

To: The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

From: Alex Smith, Concerned Citizen.

In this submission, I raise two issues about the Brisbane River flood. The first relates to Communications and the second to Dam Management.

Issue 1

The information flow to the community as the river was rising to major flood level failed to take account of the varying river heights and varying river peak times along the heavily populated areas of the river.

The media and Brisbane City Council concentrated solely on the Brisbane City Gauge height where the forecast peak was to occur on the high tide on the Thursday morning. (They also focussed on the Bremmer Height in Ipswich but that is not relevant to this issue)

Up river at Bellbowrie, the peak was around 18 hours earlier and yet people in this community who didn't know better were being told, and believed, the peak was yet to come.

The information was clear to those who could access the weather bureau web site, but for the thousands without power, the only source of information was the radio and all outlets were focusing on the city gauge.

I encountered dozens of people on Wednesday afternoon at Moggill, Anstead and Bellbowrie who feared they still had much worse to come because they were being told the peak was to be the next morning.

Because I had access to the bureau web site and easy access to the water's edge, I knew our peak had already arrived.

The very badly affected Centenary Suburbs had a similar issue. Their peak was around 7pm Wednesday.

This failure, apparently due to ignorance, to take account of varying factors up stream also completely ignored the fact that the up-river flood was much worse than 1974. In Moggill/Bellbowrie/Anstead, up to a metre higher than '74!

There was also a chronic failure by radio and by extension, the authorities, