 1991.", that is true but in 1991 we didn't have the air conditioners on the ground. Split system air conditioners in 1991 were a significant luxury. They are mainstream - almost essential - not in the true sense, of course, but in a person's mindset they become an essential part of the house. That's probably the best representation I can give you. Others were, "Well, in 1991 we were never flooded and this time there is flood waters there." The council put a whole heap of markers up around the flood affected areas to show this is the height in 1991, and the feedback I received was some of those markers were under water. So, other areas certainly weren't under water. Another example was the time it took for the water to break to then flood the airport and equally to cut the southern highway. Now that - I was relying heavily on information there as to when I would cut the Bruce Highway. We were working on 1991 data and - I have forgotten the figures but I think it was 8.4 or 8.5, the information I had was the Bruce Highway would go under water. We sat there and obviously very carefully watched the river rise. It got to - if it is 8.5, we will use that as an example - if got to that figure the road hadn't cut. So clearly the flood waters were running around differently. I am not a hydrologist but obviously I am able to work out when something is cut and when it is not. I could see the differences between '91 and now. My personal frustration was people weren't getting the message. Similarly with Emerald. People were working on 2008. It is now 2011, it is a different flood, it was a more rapidly rising flood. How I get that message out in the future, I don't know. I think it is human nature.

I suppose that is part of what this Commission is about, to emphasise no two floods are the same?-- No and it would be very very reckless to try and build something in the future based on this - even on this flood. I probably should qualify a little more carefully I guess. Clearly there is learnings. Absolutely there is learnings. But to be 100 per cent prescriptive to say, "This is the how and why we respond to a flood in the future," and to have no latitude, that would be of concern. You need to have that flexibility and that room to move almost like a gray area in the middle. There is certainly some black and white about what you can and can't do but there needs to be flexibility in the middle to allow the decision makers the scope to apply good judgment and hopefully make good decision.

While we are talking about community attitudes, you also, I think, make a point that the length of this flood impacted on the goodwill of the community. Can you just explain what you meant by that?-- Emerald not so because it was a quick event by comparison but Rockhampton was a very long drawn out flood. As you know, Rockhampton was in full flood before Brisbane and all the events in the southeast corner. Those events were

finished and Rockhampton was still in full flood. Rockhampton was still isolated. The novelty factor, if you will, for the community, that was the need to evacuate and the media being here every day, and all of the things that go with the flood, for the first week or so that - the community were okay with that. But as the time drew on it stopped being funny. It started to wear people down. It, you know, you are isolated. You can't fly out. You can't catch a train. When is the road going to open? We don't know and people were starting - you know, generally speaking there was frustration there. You know just - frustration is the wrong term - people were just I suppose over the floods. They had just had enough of it and things like the evacuation centre, the conduct of people there. It is like anything, when you go on a trip the goodwill is there to start off with but the longer it goes on, the personalities start coming out and little bits of friction and things like that that wouldn't be evident if it was only going for three or four days.

1

10

I was going to ask you about the evacuation centres to which I think you refer on page 5 of your statement. Were there specific issues there that could have been dealt with which - the length of time that people were there-----?-- Obviously the length of time we don't influence because that's dependant upon the flooding. There were some learnings there that relate to probably almost like a Code of Conduct. The people going into that evacuation centre really should have - and I know the LDMG are looking at it if they haven't already adopted it, for future events that a condition of entry to the evacuation situation centre is you do certain things. That didn't happen so the expectations of the people there - there was no expectations of them and I think it is good to have expectations laid out so that when they go there they know what their rules are. They know what they can and can't do. Then the other side of it was how we then evacuate people from the evacuation centre. Because it was for so long it essentially become their second home. Then people were having to face the reality of not being able to go straight back into their home and we had no real need for the evacuation centre and transitioning them back to other housing. I think - I am not saying it was done poorly but I think there was a little we can work on in the future as well. Just in terms of positioning or preparing these people for movement out of the evacuation centre.

20

30

40

That was one of the things I was going to ask Mr Carter about because I think he makes the point that some people were probably being looked after better in the evacuation centre than they might have been anywhere else at that time?-- I wasn't going to say that but that was the information - the feedback I had.

50

I think Mr Carter said it for you. Finally, Mr Peff, on page 13 of your statement you refer to the proposition that, "The transition of the DDC from response to recovery is seen as blurred." What would you like to know which wasn't clear and at what point would you like to have known it?-- In hindsight I think it was just the response is quite clear but the role

of the DDC - and this might be just my ongoing learning too - but the role of the DDC in the recovery phase and how involved the DDC becomes in the recovery phase. There seems to be recovery at the local level and recovery at the State level seems to be quite clear but just the role of the DDC in that recovery given that Communities are the lead agency for the recovery and what is it expected of me as the DDC. For me it was a personal - I couldn't get the answers I needed. I still am not entirely sure what my role is in recovery. As is the right of the government, of course, we now have got the Recovery Task Force which is, you know, separate again. So for me it is just what clearly is the role of the DDC in the recovery.

1

10

From whom were you seeking those answers? From the State level?-- Probably from the policy, as the policy is written. I sought advice from EMQ on it and they weren't as clear as I thought they could be. For me I would like to see it properly articulated so I know exactly what my role is.

20

Just some clear markers written down somewhere?-- Yeah.

So you can decide when your role is finished?-- Yeah.

Thanks very much, Mr Peff.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure.

MR URE: I have nothing.

30

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MR O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: We will come to you last, Mr Rolls.
Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Just going back to the last topic though, how did you finish up? At what point did you finish your involvement? I am trying to get a better idea of what you wanted to know about when you were unclear about what you were supposed to be doing at that stage?-- Commissioner, obviously because I was relieving in the position my role finished on the 31st of January when the substantive District Officer took up his position. It was fairly clinical in that respect. However, the ongoing recovery is still happening. I am not - I just am not really sure personally what the role of the DDC is in that recovery now. Communities lead recovery, more so in Emerald than Rockhampton, but what is the role of the DDC in that recovery? What is the reporting role of the DDC, you know. If Communities - as I understand it if Communities lead recovery, if they are leading recovery should that transition the responsibility across to Communities and the DDC stay with the response phase of it, the preparation and response phase of it? It is just for me - and I might be missing it completely but I just couldn't satisfy myself what

40

50

my long term role as the DDC would be in relation to recovery.

1

Thank you for that.

MR CALLAGHAN: Nothing arising. May Mr Peff be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Inspector Peff, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

10

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Brad Carter.

20

30

40

50

BRAD CARTER, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

1

MR CALLAGHAN: Could you tell the Court your full name and occupation, please?-- Brad Carter, Mayor of Rockhampton Regional Council.

You have prepared in response to a requirement from the Commission a statement of the 31st of March 2011, is that correct?-- That is correct.

10

You also were present at a Local Disaster Management Group debrief on the 27th of January 2011, there are some minutes of that meeting you referred to?-- Correct.

I also will show you a Rockhampton Flood Management Study, Executive Summary from 1992. Could you just have a look at those three? Are you familiar with each of those?-- I am not intimately familiar with the study done in 1991. I was not present in the community at the time nor was I involved in that study but I am familiar with the broad recommendations of it.

20

That's all we will be interested in. I tender those three.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 459.

30

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 459"

MR CALLAGHAN: Could I ask you firstly about some of the things done in preparation for the wet season. One success story seems to have been the prepared DVDs which were sent out, is that right?-- That is correct, that has proved to be a very effective strategy to keep our community informed.

40

It seems to have been a very wide and well accepted distribution of those. Was any special planning put into it or was there any secret to it being as well distributed as it was?-- I think it was more the understanding over a couple of years in the preparation of that. That strategy was prepared earlier in the term of this council going back to - and in the previous councils prior to amalgamation. A lot of effort was put into the design and the marketing concept behind it, the message, what are the key messages that people need to know in terms of preparing for disasters. That was done very effectively. Some funding was sourced from the State government for that. I couldn't give you all the specific detail but it was a clearly defined carefully orchestrated strategy.

50

I suppose the point being it was something which was instituted well in advance of the warnings that might have existed about the wet season?-- That is correct.

1

Something that goes back for some time. Have you been sitting here while Mr Peff gave evidence?-- Yes, I have.

You heard me ask him about the EMQ workshop on the 14th of October. He only got there for part of it but you made the point that the BOM information which was provided was helpful but the rest was not so helpful or you have - withdraw that. You said there was a bit of padding in there, is that right?-- That is correct.

10

What would you have liked to have seen or heard more of at a session like that?-- The session that I attended at that time was very much about the legislative changes and how they would work. The difference between the legislation and the intent of a disaster management plan and what happens in practice are probably quite different. I think what Acting Superintendent Peff was getting to was the reality of a disaster and what happens and some unforeseen unexpected events that can occur. So, I don't know what the answer is in terms of how you can ever prepare completely in advance for disasters that may have a number of different consequences depending on the way they go. That would be the best way I could describe that. However, the training that we were provided in terms of the legislative changes, the roles and responsibilities of the different elements and components of a disaster response I believe was quite effective and I understood what my legal responsibilities were; what the responsibilities of the Local Disaster Management Group were and we certainly did our best in this disaster to comply with the State legislation and work as religiously as we could to that.

20

30

40

50

While we're still talking about EMQ, though, there is the issue about the flood barriers which protected the airport - and this is picked up in those minutes as well. I think Mr Steele makes the point or made the point at the debrief that he would like to have seen those barriers there perhaps a couple of days earlier but there may have been some reluctance to deploy them, is that right?-- The issue first came to my attention in December when we had minor floods. If you are aware, we had minor floods in December and major floods in January. During the minor floods I was participating in a District Disaster Management Group meeting and the issue of the availability of flood barriers, and at that time we were led to believe that there was 500 metres of flood barrier in Townsville, 500 metres of flood barrier held in storage in Brisbane, and an officer of EMQ made the comment that the cost to relocate one of those sets of flood barriers will be in the order of \$20,000 and he wasn't prepared - or EMQ weren't prepared to make that financial commitment, to which I challenged that opinion. The whole disaster management process that was being driven by the State Government was all about leaning forward, over preparing, under delivering, and I felt that that response was an inappropriate response and I challenged it and I believe that some time thereafter those flood barriers were relocated or one set of flood barriers was relocated to Rockhampton. They weren't needed, nor deployed during the December minor flooding. However, it was patently obvious during the January major flooding that we should deploy that around the Rockhampton airport. We did give consideration to deploying that around water infrastructure - water treatment facilities or sewerage treatment facilities. At that time we felt that they were quite safe with the predicted flood levels. The airport was the facility most at risk so those flood barriers were deployed and located around the airport. Whilst the floodwaters came within 300 millimetres of the floor of the main terminal building, the floodwaters certainly would have entered the basement of the control tower. So, in effect, the flood barriers proved very effective in allowing the airport control tower to function throughout the whole of the disaster in January.

10

20

30

40

\$20,000 probably being cheap at the price?-- I thought that was a minimal, negligible cost.

You said you challenged the decision or the provisional decision. How did you do that? How did you challenge-----?-- I expressed my concern at that time at that meeting that that was an inappropriate comment and an inappropriate manner by which to make a determination as to whether that piece of equipment should be deployed or not. In the back of my mind I was also probably thinking that the Queensland Government had invested millions of dollars in acquiring these facilities and if they had invested that heavily why would you keep them in storage.

50

Did you have to go further, though, or was it just a question of negotiating with-----?-- At that stage, it became obvious

that we were then more into realising that in December we were only going to get minor flood levels, so the accuracy of the height of the water at that time indicated that it probably wasn't required but for some reason - I don't know whether it was through my comments, but I became aware that that flood barrier was now available in Rockhampton. I don't know what transpired for that decision to occur.

1

Still with EMQ, can we return to the topic of the SES because that crops up a bit in the minutes and in various places in the material. For a start, there had been some recent changes in the SES in this area, is that correct?-- We had employed an SES controller to communicate and coordinate probably the five various SES groups.

10

These five have had to come together as a result of the amalgamation process, is that right?-- In essence, that would be correct, and we also - it is probably a good outcome of amalgamation that you can manage and harness and garnish those resources very effectively, and we, as a council, took the decision to employ that person so that in times of non-disasters that person is on the payroll of council, and in times of disaster they report through the EMQ process.

20

And that immediately invites the question as to whether there is any potential for conflict, or whether there was any conflict there, an employee of council, but, as you say, during the disaster working for someone else?-- It does raise the potential for a conflict. However, it was not a major issue during our disaster, mainly because of the long lead time that we had for preparation and the extremely positive and effective communication and cooperation that resided amongst all agencies through our Local Disaster Management Group meetings.

30

Can I ask you - and you may not know the figure off the top of your head - but at what cost to the council is the employment of such a person?-- Look, I must admit, I don't have those figures with me, I am sorry. It would be the wages and on costs and I-----

40

We can find that out. Your council supplies other support to the SES, though, is that right?-- That's correct. And I don't have that information specifically with me, but we do in terms of equipment and through that coordination role.

There was a concern expressed at the LDMG meeting on the 27th that because this was a new unit, there was no planning in place, or little planning in place for this particular event. Are you aware of that being expressed?-- In terms of the SES involvement?

50

Yes, yes?-- I am not familiar with the complete detail of that. My observation, in terms of working with a volunteer emergency organisation and working with professional emergency service agencies, is that there are slightly different behaviours, and that's raised some issues in my mind as to how we might consider improvements in the future to make sure that

we have the perfect response, or we head towards a perfect response.

1

And you may well still be formulating these in your own mind but can you share with us the ideas that you might be contemplating for improvement?-- Well, the ideas for improvement aren't yet clear in my head, but the issues are around you have a volunteer organisation and the volunteers do a magnificent job in terms of their time but a - a professional emergency organisation works through a very structured chain of command. So I have seen evidence where through - whether it is the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire Service, or the Australian Defence Force, the instructions and chain of command work very effectively in issuing instructions down and intelligence coming back up. With the State emergency service, probably there is some areas there where individuals may wish to make some individual judgments themselves rather than working in terms of a structured formal chain of command.

10

So clearer lines?-- Clearer lines of communication. In essence, you know, my expectation for future events would be to do whatever I could to make sure that the communication going down - and one issue through one of the workshops we had, in terms of understanding what we could have done better - the issue of collecting intelligence at the coalface, as such, and feeding it back into our Local Disaster Management Group to allow that group to make better informed decisions for issuing daily instructions in terms of - or daily guidance in terms of what could be done better, that the feedback loop coming back up probably could be improved.

20

30

Thank you?-- However, I would qualify to say that I think we had a very effective disaster management response.

Could I move then to the topic that we have touched upon with Mr Peff and that's this issue of evacuation centres. Can I ask, first of all, do you have an arrangement with the Red Cross, as far as evacuation centres go?-- We had a formal arrangement in place as part of our Local Disaster Management Group that they would operate once we identified an evacuation centre, and in this case the Red Cross had the responsibility for operating the facility, once we identified the facility at the Central Queensland University, the Salvation Army would do the catering and St John's Ambulance would provide some assistance through health care, et cetera, and that evacuation centre worked extremely effectively in our situation.

40

The one qualification to that proposition which I observed from the minutes - and you may not be around the detail yourself - but there were some issues with the so called Emory system, that is to say there was a discrepancy between the head count and the number of people registered. Were you aware of that?-- Yes, very aware of that situation.

50

And was that something which was causing some angst or was that just a-----?-- No, that didn't cause any angst. I think what it highlighted was the reality where we had a very strong

message in the community about self evacuation. Some of those people - sorry, many people chose to register with the evacuation centre, but when the bodies actually turned up they were a lesser number than what was registered. To me, that was probably a good outcome because that highlighted that many people were doing as per the advice we recommended, and that is seek accommodation with friends and relatives, obtain a motel, and be as resilient as you can in making those determinations.

1

One point which you do make in your statement, which I do want to ask you about, is the fact that you have identified that there are major issues for centres such as these with people who might have mental health or special needs issues. It is a point that you have already made?-- Yes.

10

Do you have suggestions or ideas as to how that sort of issue could be addressed going forward?-- Well, I think we learned from this exercise that that situation does occur, that sometimes the nature of people that you have in an evacuation centre sometimes do not have the support mechanisms of friends, relatives that can look after them. So you are getting a cross-section of your society that's probably not an accurate reflection of what you would expect in your whole society. We learnt through the process that the - I actually felt that the services provided by Red Cross and the Salvation Army, in terms of communicating with other agencies that can provide counselling assistance, actually work very effectively in our situation. So, in future, responses - I certainly would be encouraging a need to think about whether we can improve the access to counselling and health care, and I am aware of some cases where people were given medical checks in the event that there may have been some health risk and that was dealt with in a very compassionate and appropriate manner.

20

30

I was going to ask you about that because you say that these things were addressed - issues such as this were addressed by assistance and counselling. You are talking there about from the Salvation Army, Red Cross - anything else?-- And St John's Ambulance.

40

St John's?-- We also had a very close relationship with the State Government, Department of Communities, and we also had a very close relationship with Centrelink. So in terms of the welfare, recipients needing that welfare assistance, that was being sort of case managed where it needed to be by those agencies without us having to get involved in the details. We had a total of about 187 people at the peak of the evacuation centre. So those numbers were not great by comparison to what happened in the south-east corner, they were very manageable, the evacuation centre could have actually handled a greater number than that and was designed to handle a greater number than that.

50

Was it through the assistance of the agencies such as you have identified and the government departments which you have identified that you address this issue that we touched upon with Mr Peff of easing out those who might have been reluctant

to leave?-- Yes, the interesting observation there was probably a handful of stragglers at the end that found the accommodation of a very high standard and would have liked to have stayed there for a longer period of time. One of the things that I think worked really well was at our Local Disaster Management Group meeting we had Department of Communities and Centrelink and Queensland Health, as examples, participating actively on a daily basis which allowed them to make informed decisions. When they went to manage their agency responsibilities, they could deal with them in the proper mechanism through their normal business.

1

10

Can I turn then to the local Disaster Management Group and the manner in which it was able to liaise with other agencies? The impression I get from the material you have provided - point 15 of your response - is that it all worked very well, and there is a good model of the cooperation, if you like, between your council and QPS in particular. Can you elaborate on that model for us, though?-- Well, the best way I could probably describe some history is that our Local Disaster Management Group, in accordance with the Disaster Management Act, had spent a fair bit of time prior to this event - we had some alarm bells ring in the bushfires of 2009 - 2008 and 2009 and an earlier cyclone which allowed us to sort of have responses of our Local Disaster Management Group where we didn't have - certainly the bushfire was a significant disaster, but allowed us to do some work together cooperatively in terms of how you might address these impacts. So there was a pretty strong working relationship developing. When we had the minor flood levels in December, that allowed us to work together, cooperate and interact, and that just flowed through. So, the forming of meetings in January 2011 for this disaster was not something that was a completely new group of individuals starting to work together; there was already a history of relationship building that worked very effectively, and I would have to commend the cooperation from the major State agencies, the disaster agencies, particularly Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire Service in the way we worked together.

20

30

40

Can I ask you about an entry in the minutes which is under the heading of "Mayor", and the entry reads - there aren't page numbers, so I will just read it quickly - and these are someone else's notes, obviously, I would assume - under the heading "Mayor" it says, "Most of the active decisions regarding disasters are made at the LDMG level and not at the DDMG", and "Are the people sitting on the DDMG sitting at the right level?" What were you trying to get at - assuming you said something along those lines-----?-- I certainly did.

50

-----what were you trying to get at by making that point?-- We have got a three-tiered structure in terms of the disaster management response: you have got the Local Disaster Management Group, you have got the District Disaster Management Group and the State Disaster Management Group, and the Local Disaster Management Group reports to the district, which reports to the State, and I would have to qualify and say that depending on the nature of your disaster may depend

on how those three groups interact. In this case, the flooding that was occurring in Rockhampton in January was very much a localised issue within the boundaries and the confines of the Rockhampton Regional Council area, which meant that our council officers and my role, we were very familiar with the territory, the issues, the predicted flood levels, et cetera. The issue then of having to report to a District Disaster Management Group, which may make or endorse certain decisions, in some cases I questioned whether that may have been necessary because the actual decisions were being made on a daily basis at the Local Disaster Management Group, and in any disaster the importance of active, quick, accurate responses is critical to saving lives, saving property. So you don't want any delays. In our case, we managed to coopt people, and Acting Superintendent Peff gave the example where he attended the Local Disaster Management Group meeting on a regular basis and that allowed him to contribute information and to be aware of information that I think overall improved the whole decision-making process. It allowed him in terms of his role with policing, it allowed us in terms of our role to manage issues. So I could give you examples if you wanted me to go a bit further.

Well, perhaps one if you can think-----?-- Probably the good example would be the closure - the decision to close the Bruce Highway on January the 1st. At 3 o'clock that afternoon, the Bruce Highway was not wet to the south of town and water was just starting to lap across the Capricorn Highway. Based on advice from the Department of Main Roads, Bureau of Meteorology predictions, our local council officers and our Disaster Management Coordinator, was that that night it was expected that waters would come up rather quickly in that area even though the river was coming up marginally and very smally. The decision was taken by Superintendent Peff, in conjunction with myself and Main Roads Department, to close the Bruce Highway that night because closing a highway at night is a dangerous thing to do, particularly when it is the route through to Cairns, and that decision was taken while the highway was still dry, which raises a bit of angst from the community. The water was actually 300 millimetres below the Bruce Highway to the south of town when that decision was made. Early the next morning, Sunday morning, which would have been January the 2nd, the waters were about 500 millimetres over the Bruce Highway. That water had moved 800 millimetres overnight. Now, if you think about that decision to close a Bruce Highway, the agencies involved, the right time to make that decision to get the information out to do it in daylight hours, to get the media engaged to inform the community, everything seemed to work exceptionally well and that saved a lot of discomfort, a lot of harm and plenty of advance notice of that. A similar decision was made in relation to the closure of the Rockhampton Airport which was closed at 3 o'clock that afternoon for pretty much the same reasons.

You do have an issue, though, or you have pointed out at point 16 of your responses that the Sitreps, which were submitted to the SDMG, you were concerned that they mightn't have been

receiving the attention that they might have deserved and that phone calls were being made-----?-- That's correct. 1

-----instead of or in addition to those reports, is that right?-- That's correct. As part of the disaster response we are required to produce those situation reports and feed them up through the structured process which is the State Government structured process. There were several occasions when our disaster coordinator and our team received information coming from other parts of - I suppose predominantly the State Government seeking information on updates on our situation, and it was obvious to us that the questions that they were asking, the information was contained in those situation reports and could have been gleaned and obtained from those reports. 10

It just appeared to you that they just hadn't been read or at least not by the right person?-- That's correct. I probably wouldn't be in a position to comment why they weren't getting that information----- 20

No?-- -----but the nature of the questions certainly clearly indicated that they weren't aware of the information already contained in the reports.

Finally, I suppose, on the issue of - not quite finally - at the debrief on the 27th, there was an entry under the QPS heading - and, again, these are someone else's notes of something someone else has said - but the entry reads, "The decisions that were decided on at the LDMG meetings were getting lost/misinterpreted by some members working on the ground." Were you aware of problems in that regard?-- There were a couple of isolated incidents where the carrying out of a direction or a decision may have been misunderstood as it went down through - out to some of the people involved in delivering that, and that was, I think, in some of my earlier comments, the issue that I learnt from this process, the need for some very clear - clearer communications going down and the clearer collection of intelligence coming up through those same mechanisms. 30 40

All right. Nothing wrong with the mechanisms themselves, just the messages going into them?-- Just an area that we could certainly improve that process. It didn't cause us any major problems but it did highlight that when you have got new professional emergency service staff coming to town, they may behave in a different manner until sort of an issue arises, and there were issues that arose and were addressed very quickly, and it was more a misunderstanding of communication than any ill intent on any person's part, but it does highlight that when you have got a lot of different people coming and going into a disaster response over a long period of time, the need for very clear communication is a very important thing to do well and I think we can improve in the future on that. 50

That's probably just something to be addressed by training in effective communication methods or effective communication,

period, would that be right?-- Training would be one component. I think the ability of people to work together and interact and understand how they communicate, whether that's through training or practice, I am not sure, but yeah.

1

Okay. Finally on the topic of liaising with other agencies, you have referred to the fact that - or there were two occasions upon which a Unimog would have been useful - or requested through the SDMG, one approved, one declined, but in either case 24, 48 turnaround on the request, is that right?-- Yeah, this is one issue that's had me quite interested in terms of the reaction from the Australian Defence Force in these circumstances.

10

And you may as well just give us a bit more detail?-- Well, firstly, we have a situation - well, firstly, we had a representative, a liaison officer from the ADF, Major Duncan, who sits at the District Disaster Management Group level, through making sure that things worked, came and attended the Local Disaster Management Group meeting. Normally he doesn't sit in that capacity so that was a good decision and proved to be effective. We had the military Black Hawks deployed here and they were available. In terms of our disaster they weren't required to be used. We had plenty and surplus private chartered helicopters available to do the work that we needed to do. However, if those helicopters needed to be deployed, once the military decision was made that they were based here, they were available for deployment based on the nature of the task. So they were available but didn't need to be used. We asked for a high clearance vehicle early in the piece, a military Unimog and that request was declined - for whatever reason I am not sure - and that was to transport people through flooded water into safety. We felt that that was a reasonable request. Later on in the disaster response, towards the tail end of it when floodwaters were starting to recede, we had Lieutenant Colonel Boquine sitting in our Local Disaster Management Group also coming along in a voluntary capacity or reservist with the actual keys to a Unimog in his hand. When we made the request to borrow a Unimog to transport food supplies against to Gracemere where there was an issue of some members of our community short of food, he was not able to allocate a vehicle and the request had to go through the District Disaster Management Group up to the top. Now, that's where I have difficulty in understanding that when you have a senior officer with a set of keys, why he isn't charged with the responsibility of judging a situation in terms of the risk and appropriateness to hand that set across for an emergency response. They are issues that I think we need to get better in the future, where the decision to deploy military equipment needs to be done at a strategic higher level early in a disaster. The actual deployment on the day that the equipment is needed, that decision has to be made locally, it has to be made when the need is identified. It doesn't need an up and down, two day, three day sort of response.

20

30

40

50

And the request you made which was declined, which on paper seems perfectly reasonable and sensible, do you have any sense

of why it was declined?-- I have to say I don't know the reason for that at the time. We actually ended up using Queensland Fire Service high clearance vehicles at that time for that purpose. So we still used high clearance vehicles.

1

But you made the point that they weren't nearly as suitable?-- The Unimog would have been much more effective at that time. Plus that it was available locally and was unused.

All right. Well, two final points, I think. One relates to that study, which you have acknowledged, and I am not going to ask you about the details, but various suggestions were made in 1992 in relation to the 1991 flood, protecting the airport, I think, being an obvious one. Are you aware of why, perhaps, some of the things suggested in there haven't been done? I realise it is long before your time but do you have a sense of where those proposals got to and what stopped them?-- The decisions which may have been taken by the Rockhampton City Council or not taken by them, I am not aware of their logic, but the key things that were probably undertaken as a result of that was the raising of the Bruce Highway to the north of Rockhampton, which remained open for the full duration of this flood, the adoption of some of those recommendations from that report into the 2005 City Plan - Rockhampton City Plan were adopted. That resulted in, to the best of my knowledge, no new housing approvals, for example, had water over their floorboards since then. The revised - or the 2010 study, which is in draft form, which has reviewed the recommendations of that '91 study, if they are adopted we expect that those - those issues will be incorporated into our revised planning scheme expected to be adopted and approved around about June 2012. So as a council we're still reviewing some of that. The information in terms of - as a result of the draft 2010 study and the work done there to provide informed decisions on flood levels, not only where areas would have got wet but the actual depth of that water and the velocity of that water, has been incorporated. It allowed us to produce flood maps which we used very extensively prior to the flooding event at the eight and a half, nine metre and nine and a half metre levels which were put up in shopping centres. So our community was aware of what flood levels and what would be getting wet. So there has been - as a result of that '91 work and the draft 2010 work, there have been some good outcomes from that from this council in terms of how we use that information.

10

20

30

40

50

All right. Now, there were actually a couple of issues arising out of those minutes I wanted tidy up. One was that fatigue management was a big issue for the council or the LDMG, is that correct?-- That was something identified very early in the piece where we started to - we, as a council, looked at the issues in terms of our staffing responsibilities to rotate staff and manage that fatigue. I believe we did that in a very responsible manner. It was certainly an issue that in discussions I had with the Queensland Police Service they adopted similar principles. I am not aware - and certainly SES personnel were - strategies were put into place to make sure they had adequate rest and so forth. I am not aware that any fatigue management issues became a major issue of concern and each of the agencies and organisations had - it was clearly made responsible - they had a clear understanding of their responsibilities to make sure they addressed those issues. That was due to the fact that our disaster in terms of the other disasters of the State was a very long disaster. We had a lot of lead time but the flood waters stayed very high for a long period of time which still required emergency service personnel to be very active during that whole period.

The other point made under the entry RRCs, it may have been Mr Steel or whoever who was making the point, but it is queried whether there is a need to revise the membership of the LDMG and the possibility was suggested there could be a wider range of members for the LDMG, there was some discussion at the meeting as to whether the membership should be wider or tighter. Do you recall that?-- I do recall that and that matter has been addressed.

What are the issues? What are the pros and cons if you like?-- The key issue is being a legally constituted organisation it has certain requirements in terms of maintaining a quorum. You make it too broad and too wide and you probably won't get a quorum each time you meet to have a legally binding decision want to the recorded. We addressed this matter last week at a Local Disaster Management Group as a follow-up and we have looked at, and I can't remember the specifics but we have looked at increasing the core membership slightly but also encouraging a range of - so that allows us to maintain the quorum but also extending the observers status of a number of organisations that can contribute. Perhaps a good example is the participation of an organisation like Stanwell Corporation. You might wonder why would a power station get involved in a disaster response? Well, the delivery of coal, the operations of a coal fired power station, getting staff to and from a coal fired power station which can be isolated from where a lot of those people live, they are critical issues for an organisation like that to understand. Stanwell Corporation in an observer status attended each and every one, I think, or most of the Local Disaster Management Group meetings to a allow them to make informed decisions on making sure the State was provided with energy. Now, I suppose they are some of the indirect benefits that come from having a broader membership of a Local Disaster Management Group.

The final point made in the minutes under the RRC heading is recovery planning should have commenced much sooner. What was the point being made there?-- Look, there is probably two issues when I think of the recovery. One is the recovery of the people displaced from homes where there might be damage and how quickly you get that into place. The second point about recovery is the overall recovery of the whole community. Psychological recovery, business recovery, which is a much broader long term issue and we are still heavily involved in that broader recovery issue. What we recognised at the time was probably more that your recovery - your first phase of recovery, that's getting people back into their homes, you don't start planning that and thinking about that once the flood waters have receded. You actually have to start planning and considering that whilst your flood waters are coming up so as your flood waters are coming up or your disaster is still hitting you, you start to think through what is your next phase, your recovery operation. Now, again I think we handled the recovery operation quite well. A good example would be that we had lined up the bulk cleaning operation which was predominantly carried out by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service whereby they were ready to go with teams of personnel assisted with SES personnel and council officers to bulk clean residences and get - that had water over floorboards to get the mud out of their place to allow residents to come in and do a more chemical clean to move back in which eased the days task on them. Now, that was something we planned in advance prior to flood waters receding and was put into place very effectively and lessened the need for a lot of volunteers and it worked very effectively. So we have learned some lessons from that and we did put a lot of thinking into the needs required to implement a recovery operation before the disaster - while the disaster was still occurring.

1

10

20

30

The final point I do want to get you to address is the one that you discuss, I think in part 18 of your response, and relates to the level of negativity and complacency which you perceive arising due to the tighter controls and - in the whole disaster response process?-- Could you repeat that question again for me?

40

Sure, in part 18 of your response you talk about the proposition that, first of all, that with experience in these sorts of events there is a danger of complacency?-- Yes.

That is one aspect of what you talk about there. The other is that there is a level of regulation and risk management which attached to these sorts of activities now which mightn't have been present in 1991 and that might lead to a less responsive or less helpful attitude in the community. Can you just explain what you are getting at with those points?-- I would like to qualify my comments at the start if I could, that I found the response from our community overall was exceptionally well done. Our community worked really well together. Specifically in relation to some geographic locations within Rockhampton and if I was to refer specifically to the Depot Hill area there are residents that

50

reside there that were there in '91, were also there in '54 in extreme cases - I don't think there was anybody there in 1918, though. But they understand the impact of flooding on their geographic area. They understand what it brings. They have an understanding of what the flood waters would be. There are some that were isolated by flood waters but live on high ground and there were others that had their houses inundated. What you find in some cases is some of these people feel they are capable of looking after themselves and I do admit that many of them are. The message we had to get out very clearly and we got it out loud and clear through a number of outlets and certainly the media were very supportive, was we tried to make it clear that those that decided to remain either isolated or in a house inundated with flood waters, they were making a conscious well-informed decision and that we were doing everything we can to encourage people to self-evacuate and remove themselves from risk and danger. So, I believe that those that did stay behind had made informed decisions but there was an element of complacency. We were quite pleased that the Queensland Police Service did not have to use the powers of compulsory evacuation, however, in locations where there were people wanting to remain we used a process of police negotiators, SES personnel, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service staff, council staff talking to people as much as we could about the risks of remaining and encouraging them to evacuate and we provided the high clearance vehicle, buses, access to the evacuation centre etcetera. There was an element of people in flood prone areas saying, "I am okay, I have been through this before I can look after myself."

What about the other aspect of what you are getting at; the regulation and manner in which these responses are controlled might lead to a perception that some parts of the community might be less responsive and less helpful than they otherwise might have been?-- I am trying to think of what I would have meant by that comment.

It is in the last paragraph. Have you your response there? Turn to part 18. I think the risk of litigation is probably what we are talking about if that's the-----?-- Oh, yes, sorry. I am with your train of thought now. The issue of the risk that I would be at, for example - now I am probably going about this the long way - the risk I would be at in accepting a view from the community that they are okay and I had to strongly encourage, get the public message out to - for people to shift and self-evacuate was certainly a key issue. I think people are more worried in the community about the risks of litigation and legal liability so there is some broad issues around that that does then limit sometimes the community's desire to be actively helping one another and taking risks to help somebody else. That is probably the broader issue.

Was this just an overall impression or concern you have?-- More an overall impression and concern that I had. The issue that comes foremost to my mind which might be a little bit away from your question was the issue where I had made a very clear statement at one stage that parents who stayed in flood inundated houses that had children or minors at risk and being

isolated for long periods of time were irresponsible. Now, I think the one media outlet reports my comments saying, "Everybody in Depot Hill was irresponsible." I wouldn't retract or back down from that statement because my whole statement was all designed to enforce a very conscious awareness of the risk that people were putting themselves to and for a parent to choose to leave children in a situation of risk - and I saw evidence of that and I know of one isolated case where towards the end of the flooding event a mother with a young child and a bub had got herself into a very distressed situation and then had to be evacuated which then put emergency workers at risk of coming into a flooded area to evacuate her because she had made the decision to stay. That's the sort of issue that was causing me a lot of concern at the time; that I was expected to carry a very strong message in terms of safety for the community but some members of our community felt I was perhaps being a bit harsh on them because they were capable of looking - they felt they were capable of looking after themselves. But in terms of any disaster message getting out to your community there isn't soft options. There isn't the option to say, "Yes that's okay," in that set of circumstances and let people generalise. It reinforced with me the need to make sure that your public messages are very clear, very concise and very responsible and there was a clear legal responsibility I had as chair of the Local Disaster Management Group. Had I been - adopted a softer message and there was an accident or a death then I was naturally concerned about what the legal implications could be, not the only reasons but the issues then are the legal implications, did I carry out my duty responsibly and appropriately in terms of that situation.

1

10

20

30

That is all I have.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have no questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

40

MR O'GORMAN: Commissioner, could I reserve our position in respect of the issue concerning the ADF request so the ADF can clarify the details?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

50

MR ROLLS: Just one mind if I take it up with you, Mr Mayor. The course that was conducted on the 14th of October 2010 by Emergency Management Queensland, you attended that with three other officers from the Rockhampton Regional Council, is that right?-- That is correct.

There was 31 other attendees, is that right?-- Correct.

1

Including a Mr Wilkinson who is the Central Highlands LDC?-- Yeah, I must admit I don't know him personally.

Okay so you can't say whether he was there or not?-- No, I couldn't, sorry.

Now, can I just run through with you; you attended the whole day?-- Part of the day. I wasn't able to stay the whole time.

10

So is that why you didn't fill out a feedback form at the end of the day's proceedings?-- Quite possibly. I don't recall seeing a feedback form for that session.

I suggest they were handed out to all the attendees and 10 people responded, including Mr Cowan from the Rockhampton Regional Council. Do you know about that?-- No, I don't. He may well have, I can't make a comment on that, I'm sorry.

20

All right. Just running through the course, just tell me what you remember attending. The first part, there was welcomes and introductions and the first part of the course involved a presentation from two persons from the Bureau of Meteorology Paul Birch and Ben Annells, and they spoke about flood risks, flood behaviour response times in the local area. Do you recall that?-- I vaguely recall that, yes.

Do you recall they also spoke about how to access and interpret news flood information including the detailed live demonstration of on-line resources. Do you recall that?-- Possibly I can't recall that detail, sorry.

30

Do you recall they also delivered the presentation which involved tropical cyclone and other severe weather warning services including a detailed live demonstration of on-line services?-- Yes, I can vaguely recall that.

That took the program up to about 10 to 11. Then there was a break and after that there was Ian Lang from Emergency Management Queensland spoke, do you recall that?-- Can't recall the complete detail of that, sorry.

40

Do you know what Mr Lang spoke about?-- Off the top of my head I can't-----

He spoke about the Natural Disaster Resilience Program, do you rather that?-- I can only say as I said before.

50

There was a series of slides, 30-odd slides involved in this part of the presentation. You don't recall those?-- Look, I would have to say you are going back a long period of time. I can't remember the detail of all that.

He also spoke about the tropical cyclone storm tide warning resource system handbook review; do you recall that?-- I can't recall specific details of that particular - all of that

workshop.

1

He spoke about the building community resilience projects, do you recall that?-- I can't recall that specific detail.

He spoke about emergency alerts; do you recall that?-- I have been to a number of workshops and sessions on that. This specific one I can't recall the precise detail-----

You see, this one you make mention of in your statement and you make a number of observations about it so I am asking about - testing your recollection?-- The statement that we presented was a joint statement, so.

10

Well, he also spoke about the update on the new legislation, amendments to the Disaster Management Act. Do you recall that?-- I recall discussion around the state legislation, correct.

That took you up to 20 to 12. Then there was a further presentation from ABC local radio Queensland which discussed the very valuable role the ABC radio plays as the emergency service broadcast; do you recall that?-- No, I can't recall that presentation.

20

Then there was a luncheon adjournment and then - for half an hour, then at 12.30 there was again a further presentation by the Bureau of Meteorology which spoke about the 2009/2010 season in review; do you recall that?-- I can recall part of that, yes, I think.

30

Then there was also-----?-- I would probably have to check my records to see if whether I was able to stay there for that whole duration. I have to say and admit quite honestly some of the information is vague to me so I don't know whether that helps you at all.

No. Well, then there was a discussion about the 2010/11 season outlook; do you recall being present for that?-- I can't recall whether I was at that particular session at that time, yes.

40

Then from about 1.15 to about quarter to three there was a panel workshop chaired by the Emergency Management Queensland Regional Director. Do you recall that panel of discussion?-- No, I don't.

So you couldn't comment on whether or not there was matters of local interest concern, EMA flood manuals, fostering property resilience, those things discussed? You can't recall any of that?-- I have to say at that particular workshop, no, I can't recall the detailed discussion on that.

50

Then the seminar concluded after that panel workshop at quarter to 3. By that stage members were asked to fill out feedback forms and of that the only response, I suggest to you, from the Rockhampton Regional Council was from a Mr Edward Cowan. Would you have a look at this document,

please? Is that a form completed by Mr Edward Cowan from the Rockhampton Regional Council subsequent to the seminar that was conducted on 14 October 2010? I have more copies for the Commission.

1

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls, this sort of thing is rather subjective. The kind of thing that appeals to some people, and appeal to others. I am willing to accept from the list of topics that you have given that there probably was useful content in this seminar. Do you really need to pursue it to this level?

10

MR ROLLS: I will just tender the feedback form and limit it to that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 460.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 460"

20

MR ROLLS: Just one point, Mr Carter, you made with respect to the SES. The Emergency Management Queensland since 2009 has assisted the SES to enable the Rockhampton unit to become self sufficient in aspects of training, all aspects of training; would you agree with that?-- Yes, to a degree.

In 2010 Emergency Management Queensland funded and facilitated the training of six Rockhampton Regional Council SES unit members in a nationally recognised training and assessment program, you agree with that?-- Yes.

30

No further questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR CALLAGHAN: No questions. May Mr Carter be excused?

40

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

WITNESS EXCUSED

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, do you want to take the morning break or should we press on? What do you think?

50

MR CALLAGHAN: I am in the Commission's hands.

COMMISSIONER: Well, you need to tell me how long you think the witnesses will be.

MR CALLAGHAN: The one witness we have got - we have one witness who I think we would like to get done before lunch but

I think we could probably take an adjournment and still comfortably fit that witness in.

1

COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn until five past.

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 11.52 A.M.

10

20

30

40

50

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 12.07 P.M.

MR CALLAGHAN: I call Fleur Anderson.

FLEUR MAREE ANDERSON, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

10

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

Mrs Anderson, you and your husband Kirk, are cotton formers residing at a property on 16254 Leichhardt Highway Theodore, is that right?-- That's correct.

20

You provided a four-page statement to the Commission, is that correct?-- That's right.

I am just going to show you that?-- Thank you.

That's your statement?-- Yep.

Yes, I tender that.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 461.

30

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 461"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mrs Anderson, at paragraph 3 of your statement you describe being at home on the 22nd of December 2010?-- Uh-huh.

40

And that you had been monitoring the BOM website but that your husband was out checking the creeks, is that right?-- That's right.

And at about 11 p.m. your husband rang from Castle Creek which is about 10 to 15 kilometres down the road from your place, is that right?-- That's right.

And he was concerned even then that Castle Creek would overflow and cut you off?-- That's right.

50

So you packed some belongings and left?-- Uh-huh.

And what followed from that? The creek did in fact overflow?-- Yes, it did.

When was that?-- By - from memory, by the end of the next day

it was over the - over the highway, over the - or getting close to the highway and our local roads on our property were inundated.

1

And you make the point that - well, there are two creeks involved, are there, Castle and Lonesome Creek, is that right?-- For our property, yes.

For your property, yes?-- Yes.

10

But neither of them is monitored digitally, is that correct?-- That's correct.

So if it wasn't for your husband actually checking the creek, what would have happened?-- When we evacuated it wasn't because we so much feared for our safety or inundation in our home at that stage; it was that we chose to leave for convenience so that we wouldn't be cut off from town, and we have a young daughter, and it was close to Christmas and we wanted to get over the other side of town close to our family. So we chose to self evacuate at that time.

20

In fact, you were unable to return for some time, is that right?-- That's right. We didn't return for 18 days or more.

And there is a levee bank that borders your property?-- That's right.

But it broke at several places?-- On Christmas Day, yes.

30

Had it - had it broken previously?-- It did break in March 2010 and that's the first time in our experience on that property.

Which goes back some years, does it?-- For us and then further generations before that.

And the flooding - just describe the effect that it had on the farm?-- The flooding covered our entire cotton crop, about 1,000 acres of cotton there, and came into our sheds and workshops and up to about our third step on our home. It didn't enter our home. And the crop was completely deprived of oxygen and everything else and died, and there was nothing recoverable.

40

And some infrastructure damage as well?-- Yeah, infrastructure damage to the levee banks where it burst and to the laser levelling and the irrigation infrastructure that we have around our property and a couple of pumps as well.

50

Okay. Now, you are President of the local Cotton Growers' Association?-- That's right.

And so you get input from your members who have been affected by the floods?-- Yeah, part of my role is to check in on my growers and see how they are faring and feed that information up to industry lobby groups.

And what are the principal concerns of your members that you would like the Commission to be aware of?-- The principal concerns for our growers is the monitoring of local creeks for better information. That was - that's definitely the primary concern.

1

Now, the creeks that we're concerned about, you have told us about the ones that affect your property. You refer in your statement to key creeks between Taroom and Moura, is that right?-- That's right, or - yeah.

10

How does it work at the moment? Word of mouth network, it would seem, is that right?-- Yeah, it is a combination of local word of mouth, calling people that are situated on those key areas, and getting rainfalls and everything else, and then we also use the information provided to us by local government and the local groups and Bureau of Meteorology. So just sort of pulling information from wherever we can.

Another concern you express is lack of capacity in the local government. What's your concern in that regard?-- I think the local government did a fantastic job with the resources available to them and our councillor, Vaughn Becker, that coordinated that locally did a fantastic job due to his rapport in the community. They did the best with what they had, so I would suggest that anything that wasn't able to be addressed, or time-frames and things like that, was purely a lack of resources, not a lack of capability.

20

Are there any particular resources that you can identify that they didn't have which might have been useful or might be useful in the future?-- From an outsider's - from a pure consumer, layperson's point of view, if there were any concerns, it might have been that the local personnel or the human capacity, I suppose, in the community, not just for the - not so much - not just for the evacuation and that sort of stuff, but also after the event for the recovery phase. A lot of responsibility on a few key people with maybe not - that could do with some backup service and a lot of long hours and sleepless nights.

30

Yes, more hands on deck?-- Yeah.

The other thing that you have referred to - or the other concern you express is about the potential loss of telecommunications. Is that because telecommunications were so important?-- From my personal - or for our personal situation, not being in the evacuation centre in Moura with the rest of the local residents because we self evacuated earlier, we were on a property up on higher ground and that was our only form of communication. Once land lines were down we also lost a certain level of internet access due to dial-up internet there and our mobiles were our only form of communication, and with the people that were in that home, that communication is health and safety and also our information source to stay in touch with what's happening. And it was handled - the telecommunications was handled quite well. And - however, it was probably something that - or we

50

didn't certainly foresee and it was probably something that came up quickly. It was dealt with well but needs to be kept in mind for the future.

1

One issue there being that we're talking about mobile communications-----?-- Yes.

-----which have to be recharged which makes the need for electricity-----?-- Absolutely.

10

-----that much more important, is that right?-- Yes, and - yeah.

Just before we move on from the council, one other concern which you do identify is in terms of information provided as regards preparation and response-----?-- Uh-huh.

-----before the event?-- Yeah.

There doesn't seem to have been much of that that got through to you at least, is that right?-- We certainly didn't receive a lot of communication early in formal methods. We did receive the community newsletter. That was an initiative of a local group in conjunction with the Banana Shire, to my knowledge, and it was great at keeping everyone informed but we didn't receive certainly any notice of needing to evacuate or any formal sort of touching base, but because we self evacuated early, we probably weren't in need and we also did communicate that we had done that to the relevant sources. So we didn't receive any communication, however I don't believe that we needed it.

20

30

All right. And, finally, the question of roads is always an issue-----?-- Uh-huh.

-----in areas like yours. You've expressed the concern that they were damaged and are yet to be repaired or at least as at the time of preparing your statement?-- I think it is fair to say the road systems Statewide is pretty in a poor state at the moment, and certainly the Banana Shire, our road network has been significantly compromised due to the events, and I think perhaps from my observations that there is still a lot to be done and not a lot has been able to be done so far, and I would suggest that that is the roundabout way that funds are delivered to the council for them to be able to commence work.

40

All right. They are the only questions I have, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you do you find local radio any use, for warnings or information?-- Absolutely, yeah. Our local radio's a pretty essential service for rural areas, particularly.

50

And in this particular event?-- Yeah, it was certainly - we listened to local radio a lot for updates. At our early stage when we self evacuated, though, it hadn't quite hit the - you know, our half hourly newsreel or anything like that because it wasn't Dawson River - well, no-one had that information

because it wasn't monitored, so no-one was able to alert to that, it was purely local knowledge at that stage. When it - because we're talking about mainly the local creeks that impacted us first before the Dawson River. The Dawson River, as it rose, certainly we listened to, particularly after we lost our internet service and everything, to get those readings was certainly via local radio.

1

And do you have a battery-operated radio or how do you manage if the electricity goes?-- If the electricity went, we have, yeah, battery operated, but how long that would last I am not quite sure. But we were fortunate that we didn't have power cut off where we were.

10

Thanks. Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

20

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Callaghan, do you want-----

30

MR CALLAGHAN: I think Mrs Anderson was just about to say something.

COMMISSIONER: I am sorry. Have I stopped you in your tracks?-- All I was going to say if we were in a situation where power was to be cut off, we probably would have to reconsider where we evacuated to. Certainly where we were wasn't safe and we would probably go over to the evacuation centre, which in hindsight wouldn't have been a bad idea because we didn't incur a lot of additional expenses and stress, not being in that evacuation centre.

40

You occurred stress not being in the evacuation centre?-- Yeah.

I would have thought it might have some stresses of its own?-- I am sure it absolutely would. But being isolated from the rest, we had several people there and it is just living in confined quarters with limited resources and food and water and everything else and being-----

50

And a two year old?-- Yeah, and a two year old, and a bit of cabin fever.

Thanks.

MR CALLAGHAN: Nothing further. May Mrs Anderson be excused?

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks, Mrs Anderson, you are excused.

1

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Inspector Hill.

10

20

30

40

50

MARCUS EDWARD HILL, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

1

MS WILSON: Is your full name Marcus Edward Hill?-- That's correct.

You are an Inspector of Police?-- Yes.

And you are normally attached to the Rockhampton District as a District Inspector?-- That's correct, yes.

10

But you are currently relieving as a District Officer in the Gladstone District?-- Yes.

And you have performed that role since the 28th of December 2010?-- That's correct, yes.

From the 28th of December 2010 to the 6th of January this year you were the Deputy and Relief District Disaster Coordinator?-- Yes.

20

And from 6 January this year you were the District Disaster Coordinator?-- Yes.

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

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

30

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 462.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 462"

40

MS WILSON: Just in relation to the District Disaster Coordinator, who is performing that role now?-- I am.

You are? You are still there?-- I am, yes.

Now, if I can ask you some questions about the logistical cell that was set up in Rockhampton?-- Yes.

If you go to your statement at page 5, for your reference, that's where you refer to that. Now, this worked very well, you say?-- Yes, it did.

50

How did you tap into the logistical cell in Rockhampton from Gladstone?-- Either by phone call or direct email request.

Okay. So why having a logistical cell in Rockhampton was that of great assistance to you as a DDC in Gladstone?-- If we

needed additional police resources or additional equipment from a policing perspective, as opposed to disaster management side of things, the logistical cell could look after it, would provide it, would provision those people, which meant that locally we didn't have to deal with it. Traditionally as a DDC we step outside of the district officer's role. Somebody else comes in as the district officer. If we didn't have the logistics cell in Rockhampton, then the responsibilities for that cell would have fallen to the district officer at Gladstone to provide those resources.

1

10

Could they be provided in a timely way, the resources?-- They - I think the logistics cell in Rockhampton proved that they were more timely, if that makes sense.

No, I don't quite understand that?-- Dealing from a district perspective, we're dealing with Gladstone District only, whereas Rockhampton it was set up regionally. So they were dealing with requests from Gladstone, requests from Emerald, requests from Rockhampton. So they had greater resources at their disposal that they could tap into.

20

At page 8 you refer to the liaison with the Australian Defence Force, and you state that there was an Australian Defence Force liaison officer, Major Phil Duncan, was a member of the District Disaster Management Group?-- Yes.

During the flood events you utilised the resources of the Australian Defence Force?-- Yes.

30

I am interested in how this process worked. Having the liaison officer on the DDMG, did that bypass having to go up through to a State level?-- No, it didn't, but what it did it was - I suppose I need to clarify this - the request for military assistance was not undertaken by me; that was Graeme Coleman, Inspector Graham Coleman looked after that, but the benefit of having a liaison officer is they can, I suppose, smooth the path or provide some background information about military assets, what military capabilities are that we may not necessarily know about. If we then forward a request up through State, by the time we get that response back asking the other 10 or 15 questions that the liaison officer has already been able to clarify, it speeds up the process.

40

So it sped up the process in an administrative way?-- Yes.

But it still had to go up through State level and be processed?-- Yes.

Were you able to tap in - we have heard evidence before that there was a Rockhampton base set up in Rockhampton for deploying military assets. Were you able to tap into that Rockhampton cell?-- At that stage we no longer - apart from a water treatment plant that was operating at Theodore, we no longer needed military assets. The original request of military assets consisted of helicopter support to evacuate the township.

50

That was at Theodore?-- Theodore, yes. Once that had passed, our need for military, apart from the water treatment plant, no longer existed.

1

While we're on Theodore, the helicopter evacuation of Theodore, did that involve civilian helicopters?-- Yes, it did.

And the military helicopters, the Black Hawk helicopters going in?-- The initial request was for military assistance but essentially the civilian evacuation was undertaken with civilian aircraft. The military aircraft had to come from Townsville, from memory. There was some issues with availability of air crew, that type of thing. So by the time they have arrived, the vast majority of civilians had been evacuated by civilian aircraft.

10

One of the issues that has been raised is that one of the main issues which affected the evacuations from Theodore was the need to obtain quotes from helicopter services prior to the evacuation which delayed the operation of several hours. Were you aware of this issue?-- No, I wasn't.

20

The coordination of helicopters - the utilisation of civilian helicopters, who coordinated that and what helicopters were used?-- Again, that was undertaken in the early hours of the 28th prior to my arrival. Essentially, my understanding is that it was coordinated by the LDMG at Banana.

So the LDMG would source the helicopters and then direct them to Theodore and direct them to where they needed to then go?-- Yes.

30

You didn't play any role in that?-- No, I didn't play any role in that.

If I can take you to the disaster management arrangements in the future - and that's referred in your statement at page 10 - you comment that because the amendments of the Disaster Management Act commenced on 1 November last year and the flood event occurring soon after, that some of the practical operation aspects had not been fully developed?-- That's correct, yes.

40

Has that been now developed?-- I think it is a continuing process. As I understand it, the evacuation guidelines are currently being reviewed and they are going through. The point that I was making there was the transition from response to recovery, traditionally recovery is EMQ, Communities arrangement; how far as a DDC was it expected that you would maintain some role in the recovery process.

50

Have you got any further guidelines in relation to that?-- Not at this stage but I believe all that, as I said, is being processed.

And that's what you were looking for as further clarity about when you step back in relation to the flood event as a DDC,

and that it is a recovery process?-- Yes. It is accepted that because of the - both response and recovery overlap, that there will be a period of time where you will maintain a role but how long does that continue on, when does somebody else step in, given that, you know, recovery phase can take years.

1

And your understanding is that is being looked at?-- Yes.

Who do you understand - what government agencies are looking at that?-- I think it is probably a combination of, from my understanding, EMQ and QPS.

10

Thank you, I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

20

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls.

MR ROLLS: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Sorry, you can go last if you want, Mr Rolls. Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

30

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls, you have no questions.

MR ROLLS: No.

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

COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. You are excused.

40

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Colin Head.

50

MS WILSON: I call Colin Head.

COLIN HEAD, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

MS WILSON: Can you tell the inquiry your full name please?--
Yes, Colin Aubrey James Head.

10

You are the Local Disaster Coordinator for the Banana Shire
Council?-- That is correct.

You have held the role of the Local Disaster Coordinator, the
LDC, since September 2010?-- That is correct.

In response from a direction from the Commission of Inquiry
you made a statement outlining your roles and responsibilities
in relation to the flood event?-- That is correct.

20

The statement has various attachments that are referred to in
the statement?-- Yes.

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

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

30

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 463.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 463"

MS WILSON: You also provided to the Commission this morning
some media releases?-- That is correct.

40

These media releases were issued by Banana Shire Council?--
Yes.

Have a look at this document, please. Now, what do those
media releases refer to?-- These are the media releases
released by the Local Disaster Management Group to all press,
both radio and print, for the - during the event, during the
flood event.

50

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 464.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 464"

MS WILSON: You have your statement in front of you. If I can take you through some matters that you raise there. The Banana Shire council and the Local Disaster Management Group held a debrief session following the March 2010 floods?-- That is correct.

As a result, Local Emergency Coordination Committees were planned?-- That is correct.

10

Why did the Banana Shire Council and the LDMG see it necessary to plan and constitute LECCs, Local Emergency Coordination Committees?-- Basically the tyranny of distance of the Banana Shire. The communities that are isolated are a substantial distance away from the coordination centre.

Mr Head, I am going to have to ask you to slow down because it is being recorded?-- Sorry. The feedback from the public in particular after the March 2010 event was the lack of local face on the ground, so to speak, to be able to provide direct information to the community.

20

How does the LECs address that issue?-- Two ways. Basically in preparation for events, the LECC has the Terms of Reference required or asked to give local input into preparations that may be required for a flood event; and during the flood event to act as the eyes, ears and mouth piece of the LDMG.

You referred there to Terms of Reference. Some Terms of References were drafted before the flood events this year?-- That is correct.

30

But they hadn't actually been finalised or approved?-- That is correct.

Now, in your appendix D to your statement - have you got that in front of you? You wouldn't have that there?-- No.

You set out the Terms of Reference. If you look up there, that's what you are referring to?-- That is correct.

40

Why is it necessary to have a Terms of Reference between the - at the LDMG level or the council level and these LECCs?-- With discussion with EMQ for these similar arrangements in other places, there is some concern that we need to ensure the understanding of who actually has authority to do what during a disaster event.

How many LECCs were planned after the March 2010 flood events?-- Council identified the relative communities that are likely to be isolated and I believe six were planned.

50

Can you tell me what six they are?-- They are in, actually, the Terms of Reference.

So the ones that are actually included in the Terms of Reference; were they activated?-- Not all.

Okay. So which one were up and running, so to speak, to deal with the flood events for this year?-- The main focus obviously was on the Dawson Valley, in particular Theodore. To a lesser extent Taroom but also the Wowan area.

Now, who constitutes these LECCs?-- Could you-----

Well, what - what organisations contribute to these committees?-- The Terms of Reference actually identified the membership that council would like to have seen on those. The chairmanship was given - the responsibility for the chairmanship was given to the local councillor representing that area and the Terms of Reference identified key people which we believed would be able to provide assistance in that matter.

10

One of the effective LECCs that was in operation was the Theodore LECC?-- That is correct.

20

Now, we talked about that document hadn't been finalised and it hadn't been ratified by council, the set up of the LECCs but you are aware that you are entering into a flood season and there would be a requirement for LECCs so they were set up in an ad hoc basis; is that the case?-- The - given the time frames we had, we ensured we had at least a presence on the ground with an understanding of those reference - Terms of Reference prior to the event.

If we can refer to the Theodore LECC. Did you get all the membership that you wanted in relation to that LECC? You got the local councillor. What about police and other government agencies?-- Generally I would say yes. Councillor Becker could actually give more detail on that.

30

Now, how the LECCs work is being able to get a face on the ground of the LDMG, that's one of the important features that you are trying to achieve?-- That is correct. There is a lot of information obviously processed at the - in the Local Disaster Coordination Centre that is not necessarily easily disseminated to the community and the intention for the LECC was to be able to disseminate that information to the locals so they were aware that things were happening even if nothing actually was happening on the ground.

40

So there is information that the community are getting via the LECCs from the LDMG. What about - is it a two-way street? Does information go back from the LECC to assist the LDMG in decision making?-- Very much so.

50

Is the LECC part of that decision making process in relation to decisions being made for their area?-- Generally I would say yes.

Well, generally. There seems to be some exceptions?-- No, the advice in all instances I can be - that I can recount, the advice of the LECC was accepted by the LDMG. There is no requirement for the LDMG to do that, of course.

No, but did you respect the information and the knowledge that was gained from being on the ground?-- Yes.

The SES. Now, you addressed the - matters in relation to SES at page 4, which is item 2 of your statement. Does the Banana Shire Council fund the SES to any extent?-- The Banana Shire Council is responsible for the supply of all equipment to the SES group.

10

All equipment?-- Except that which is donated or they obtain through fund raising.

So any equipment that the SES have is largely founded by the Banana Shire Council?-- That is correct, and I have been advised by EMQ that council actually owns that equipment.

To fund the SES to this level did you have any discussions with EMQ in relation to that?-- We are in constant dialogue with EMQ in terms of any grants that are available or any other funding opportunities that present themselves.

20

Has there been funding opportunities that presented themselves?-- Yes, there has.

Where do you get this funding from?-- I have no - I can't give that information at this point in time. It doesn't come readily to mind but there have been grants available for flood boats and those sorts of thing.

30

Item 2, page 4 you set out the various groups of Theodore, Moura, Biloela and the list goes on. Have you any idea of the membership of these groups?-- Yes, council has a - or nominated a local controller which is appointed by EMQ.

Slow down, Mr Head. Just slow down?-- The local controller, council nominates a local controller which is then appointed by EMQ and that is the interface between EMQ, the SES groups and council itself. That controller actually reports to council on the groups, the membership of those groups and their operational capability.

40

For each of the groups you identified on page 4 there is a local controller?-- No, there is one local controller for the Shire. Each group has a group leader.

Does council have any influence on the nomination of the group leader?-- No.

Is that an internal SES-----?-- That is an SES issue.

50

What about the deployment of the SES? Who determines where they are deployed?-- My understanding is that that's through EMQ.

The actual membership of these groups, could you give us any idea what they are? For Theodore?-- Theodore currently - and I was only advised of this the other day - is down to four

members.

1

Four members?-- Yes.

Moura. If we can go through the list?-- I don't have those numbers, sorry but Theodore is one I do know because of a conversation I had recently.

How many did it have during the flood event?-- I believe it had around six and it was supplemented by SES members from other groups being brought into town.

10

Is the council undertaking any program to increase membership?-- Council directly doesn't get involved in the recruiting of SES personnel.

If I can take you to the information that was provided to the LDMG, in particular the matters referred to at item 10 of your statement.

20

COMMISSIONER: Before you go on. Do you pay the local controller? Who pays him?-- The local controller position is actually a voluntary position in Banana Shire however there is an annual gratuity that goes with that to assist in attracting someone to take up the role.

Of what proportions? Can you tell us vaguely the gratuity?-- The gratuity is \$5,000.

Thank.

30

MS WILSON: Are you at page 14 which - of your statement?-- Yes.

This is addressing the sources and accuracy and timeliness of the information provided to you. If I can take you through A. It states there, "That weather and flood information was provided by the Bureau of Meteorology," then there is three other matters addressed. The first is that, "Flood levels provided by the Bureau show some variances from the flood gauge reading measures measured by SES at Theodore." ?-- That is correct.

40

Can you take me through that?-- We have been in communication with Bureau of Meteorology for a significant period of time now. Particularly after the March event there was a half a metre discrepancy between the estimated peak and the actual peak. They were half a metre low. We had discussions with the BOM hydrologist as to why that would be and we are continuing those discussions. Those variances still continue through to the December event. At this point in time it is conjecture as to actually what the reasoning for that is.

50

What are the - what has been discussed at the possible reasons for that?-- The lack of measuring stations in terms of additional inflows. There is a massive number of creeks that actually join the Dawson River between Taroom and Moura which has already been identified, and very few of those have

measuring stations on them both in meteorology terms and in terms of rainfall or in hydrology terms in terms of actually stream levels. 1

Has there been any steps forward to resolve this issue?-- We have been identifying a number of sites where we believe that they should be. We were in communication again with the hydrologists in the last week to try and firm up a time to actually meet with them to coordinate where we believe additional stations are required. 10

When you talk about hydrologists is that the hydrologists with the Bureau of Meteorology?-- That is correct.

That works into the third item that you particularise there is that, "Once localised storm flooding impacted Theodore readings were provided to BOM from local sources to provide more accurate levels." Where were the local sources?-- The - as Mrs Anderson said, we do rely a lot on property owners who use past experience in terms of creek levels on their properties and what the potential - how that relates to downstream events from - as an extrapolation of past events. 20

Do they have measuring devices?-- No, they don't. It is usually up to the bottom gate post or, you know, there is usually local references, it is not a tide reference but usually they can relate that to a particular event.

So you are getting information from farmers that went along this line: that the waters are up to the bottom of the post and when that happens the impact is this?-- Well, the last time that happened the level in Theodore was X or whatever. We were able to feed some of that information back through BOM. However, it is a much more complex process than that obvious because it does relate on what is already in the river. For those who have an idea of the topography of the area, Castle Creek actually flows contra to the Dawson River. It comes in at about 30 degrees in the opposite direction and consequently, depending on which way the - where the rain events have been, it can actually act as a relief valve for the Dawson River. However, if the Dawson River is already in flood and there is a massive inflow into the Castle Creek then it can result in a substantial rise in Theodore very quickly. 30

The information that you were being provided from the local sources, though, did provide more accurate levels. That seems to be the case from your statement in (iii)?-- It allowed us, I suppose, to anticipate higher levels than what BOM was predicting. In terms of an actual level, we couldn't do that but we knew it would be higher than what their modeling was showing. 40 50

So it just - when you received some information from a farmer saying that "It is at this level," that was relayed on to BOM?-- We had very good communication with the BOM hydrologist. We had 24/7 access to them on their mobile phones and we had numerous discussions as to the likely impacts. Again, they were loath to commit to a level because

they are not into speculation, however they did agree it would actually have an increased impact.

1

The issues that you raise in item 10A, can they be largely resolved by more gauges in rivers and creeks?-- That's our expectation, yes.

That is something you are engaging with the Bureau at the moment on?-- That is correct.

10

Have you got an expectation that more gauges can be put in the creeks and rivers before the next wet season?-- We would like to think so. That is why we are trying to expedite it at the moment. We believe there is at least 10 to 12 gauges required.

In item 10D you raise issues with the information that was provided on the Queensland Transport and Main Roads - by Queensland Transport and Main Roads?-- That is correct.

20

How can those issues be resolved?-- The - we had discussions with the District Court Director and Regional Director for Main Roads in the area. The initial 131940 website crashed because it had far too much graphics on it. It wasn't set up to handle the level of inquiry it received and Main Roads stripped that down to a very basic text version which actually allowed much better access. The information going on to that site was provided from a number of sources, including council, however there seemed to be some interpretation issues in terms of the actual location of some of those closures. We are talking now to Main Roads as to how we can better clarify those positions.

30

What do you mean by "interpretation issues"?-- The - quite often the references tend to be in terms of properties or local features which aren't necessarily readily identified by Main Roads personnel. When that information then is - in an attempt to clarify that you are trying to identify where it actually is. You can end up with - one situation was we had the closure of the highway on the wrong side of a community. That was picked up by us and transferred back to them for rectification.

40

Where is the council getting their information from in relation to road closures?-- We have, during a flood event we activate our works personnel, our supervisory works personnel, who - the area is actually divided into four regions and each coordinator for that region is responsible for reporting in on those - in particular the major roads in their area. Main Roads also has an inspector based in Banana Shire who individually and in liaison with our coordinators monitors the highway network.

50

So in terms of interpreting the local information how is that going to be resolved with the Department of Main Roads? I mean, you provide them with the identify of where - the position where the road is closed based on local features and then the Department of Main Roads wishes to post that

information in terms of what actual road that is; is that the case?-- Yeah, what we were - will be planning to do in the future is email a map showing the actual locations on a map which will make it easier for the personnel in Main Roads to put that onto the site.

1

Have you an expectation that a map will be available to road users for them to easily identify where roads have been closed?-- The - I believe the website - and it has been a while since I looked at the website - but I believe the website will actually allow you to identify the - a map location of those sites if you click on them.

10

If you can go to item 12 which deals with the Theodore evacuation. That's on page 16 of your statement where it is raised that the main issue which affected evacuations was the need to obtain quotes from helicopter services. Can you tell us about that?-- I wasn't the - I was relieved as the Disaster Coordinator at that particular time. John Walker, my deputy, was in the role. I wasn't actually in the centre when that was happening but I believe there was some issue in terms of identifying which helicopters were able to be used because of a requirement for a prequalification or preregistration. I can't comment any further than that.

20

Can this issue be resolved by before a wet season going through those checks to ensure the helicopters that can be used meet those qualifications?-- I believe so.

Is that something that the LDMG is looking at?-- I believe it has been addressed, yes.

30

If you can go to item 16. Item 16 raises the issue of the communication by the LDMG with the SDC. The issue raised in relation to 16A was the amount of time needed for participants to log in across the State and the time it took to receive reports from individual centres and it is stated that, "A regional approach to this communication may save some valuable time for LDCC members." What do you mean by "regional approach"?-- I think it is important for particular hotspots to have local input into the State teleconference. I believe there was far too many people involved for areas that had next to no impact who were taking up a lot of time in those conferences. Consequently, it should be more by invitation, a specific invitation rather than an open invitation, for local authorities to log on.

40

When you talk about a regional approach it is-----?-- Through the district.

50

Through the district?-- The District Disaster Coordinator, yeah.

Are you wanting the District Disaster Coordinator to pass on the information relevant to that region without the LDMG becoming involved?-- For those areas that aren't under specific threat at that time. I believe there is a need for local input for - like in the instance of Theodore, I think we

were able to give up to the minute information that the district wouldn't have had direct access to at that time. They were relying on situational reports we submitted and consequently, yeah, the situation was changing on an hour by hour basis.

1

In relation to situation reports, SITREPs, you state that that could be better coordinated between the DDC and SDCC so the information provided by you, the Local Disaster Coordinator could be used to provide the State update. How would that work?-- That's again the timing of the - of our SITREP to the district was actually after the State conference. I think if the State conference had been slightly later it would have been an opportunity for the local group to further advise the district so they could be better informed when talking to the State.

10

Have you raised these issues with the DDC?-- I believe it came up in our debrief but I won't swear on that.

20

Communications is an issue and that is using media outlets to provide information to the public. That issue is addressed over the page at 17B. The issue I am interested in is that you state that, "Not all information was delivered in a timely manner, if at all, in some cases." You state that, "ABC Radio has the best coverage of the Shire and is critical for the dissemination of information. A consistent and reliable single point of distribution of information is needed." What do you mean by that?-- The - the Shire is actually covered by three ABC regions, for want of a better term. The north, I suppose the north-eastern side of the Shire requires Rockhampton; the southern section receives Toowoomba and; the western side gets Longreach so we have problems getting a consistent message out there. We have had some preliminary discussion with ABC of whether we can actually provide the information to one source and they will get it disseminated but at this point in time we haven't been able to ratify that.

30

So you are in discussions with the ABC network?-- That is correct.

40

You haven't been able to get an answer that is suitable for you at the moment?-- The - we are not confident the information will be passed on in its entirety in those other areas.

Why is that?-- Because of the conflicting issues, I mean, for the Toowoomba region. Obviously the local issues down there are going to take precedence over something happening outside their immediate area.

50

How can this be resolved - how do you see this can be resolved? The ABC in Toowoomba saying, "Yes we will release that information," or can it be resolved in another way?-- I would like to see some sort of formal protocol which actually identifies that information that we pass on will be transmitted.

Now, the Banana Shire Council, does it use the Guardian software system?-- It has now got the Guardian software system installed.

1

Did it have the Guardian software system installed through the flood events?-- It - it was not operational, no.

What advantages to you see in using the Guardian software system?-- I see significant advantages. The first one in personnel management. The - fatigue management was a particular issue that we had to deal with and I see Guardian as being able to do that very effectively.

10

How does Guardian assist in relation to that issue?-- Basically we were relying on our admin manager of the coordination centre to identify who had been there for how long and to tap them on the shoulder and tell them it was time to go. Guardian requires you to log in to be a user and it will actually give an alarm when it is time to go. That can be monitored by anyone with access to the system. So that's a significant thing. The other thing is it will speed up the preparation of SITREPs. It allows - collates a lot of the information. It also identifies if we are getting multiple inquiries about the same event because of the way the information is put in so we are not - with respect to the telephone answering and data log in, we can identify whether or not we already have that on our system rather than doubling up on issues.

20

Do you see any advantage in other councils having the Guardian software system? Does that work better for you in any way?-- I believe so for a number of reasons. If we come back to the personnel issue again. Banana Shire does not have the capacity to provide 24 hour manning of its coordination centre with its own resources. I believe there needs to be a network set up across the State where other local authorities not impacted could release some of their staff to act as relief in that area. If they are trained on the Guardian system that would expedite their ability to operate effectively.

30

In that situation personnel from our councils would come into the region covered by Banana Shire and work with the LDMG using the Guardian system?-- That is correct, the issue we believe is that it needs to be wider than regional because quite often the event is a regional event and we have already started identifying local authorities which we believe would be appropriate and the Ayr, Home Hill area is one in particular we believe we could work with. Similarly we could provide staff to them in an event as well.

40

COMMISSIONER: Do you see that as council to council or done through the LGAQ? What is the best way?-- We are acting unilaterally at the moment but it probably is - would be advantageous if it was taken on a statewide basis and probably through the LGAQ would be a good mechanism for that.

50

COMMISSIONER: Ms Wilson, is that a convenient time.

MS WILSON: Yes.

1

COMMISSIONER: Is 2.30 all right?

MS WILSON: Yes, that would be convenient.

COMMISSIONER: 2.30 then.

10

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1.00 P.M. TILL 2.30 P.M.

20

30

40

50

THE COMMISSION RESUMED AT 2.32 P.M.

COLIN AUBREY JAMES HEAD, CONTINUING:

MS WILSON: Mr Head, just prior to lunch we were talking about neighbouring councils and working with neighbouring councils. Another issue arises with neighbouring councils that you particularised at page 28 at item 21G of your statement, and that talks about resupply requests. I don't quite understand what the residents were requesting?-- Resupply of either foodstuffs or, you know, the property has become isolated and after a period of time they need resupply of basic necessities.

10

And why did that then require the LECC to obtain mapping resources from other councils?-- To get the locations for those drops.

20

Were the residents within your own region?-- No, the residents - the properties requesting resupply were in Central Highlands. We don't have access to that mapping information.

Why were you doing the resupplying?-- Geographically it is closer to us than it is to Central Highlands.

30

We're talking about getting - if you are talking about getting more integrated technology, like the Guardian system with other councils, would greater integrated technology assist in this process, or is it just always just having to get that material from other councils and then make an analysis from there?-- The access to the neighbouring councils' databases for mapping would be beneficial.

And do you understand whether that is something that could easily be done or is that difficult?-- I am not aware of the protocols involved in that.

40

Well, for example, if other councils had to access your own mapping, is that easily done?-- It is usually by request for the particular area involved. I am not sure what the protocol would be involved in getting that, you know, as a permanent access arrangement.

And have you had discussions with the neighbouring councils to be able to get that access?-- Not on that issue.

50

Is that something you are going to take up or something you can let lie, that it wasn't such a big issue?-- There are particular areas of the shire - or adjacent to the shire where it will become an issue in the future and it is an issue we do need to follow up on.

And if we can just turn the page, finally in relation to this

statement, you refer to the issue of rural levee banks and that concerns have been raised in relation to levee banks being constructed, and they have been constructed by local farmers to protect their crops. Is the council going to do anything in relation to such concerns?-- Council has no authority over those areas. A lot of those farms have had a lot of work done with laser levelling and levees. We're hoping with the flood study that we have currently got underway at the moment that we will be able to get an indication of what the impacts of those are likely to be.

1
10

Once you get an indication of the impact what is then the council considering doing?-- Basically, what we need to do then is simply monitor any changes to those levee banks and the potential then for changes in flow characteristics in the future.

So you are really looking for information and seeing how these levee banks will affect flows and then you can convey that information to residents?-- That's correct, yes.

20

In front of you do you have some debrief meetings documents?-- No, I don't.

I am going to show you two of these documents. Banana Shire had a debrief in relation to the flood events?-- That's correct.

And one of them occurred on the 17th of February?-- That's correct.

30

Now, have you got the 17th of February in front of you?-- Yes, I have.

You attended?-- Yes, I did.

Just a couple of matters that I wished to address in relation to this meeting that occurred on the 17th - and if we can go to page 6 where the "lessons learned" - there is a section called the "Lessons Learned". Have you got that?-- Yes.

40

The first item there is "The public needs to receive up-to-date information and advice. The way the council sees to address that is to set up the LECCs?-- That's correct, yeah.

Is that how the council sees is the best tool to get information to residents quickly?-- For communities it is because of the nature of those communities.

50

And in terms of setting up these LECCs, we started this evidence by referring to the fact that at the time of the floods they had not been formalised. Have they been formalised now?-- Not all of them, no.

And how many have been? For example, has the Theodore LECC been formalised?-- No, it hasn't.

What further steps need to be done to formalise these LECCs?--
The Chairperson of the LECC needs to confirm the membership of
that so we can get it formally recognised.

1

Has that been difficult to do in some circumstances?-- It is
- in the recent months it has been a lower priority obviously
because of the recovery process.

And before the next wet season is the council hoping to have
all of these LECCs set up?-- That's the intent.

10

And just on the final dot point on that page, refers to access
to aerodromes?-- Yes.

Now, that was an issue in relation to Theodore?-- That's
correct.

That it was determined that if the Theodore airstrip could
have remained open longer, then evacuations would have been
easier by fixed air wing?-- That's correct.

20

So what is the council doing in relation to the LDMG and the
council doing in relation to ensuring that these aerodromes
are not compromised by floodwaters at an early stage?-- The
issue with the Theodore aerodrome is mainly access. The
aerodrome itself has very good flood immunity. However,
access to the aerodrome is an issue. Township - people of the
township have to cross Castle Creek to get to the aerodrome,
and also the road to the aerodrome on the other side of Castle
Creek is susceptible to some inundation. It is actually a
State road. This has been referred to both the District
Director and the Regional Director to see if we can get some
action taken on that. It is a secondary road so we haven't
got favourable comment back from Main Roads on that as it
being given a high priority under their normal process.
Whether that can be expedited in any other way remains to be
seen. The aerodrome itself, council looks after six
aerodromes. It is a massive drain on council's budget. This
aerodrome is used for emergency services basically only. The
main aerodrome is Thangool and consequently council just
doesn't have the funds on its own to do the upgrade necessary
to make it an all weather strip.

30

40

That's in relation to Theodore?-- That's Theodore, yeah.

Have you had any discussions with any other government
agencies at other levels to assist in ensuring the immunity
from flood?-- It is more - it is more impacts of the wet -
for the actual aerodrome itself.

50

The tarmac?-- Yes. The runway experienced significant
failures due to the nature of the soil there and the collapse
of the pavement, and consequently the strip was restricted to
700 metres early in the event which obviously compromised our
ability to use it as well.

So the council hasn't got the funds to be able to rectify the
strip?-- No, a rough estimate's in excess of \$2 million to

upgrade it to an all weather strip, and council's budget for aerodromes for the year doesn't match that. That's for all six aerodromes.

1

Have there been any discussions with government agencies at State level to assist council in that proposal - in any proposal to get the tarmac fixed?-- We have been identifying options to see where funding could be available but at this point in time none has been identified.

10

Now, Commissioner, I will tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 465.

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 465

20

MS WILSON: Now, this debrief took two days, is that the case?-- That's correct, yes.

Because there is a debrief that occurred on the 18th of February as well. So is that a continuation?-- The debrief was broken into two sections; one was response and one was recovery.

The one on the 18th was the recovery?-- That's correct.

30

Do you have the 18th in front of you?-- I don't believe I have.

We will get you that document in a moment. One of the issues that were raised was the understanding of Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Do you have a Memorandum of Understanding with either of those groups?-- Currently we don't but we're investigating the establishment of those.

Why are you investigating the Memorandum of Understanding with both of those groups?-- To assist in the preparation of future events.

40

Was that something that could have been done better if you had the support of an organisation like the Red Cross or Salvation Army?-- We did have - we did use the Red Cross. The Red Cross did make personnel available. However, there seemed to be a - some discrepancy as to the extent of their role in that event.

50

So the roles and responsibilities of Red Cross and the LDMG need to be defined?-- That's correct.

And that's what you are exploring through your Memorandum of Understanding. In relation to the Salvation Army, what roles are you seeing for the Salvation Army to play in flood event recovery?-- Mainly catering for an evacuation centre.

If you look at that - if we can take you to page 7 of that document?-- Sorry, which document?

1

The 18th - have you got the 18th in front of you there?-- No, I haven't.

Okay. If I can just take you through a couple of issues that are raised there. The group acknowledged that subgroups should have been established earlier, however agreed the Banana Shire did not have the available time to establish subcommittees like other councils in the region who received warning." The subgroups that you are referring to, are they the LECCs?-- No, the subgroups they are referring to are the recovery subgroups.

10

And what recovery subgroups do you have? Is that in relation to evacuations you have got a subgroup?-- No, it is in terms of the recovery itself. It is more in terms of recovery of infrastructure, economics, I am not sure - I can't remember the terminology for the other groups.

20

One of the issues that was discussed was the "benefits of having allocated community evacuation recovery centres for each community predetermined." During this flood event did you have those evacuation centres predetermined and for the community to know where they were?-- We did but this event identified the level of information wasn't sufficient to have them operate effectively.

Is it the LDMG's view that the community should know where the evacuation centres are?-- I believe the community did know where the centres were. It is matter of fact that - the issue was more the fact that they weren't adequately resourced in advance of the event.

30

So the issue that is being discussed is before a wet season to ensure that these evacuation centres have access to supplies that can be immediately activated? Is that the issue?-- And also we have now confirmed the numbers that can be accommodated in those centres. There was some rudimentary numbers put together before but we have now got experience that identifies what can comfortably be accommodated.

40

And how would members of the community know where those evacuation centres are?-- Each of the communities have already been involved in determining those in an informal process usually through the local councillor.

Is this something also the LECCs can come into play?-- I see that as a significant role for the LECCs to assist in that process.

50

Okay. And if you can go to page 9 of that document, where access to other council resources is discussed, and it is considered whether a Memorandum of Understanding should exist between this council and other councils to assist in providing support during a flood event. Why do you see - why do you see that as a necessary step to take?-- Well, basically, as I

reiterated before, in terms of the operation of the Local Disaster Coordination Centre for 24 hour manning, we don't have - the council staff is not sufficient to do that.

1

Is that the only issue that you see that you could gain immediate support from other councils?-- The - not only other councils but it is other facility - other entities as well. We have had a close working relationship with the mines and some of council's personnel now work for the mines. It would be very easy to second them back in to assist with that operation.

10

And if you do enter into relationships with these organisations, then the framework will be determined by a Memorandum of Understanding?-- That's correct.

Is that the case? So everyone knows their roles and responsibilities?-- That's correct.

Finally, if I can take you to page 13 of this document, which refers to the updates of river heights and how this information, or when this information was conveyed to residents, there was an issue identified about how this information actually got to the Bureau of Meteorology. Can you tell us about that?-- The - in the early stages, the SES were reporting that directly to BOM.

20

So the SES were measuring the river gauges and reporting that information directly to BOM?-- At Theodore, yes.

30

Yes?-- And later in the event BOM gave us the authority to actually update their site directly. So we were actually putting information directly on to the BOM site.

How did that work?-- Very well.

Did it work better having that access to the BOM site?-- Generally I believe it was beneficial. I mean, it got - the information got there as quickly as possible then. There was no second step to take.

40

And the information that you were putting on the BOM site, was that information that you gathered from local residents, like we discussed previously?-- No, no, this was actually the-----

River gauges?-- Readings of those official stations, yeah.

Okay. Thank you. I have got no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: I will leave you to last, Mr Ure.

50

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: Mr Head, can I just clarify two points with you? First of all, in relation to what you say about - at page - paragraph 12, page 16 of your statement, you identify - you say there you are talking about the need to obtain quotes for helicopter services. Now, do I understand your evidence to be that (1) you weren't in Theodore at the time that these services were sought?-- No, I wasn't actually in the Coordination Centre at Biloela. I was actually out at the shire.

10

Secondly, you weren't involved in procuring these services?-- That's correct.

So what you say in your statement is what you have been told by others?-- That's right.

Now-----?-- The deputy local controller who was in charge at the time.

20

Do I understand - you seem to say that the delay was obtained as a consequence of the need to obtain prequalification, I think was the word you used?-- In the statement I just talk about the need to obtain quotes.

Yeah, but you didn't say that in your evidence. You said - I thought the word prequalification?-- The system that council works on, we can have a list of prequalified suppliers, which means you have a ready access to a list of people who you don't have to call quotes to get.

30

The obligation to obtain quotes, was that something that the LDMG imposed?-- I am not sure where that came from. As I said, I wasn't involved directly in that process.

So you don't say it was something that Emergency Services Queensland imposed?-- No.

The other point is with respect to the Main Roads closures that you refer to at page 14 paragraph 10, item 10D, you accept, don't you, that the Main Roads site doesn't operate on real time?-- That's correct, yeah.

40

It is - and it is dependent upon, if you like, a series of Chinese whispers from the council workers to someone at council, to someone at Main Roads and someone who operates the website?-- We believe we've got a much more robust system than that in place now. We go directly to the person in Emerald charged with updating the website.

50

But that's how it worked at the time of this event, is that right?-- It worked at various - yeah, from that through to direct contact, yes.

And the number of communications always leaves scope for differences in interpretation of what locations are being spoken about?-- That's correct.

But you now say the system is more efficient in the sense there are less communications involved in communicating with Main Roads?-- For our area it is, yes.

1

You also accept, too, that Main Roads had to deal with a disaster which was far larger in scope than simply the Banana Shire?-- Yes. That was the comment about the initial website; the structure was not set up to handle the level of inquiries it had.

10

There was such an enormous volume of material that the Main Roads website had to deal with, it had to pare that down so that a more efficient or bare bones system could be implemented to give the service people who required the information from the site?-- Yes.

Nothing further, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

20

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thanks.

MS WILSON: Madam Commissioner, I should just tender those minutes of that debrief meeting on the 18th of February.

COMMISSIONER: That will be Exhibit-----

30

MS WILSON: The 18th is part of the statement. I don't need to. The 17th were not.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Head. You are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

40

MR CALLAGHAN: The next witness is to be called by telephone. I understand the arrangements are in place.

50

BURNETT FITZPIERCE JOYCE, ON AFFIRMATION, EXAMINED VIA
TELEPHONE LINK:

1

MR CALLAGHAN: It is Counsel Assisting speaking, Mr Joyce.
You can hear me okay?-- Yep.

Your full name is Burnett Fitzpierce Joyce?-- Yes, that's
right.

10

You are the author of a four-page statement for the purposes
of this Commission, is that right?-- Yeah.

Do you have a copy of that with you?-- I do.

Yes, I tender that statement.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 466.

20

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 466"

MR CALLAGHAN: Mr Joyce, in that statement you describe the
whereabouts of your cattle station on the Cracow-Theodore
Road, is that correct?-- Yes.

30

And you give an introduction by way of explaining the
circumstances where you live and - circumstances of the floods
as they affected where you lived. I wanted to ask you about
some specific aspects of that statement?-- Yeah.

If I can take you to paragraph 6 where you express some
concerns about power during the floods in December
and January?-- Yep.

Can you just - I know what you have got written there but can
you just elaborate on that for us?-- Yeah. In the early
parts of the statement, when we knew we were going to be
suffering major inundation, I put a report or a request in on
the life threatening options on the Ergon call centre-----

40

Yes?-- -----which is where you push number 1, and that
request was they look at disconnecting all our branch lines so
we could retrieve a lot of electrical equipment. That was the
first part of it. We didn't get any response for over 30
hours, and when a response did come, it came in the form of
having the total power to the whole system disconnected. Now,
that took the power off from six of our residences, plus a
neighbour's property, plus the Cracow Gold Mine Plumbing
installation and it was all done without notification.

50

And you were left without power for quite some time, is that
right?-- Yes, seven days. A week.

Yeah?-- And we had - obviously after a while we got generators organised and we were able to shuffle generators between two properties and shove certain equipment down and get enough generation and generating capability going to preserve food.

1

The next thing I wanted to ask you about was what you have got in the following paragraph concerning the warnings. You express concern that you didn't receive warning from any agency that the district was threatened, is that right?-- What I expressed was right but it wasn't a concern. I wasn't concerned that we weren't getting warnings because, I guess, in short, it doesn't concern us. Where we're pretty self sufficient and we know, from talking to people up river, what's going to happen, and we know from recording or monitoring rainfall what the approximate situation is going to be.

10

I see. What do you have to say about the readings being supplied from the measuring stations being operated by SunWater?-- There is one reading station operated by SunWater downstream of us, which again we don't utilise the recordings there, but it has been repeatedly reported to me that that station was not just inaccurate but highly inaccurate, and it wasn't just in that flood, it has been in previous occasions as well. And the Gylanda Weir Recording Station, which is above us, has accuracy or not of that, I couldn't comment, but for our situation it wasn't relevant because I didn't really know in a flood like that what their recordings meant compared to what we were going to suffer as far as flooding.

20

30

Do you know how other people treat the purportedly inaccurate measuring station? Is it just common knowledge so it is not relied upon, or what's the story?-- Yes, that was the general consensus that was being relayed back to me, that you couldn't rely on the stations to make estimations of what was going to happen, and that was coming predominantly from affected cotton farmers downstream who because of the critical levels on their levee banks were relying heavily on those records.

40

All right?-- Or those reports.

I just want to move over to the last page of your statement and to the second last paragraph, which is in the list of recommendations that you have, but what I am interested to learn is why you are making this recommendation, and that is relating to the need for a permanent disaster coordinator. Your perception seems to have been that there was a lack of coordination between, for example, the police and the SES. Is that right?-- Yeah, I just put a note in my copy here, and fire service as well, as to whether that pertains to actual flooding, you know, I wouldn't be firm on that, but generally with fire and emergency, there just seems to be too much individual reaction and not enough cooperation.

50

Is this your experience over a period of time?-- Yes, not just locally but in lots of parts of Australia I have been travelling, you find the same thing, and actions like that -

reaction is good but the coordination between your reaction isn't good.

1

All right. That's not a specific concern relating to anything that you experienced during the floods just passed?-- No, no, because, in effect, any records or warnings we would have got would have been from north of us, which is downstream and is irrelevant to what we're doing.

Fair enough?-- But we didn't have - over that whole period, we had no - well, there was obviously radio and television information. We had no direct reports or warnings or anything coming by phone or email or anything like that, but, as I said, that didn't really affect our operation.

10

20

30

40

50

No. All right, well, just moving back to the previous page, to page 3 and paragraph 15, you do have some general recommendations specific to the floods. One is to have monitoring of the catchment area of the Dawson River on a regional level; is that right?-- Yeah, yeah.

1

Can you just elaborate on that one for us?-- I think one of the failures that as land holders on [indistinct] and the central part of the river, was that there had been massive rainfalls recorded in some of the catchments that weren't being allowed for in the warnings. I do understand it but the Dawson at that stage has an option of 100 per cent major catchments. Some of the ones that directly affect us come in below any recording station or various places of recording stations and the frequency between reports, if people were relying on them, it is too far apart. Severe storms can hit and run off and impact on things before any reporting is done. But it is just generally the extent of the catchments and the speed with which run-off can happen and the majority of those catchment aren't monitored. I don't know about the majority but a lot of them aren't monitored particularly between - the ones I know of between Taroom and Tarramba where massive waters can come in from branch streams and have very quick impact - when I say very quick, it is within 8 to 10 hours or sometimes sooner than that where the only warnings we get is by - normally by phone contact from local land holders so we know what is happening.

10

20

You would like to see more information gathered in that regard, is that right?-- Yeah, I think that the most valuable information we could get as land holders on the river is rainfall information as to where it fell and over what area it fell.

30

Yes?-- Because for obvious reasons a heavy thunderstorm over a couple of thousand acres is very different to a heavy thunderstorm over, sort of, 50,000 acres.

The next recommendation you make is directed towards Ergon Energy and the need to look at their clearing and maintenance programs; is that right?-- Yeah, yep.

40

What is your - sorry, go ahead?-- Well, the - it is not just directly to do with the flooding. A lot of the problems certainly that I was associated with the flooding were not caused directly by the flooding. The flood caused a whole lot of problems but the reason for the problem was lack of maintenance prior to, you know. Just directly on Gyranada there is a fair extent of high voltage lines running through Gyranada. There is trees on that line there that - I hate to think how long but certainly three years old, that have been skimming on the top of the trees from the power line, that are still there and they have been reported time and time again. There is other trees along the line we have actually ring barked to kill because of them brushing on the lines. They have also been reported and they are still there as dead trees. They - their inspection regime appears to be good but the follow-up on those inspections and carrying out the

50

maintenance and repairs appears to be lacking.

1

All right, thanks. And, just finally, there is actually a positive note that you sound in paragraph 13 as a result of the recovery work by the Banana Shire Council and, in fact, you observe some of the roads are better than they were before; is that right?-- Yeah, the response to roads I am directly associated with has been good as far as repairs to the road. You know we have had bitumen that was holey. They have come in and done quite a fast repair job on them. That's a positive. I also had reports that any rebuilding done in Theodore has been of a very high standard. I guess that is very good outcomes that, A, they have been attended to and B, it has been done well.

10

That's good. They are the only questions I have. Hang on for a moment in case anyone else has anything.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

20

MR URE: I have nothing.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: No questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

MR ROLLS: No questions.

30

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose.

MR AMBROSE: Mr Joyce, can you hear me?-- Yes.

My name is Ambrose and I act for SunWater. I want to ask you a couple of questions if I may about your comment that the measuring station operated by SunWater was supplying readings that were inaccurate?-- Yep.

40

I want to suggest to you, in fact, the reading stations that you are referring to are, in fact, designed only for low flow operational flows over the Gyranada weir and not designed to record flood flows. Might that be correct?-- Could well be correct, yes.

So that when it is, in fact, operational for what it is designed to do, it is perfectly accurate?-- Yep, that well could be right.

50

I have no further questions?-- I just like to add that if that is the situation that is not how it was being - or attempted to be utilised by downstream operators. Maybe they were wrong in trying to use the readings that way but they thought they were getting faulty information.

It might just-----?-- If the reading for the station is one

thing then I guess that needs to be made clear that they are not trying to use it for something else.

1

It might be cured by some communication?-- Yep, could well be.

Thank you, Mr Joyce.

MR CALLAGHAN: I have nothing further. May Mr Joyce be excused?

10

COMMISSIONER: Yes, thanks for your time, Mr Joyce. You are excused and we can end the connection now?-- I can't hear that.

I said thank you and goodbye?-- Could I make one small comment.

Yes?-- Please?

20

Yes?-- Just a reference to a book, an ABC book called Flood that has been published since the floods, obviously. There is a Bureau of Meteorology map in about page 3 of that book which designates the extent of flooding or the degree of flooding on a lot of Queensland catchments. It states that the Dawson River only had - I can't remember now - high water levels and moderate flooding which I am not quite sure how that got recorded as such but I am sure that is not accurate.

All right, we will be mindful of that. Thank you, Mr Joyce. We will hang up now?-- Okay, thanks, by.

30

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Kenneth Murphy.

40

50

KENNETH JOHN MURPHY, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

1

MS WILSON: Is your full name Kenneth John Murphy?-- It is.

You are employed by the Department of Employment, Economic Development AND Innovation called DEEDI in Rockhampton?-- I am.

10

You are employed as a Senior Beef Extension Officer?-- Yes.

Can you tell me what a Senior Beef Extension Officer does?-- Changing role but in the past it has always been assisting industry, in which it is the beef industry for me, to remain profitable.

You also perform the role of the Central Queensland Climate Risk Coordinator?-- That is right.

20

You prepared a statement for the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

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

Madam Commissioner, I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 467.

30

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 467"

MS WILSON: In your statement you state that it was determined that DEEDI would coordinate the availability of fodder in corporation with AgForce. Do you know when this was determined?-- There had been meetings before I was actually involved but I became involved on New Year's Day and my instructions from Paul Walmsley and Greg Robbins were that we would work together to coordinate. We wouldn't be in the helicopters dropping hay out but, in fact, putting producers looking for fodder in touch with fodder suppliers and helicopter companies.

40

The role that DEEDI was undertaking in relation to fodder drops, was that determined prior to the flooding events?-- Yes, it was part of the NDRA guidelines that we would work with industry and depending on the category of the disaster declaration was what level we worked at.

50

So before the wet season DEEDI was aware that it was the responsible agency for fodder drops?-- I understand that's the case, yes.

When was it determined that you would work with AgForce?--

New Year's - well I guess the decision was made in Brisbane before the end of the year and I became aware of it on New Year's Day.

1

The decision was made in Brisbane to work with AgForce?-- Yes.

Is that your understanding?-- Yes.

Do you have any idea about that at all or were you briefed on that or was that just your understanding?-- I have been briefed on that since, in the last few days.

10

Okay?-- But I was also asked by my regional director to be prepared to come in if I was needed during any disasters that should happen.

To specifically deal with fodder drops or just deal with issues?-- To deal where I could be useful with the disaster.

20

That's not usually AgForce's role, is it, to do such coordination for fodder drops?-- I think this is one of the things if you have the ability and the people to do it that you can get in and help.

I am wondering whether you are aware whether AgForce came on as a needs basis or it was a predetermined relationship?-- I think it was a predetermined relationship in the early discussions that happened between Christmas and New Year.

30

Do you know who those discussions were between?-- I understand between the Minister's office, Greg Robbins who is the Executive Manager of Agriculture in our department and AgForce.

Do you know who within AgForce?-- Brent Findlay.

Your role was a coordination role as you discussed just then. It wasn't in the helicopters dropping out the fodder. That involved three stages. It involved getting requests of fodder drops?-- Mmm.

40

Then also processing offers of supply-----?-- Yes.

-----of fodder and then also developing lists of helicopter pilots and helicopter operators that could deliver that fodder?-- Yes.

If we can go through these three stages. First of all, how did you determine who needed the fodder drops?-- I think they came in very quickly once we got word out. I did interviews with Joan Paterson from the ABC Country Hour and that soon made my mobile number available and also it went through the AgForce network very quickly as well. It didn't take very long for them to come through. I suspect some of them were also notified of my number by the local disaster management.

50

Were you working with the LDMG or the DDMG at this stage which

is the early - the first stage of the fodder drops?-- No, not at the very start. I was working purely with directions from my regional director and people who were asking for help.

1

The first stage, if we can call it that, that's when you were working with Danielle Hogarth?-- Yes.

From AgForce?-- Yes.

Did you - and in this stage it was immediately dealing with the need of fodder drops very quickly?-- Mmm.

10

Did you have any lists drawn up of helicopter suppliers or operators at this stage?-- We didn't but I learnt very quickly who - because I know the area reasonably well - who was needing fodder, where the flood was the worst. Paul Walmsley had given me some understanding of that. I made contact with some of those local people. We soon found the names of many helicopter operators.

20

During this first stage it was you and Danielle Hogarth who was doing the coordination but it became quickly apparent you were both doing the same type of work?-- Yes.

So then it was determined that you would handle the lists and work out who needed it and where you could access the A, fodder and B, the helicopter resources?-- It became simpler for people to contact one number rather than two or three numbers. What we were finding was they were contacting us both with the same information so I said, "Well, look, I will take that on." Danielle was stranded in a property out from Emerald and I was at least in Rockhampton so it was probably easier for me to receive calls than for her.

30

You state in your statement your role was, "Made more complex because usual contacts were on holidays or replaced by others unfamiliar with the position." What positions are you talking about? The ones that were replaced and unfamiliar with the position?-- That was later in the flood period when, because of fatigue management people were asked to go off for a few days and the replacement people weren't across what was already decided. It was very hard to make them all aware of what had gone on in the past.

40

Now, I have been talking about the earlier stages?-- Mmm.

That was dealing with fodder drops, working with Danielle Hogarth in a localised area, in a more acute area?-- Yes.

As it worsened you were asked to coordinate fodder drops across the whole State?-- Yes.

50

How did then this process work because it must have been much more complex in dealing with the number of requests and marrying them up with suitable helicopter operators that were available?-- I think one of the things that happens in rural areas is that people see a disaster happening and they get in to do what they can to help their fellow man. It didn't take

long for - I was in contact with AgForce at Roma, Melissa Knobbs, she very quickly gave me information she had. People were calling me. I could make contact with one or two helicopter companies that were known to be in that area. They gave me a list of others as well.

1

Was it the case that the provision of fodder drops, the systems that were developed were systems developed on the run?-- I think that is - yes, they were. I think that's probably the only way it can happen.

10

For future flood events, though, if you had better planning and preparation could these systems already be in place with names and contact details so that action could be implemented quicker?-- Yeah, I always worry about having these systems in place because the contact numbers change and email addresses change and people who had previously been available aren't available, so without continually updating that I think we are better doing it on the run. One or two people come forward and it happens. You know, you don't get 100 producers wanting hay within the first hour. It grows and I think you can grow with it.

20

What about before a wet season if a ring around was done to know what resources would be available in the upcoming wet season?-- That's always a possibility. We had people from New South Wales offering - helicopter companies offering their machines because they can be in New South Wales or they can be in Townsville in no time at all. You know, it is a very quick transport, so if you did that prelist, it may not be the ones that are available. Like, we know that humans take - I believe humans take priority and then we look after the animals later. So if they need in a disaster down there or needed for people I would see them as not being available for fodder drops. You could do your best but I think it would still have to develop.

30

But on this occasion there was limited planning and the job got done?-- Yes.

40

But with more planning could the job be done more efficiently and effectively?-- I really don't think it was because I believe we kept up with the demand as it was required.

One suggestion you do make is that it is preferable to have one person across the whole system?-- Yes.

That is, one coordinator?-- Yes.

Is that referring to the fact when you had two coordinators there was a double up?-- It does. As well, if I - I was asked by my managers to manage my tiredness or whatever and go off on fatigue and I said, "I can't do that," because my mobile number was the number that was being used, my personal number. My private home number was being used as well. It was easier just to keep that going remembering it all started over that New Years Day so I think it was better for me to work through with the people that I had in my network to see

50

the job finished. If it had gone on for months it was different.

1

That's a real problem when you have one person just doing the job, isn't it? There are issues of fatigue that do arise?-- They can do but we had helicopter pilots doing the same work for longer hours than I was and they were still - they were keeping going and I had - I did get to a point once the first four or five days were over you could turn off your mobile for a couple of hours and then come back on again and get messages.

10

What about if there was a centralised point of contact however there was a team operating?-- We saw that when I made contact with the local disaster management, the Flood Operations Centre. When there had been a change, the new people didn't know about all the people who had made requests or they didn't have access to the information. I just think that it is probably better for one person to stay there. As long as it is physically possible to stay there, I do believe it is better for one person.

20

I have no further questions, thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

30

MS O'GORMAN: I have no questions.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls.

MR ROLLS: One point if I may. Mr Murphy, in paragraph 21 of your statement you identified the range of farming interests that you assist with. You talk about cattle, horses, also requests for pigs and dogs; is that the case?-- Yes.

40

Are there any other classes of animal you assisted? Farm animal, that is?-- Chickens.

Yes?-- There aren't any poultry farms that were affected by floods in our area.

How do you assist those?-- As I was going to say, the only poultry requests were from enterprises further north when the roads were cut between Brisbane and Mackay and there was a need to get fodder past Rockhampton. We were able to barge some past.

50

So you also used barges to assist private producers?-- There was a commercial barge going past from Gladstone to Yeppoon and the road further north was then opened so they could barge food over. All I did was made them available, that service was there. They organised the rest.

Thank you, Commissioner, nothing further.

1

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

MS WILSON: I have no other questions, Madam Commissioner.
May the witness be excused?

10

COMMISSIONER: Thanks Mr Murphy.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS WILSON: I call Vaughan Becker.

20

30

40

50

VAUGHAN ALWYN BECKER, SWORN AND EXAMINED:

1

MS WILSON: Can you tell the Commission of Inquiry your full name?-- Vaughan Alwyn Becker.

You are a councillor of Banana Shire Council?-- Councillor for division 6, yes.

10

You prepared a statement for the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry?-- Yes.

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

I tender that document.

COMMISSIONER: Exhibit 468.

20

ADMITTED AND MARKED "EXHIBIT 468"

MS WILSON: Now, you were doing work with the Theodore LECC in relation to these flood events?-- I am the chair of the LECC for division 6.

30

The role of the LECC was information collection, dissemination and liaise with the local community in the LDCC?-- That is right.

When were you appointed as the chair of the LECC?-- I believe it was - went through a meeting from memory in October 2010.

Now, in the flood events that occurred in Theodore which is where you were working, was that the first time there was an LECC in operation?-- Yes.

40

There was a draft Terms of Reference that had been completed by the Banana Shire Council but hadn't yet been formalised?-- That is right.

You had that document during the flood event?-- Yes, I did.

Did you find them useful? Did you find having the Terms of Reference useful?-- Yes, extremely useful.

50

Why was that?-- It allowed me to show - work out the structure of what I needed and I based it and formed what I called - informally, but called an interim LECC for that event.

Yes, who was a part of your interim LECC?-- The people listed on there, the people like the doctor, the hospital, the

Queensland Police, the firies, the ambos, the community rep
and-----

1

How big was it? How many people were on it?-- I think from
memory six to eight, something like that.

The draft terms of reference provide a list of people who
should be on it. Should that list be extended to any other
organisation?-- No, I think it was adequate. It had the main
government emergency agencies there and myself as chair and
another community rep.

10

The - we talked about the role of the LECC was information
collection, dissemination, to go up to the LDMG and also to
liaise with the community about information coming down from
the LDMG. How did you find working with the LDMG in relation
to decisions that were affecting Theodore? Were you a part of
that decision making process?-- I wouldn't say I was actually
a part of it other than I would - put recommendations up and
then those recommendations would be considered from that point
but whilst we had meetings and that each morning, I think the
actual decision was probably made after I made a
recommendation.

20

If you had a problem with the any of the decisions of the LDMG
was there a manner you could address that?-- Yes, if I didn't
believe or I had further information that had come to hand
since I perhaps passed my first information up, which would
allow a better decision to be made, I would certainly contact
the LDMG and raise that issue.

30

What's your view about how the LECC system worked during this
flood event? Did it work well?-- Yes, it worked extremely
well. Especially if you compare the March 2010 flood with the
last one, it was chalk and cheese.

Do you have any suggestions you can make to us in relation to
improvements that can be made?-- I think the best thing in
all these things is keep as much local as you can. The local
knowledge, a local leader working with the local communities
is probably the best way to go.

40

Local knowledge was crucial in relation to the information
gathering of flood warnings?-- It was absolutely crucial.

That was due to a lack of gauges, was it?-- Lack of flood
gauges but I think when we talk about gauges we should also
include rain gauges. You can't just look at flood gauges in
isolation, it must be flood gauges and rain gauges.

50

One of the suggested improvements was the provision of
additional flood gauging and rainfall gauges?-- Absolutely.

You particularise some areas where they should be placed?--
Again, local knowledge can be used there but yes, there are -
council have already identified a number of places where this
would be extremely beneficial to have them.

And you state that the specific location for these gauges be determined in close consultation between the council, the Bureau of Meteorology, SunWater and the communities?-- Yes, for sure and definitely SunWater in the Theodore/Taroom area.

Why is that?-- I think they just have - water is their role. They have a great knowledge of the river and I work very closely with SunWater and I valued their coordination during the floods.

Were you aware - are you aware whether any such consultation with these organisations has occurred?-- Only informally.

On an informal basis?-- On an informal basis, yes. We have spoken about informally.

Okay. Your statement refers to delays occurring with the mandatory evacuation due to the requirement for the LDCC to obtain quotes for helicopter services. How did you become aware of this?-- I questioned the time from when I, for want of a better term, pressed the button and the information went up to the LDMG to when the evacuation took place, and I queried why was the delay there in the helicopters coming, and the person who was deputised to stand in for Col Head, because he was out of the shire at the time, advised me of the need - the requirement for them to seek these quotations.

10

What sort of delay are we talking about?-- I really couldn't answer that, but, you know, it is several hours.

20

A delay that you thought was noteworthy at the time?-- Too right it was.

One of the matters that you raise in relation to your statement is the issue of road signage where you state that, "The matter of road signage during flood needs to be addressed Statewide with signage which provides a location and type of problem." What sort of signs are you referring to there?-- Saying what the problem is and where it is, and have advance warning, so that when you have a highway branch system, you can have a sign there saying "Dawson River flooded at Taroom", back at say Miles, people then have the choice to go another way rather than drive all that way, get there and find they can't - that's where the "road closed" sign is.

30

Did you find that an issue; that because commuters or road users weren't having that information, that it was causing problems?-- It was, and it is a problem - been from March, through this one, and again the Easter floods, we had another flood at Easter, and again it was a problem. The road signage, you know, there is just - people were coming through to Taroom and stopping there. The big danger is, too, if you don't have proper signage in proper locations, you can have people caught on flood plains, and that has happened to us, too, so I believe with adequate signage you can avoid that problem.

40

And the type of signage that you are referring to would have to be electronic in some form, is it, because the message would have to change accordingly?-- You could have - there certainly needs to be more electronic signs but also, I think, a lot of it could be addressed by the drop down, the metal signs with the slide in cards on it for numbers and things like that.

50

Oh, you just put the sign into the-----?-- Yeah.

Do you have them presently?-- We have some. There is a couple actually on the Taroom-Roma Road, they are locked up, so they just look like a silver-backed sign. When something has happened, we just undo the locks, bring them down, put the information in and then you have a yellow and black normal Main Road sign. 1

So that's the type of signage that you would be - that you would find very useful in this area?-- Certainly there needs to be a lot more electronic signs but these drop down signs, as I call them, would be - a lot more of them would be great. 10

Right. The SES, the membership in Theodore we heard today is now four?-- Yeah, I didn't know it was that low.

What did you think it was?-- I thought it was around about the six or eight but that could be quite the case.

The SES during the flood events in Theodore, did they have enough resources?-- They had enough resources, like what would you call physical resources, but manpower, of course, was an issue, but we did have people that would come in and help who were working on shift at the mines, they would come in and do stints there. Certainly manpower was an issue. 20

And how were they deployed? Who deployed them and to which task?-- Barry Denning, the normal SES coordinator, was actually on annual leave and his deputy, Nathan Goodland, he was running the show, but for the very first part of the flood, and until that time, I was also working out of the SES shed and Nathan and I worked very, very closely together. 30

A problem with the SES shed, of course, was that it, too, was flooded during the flood event?-- Yes, it - I actually moved out before that. Yes, it was flooded but I moved out for that because it is on a narrow lane and given the activity - the very big activity of flood sandbags being done, and also that was where I was holding my community meetings, it simply became dangerous with the amount of traffic and people around the shed with a forklift and people working. So I took the decision to relocate myself to the RSL hall, which in fact was designated as one of our evacuation centres. So I went up there. But the SES continued to work out of the shed until they were no longer able to do so because of the water. 40

Were any assets or resources lost-----?-- No.

-----because of the flooding?-- No. In the SES shed?

Yeah?-- No. 50

I wonder if you could help me in relation to the training the SES receives? Do you know where they receive that training? Is it local or do they have to - do members have to travel some distance to receive it?-- They do probably the majority of their training locally, but they do coordinate some training with other SES branches in the shire, like, say, it may be Taroom, or Moura, or Theodore, or Biloela or something

like that, from time to time. But probably the bigger majority of it is just locally.

1

Have you got any SES members who are trained in relation to flood boats?-- Yes. Ergon actually used the SES to go out and remove fuses in the irrigation - part of the irrigation land. They have electric poles there for the electric pumps in the irrigation centre and Ergon used the SES to go out and trip those to save those poles and electrical gear.

10

Do you know where that training occurs?-- I don't know exactly where it occurs, no.

And when you talked about training occurring locally, is that in Theodore?-- Yes.

Is that within the group of members themselves that they do training?-- Yes. But, as I said, they may join up with other - Theodore, Taroom or Biloela from time to time.

20

Are you aware whether trainers come out to Theodore to perform training?-- I believe they do, yes, yes.

In terms of future planning, one of the matters that you have identified is a conference phone for the LECC, because you were using your mobile phone on speaker phone, was that the case?-- I didn't even know my mobile phone had a loud speaker until somebody told me to turn it on. But, yes, the only communications we had with the LDMG was my mobile phone which was less than satisfactory.

30

And is the SES shed the best place for the LECC to conduct its work during an event like this?-- I am doubtful about that because it is a metal shed. If it is raining, the noise of the rain on the roof you can't hear. If the forklift is working outside loading sandbags and people are sandbagging, again you can't remember. The background noise and ambient noise makes it extremely difficult. But there are benefits for me on the Chair of the LECC to be with the SES as much as I can, so that's an awkward one.

40

Because the SES shed got flooded has any other site been identified-----?-- Yes.

-----for an appropriate SES shed?-- The council has actually allowed in a draft budget - can I stress it is only draft at this stage - the sum of \$150,000 to look at the relocation of the shed in Theodore.

And would you regard that as important for the flood preparedness of Theodore?-- I think it is something we should do.

50

You state that the Theodore LECC achieved its primary objective in ensuring the gathering of information and providing that to the residents. We talked about any more - we talked about further suggestions that you could provide. What about is there any further assistance that you need from

the LDMG to perform your role?-- Given that this was the first time it happened, obviously, you know, perhaps we were somewhat under prepared. I tend to think we did a pretty good job under the circumstances. I have a lot more information now. The equipment - I just went in with my laptop, for example, but I didn't take my printer. So I had no - I was getting reports and things but no way to print them out and disseminate them around. Fortunately, Community people come to the fore, they would take stuff off the memory sheet and they would go away and print it. Just that type of equipment and general office supplies, but also until council officer Gayle Roylance come down for a couple of days and then John McDougall come for a while, I was there on my own with no backup whatsoever, and you definitely need some admin assistance there. That's a given. My phone - my mobile phone usually runs at about \$180 to \$230 a month. For December and January the total was \$2,900 so I had a lot of phone calls.

1

10

Yeah. Because the terms of reference hadn't been formalised and you regarded yourself as an interim LECC and training hadn't been given to the Chairs of the LECC, is training important for the LECCs to have?-- I think it is, although my former life was actually - I had 40 years in local government and I was a CEO in several local governments in Queensland. So as a part of my former life, all those councils had SES and those sort of things, so I had received training throughout my career, not probably direct in the role of an LECC but certainly disaster type training.

20

30

Thank you. I have no further questions.

COMMISSIONER: Ms O'Gorman?

MS O'GORMAN: No questions, thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Rolls?

40

MR ROLLS: Just one, if I may, Commissioner. I just want to ask you or confirm with you you say in your statement, and it is correct, isn't it, that you were not involved in securing helicopters for the evacuations for Theodore?-- No, not involved directly in the obtaining of them, no.

And so you have no direct knowledge, from things that you saw and heard yourself, as to why there was any delay associated with those evacuations, if there was a delay?-- Only the advice I was given when I asked.

50

Only as a result of what someone told you?-- Yes.

And is it the case that you understand it was a requirement of the LDCC to get these quotes?-- I am not sure who made the requirement. I have got no knowledge of who or what required that - put that requirement on, other than I was told it was a

requirement.

1

So you simply don't know-----?-- No.

-----where it came from. Nothing further, thank you,
Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ambrose?

MR AMBROSE: No questions.

10

COMMISSIONER: Mr Ure?

MR URE: I have nothing, thank you.

MS WILSON: Just one matter, in terms of the deployment of
helicopters, how did the LDMG know how many helicopters were
required?-- I have got - I couldn't answer that. I could
surmise.

20

Did you ring through and say, "Listen, this amount of people
need to be evacuated", or how-----?-- No, I was never -
sorry, yes, I certainly had to pass on the numbers of what had
to be evacuated, but, you know, we considered a number of
options and it was helicopters that got the tick in the end.

Thank you. I have got no further questions.

30

COMMISSIONER: Do you want Mr Becker excused?

MS WILSON: Yes, please.

COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Mr Becker, you are excused.

WITNESS EXCUSED

40

MR CALLAGHAN: That concludes the evidence scheduled for
Rockhampton. I propose that the Commission adjourn to Emerald
at 2 o'clock tomorrow.

COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn to Emerald at 2 tomorrow.

50

THE COURT ADJOURNED AT 3.44 P.M. TILL 2 .00 P.M. THE FOLLOWING
DAY AT EMERALD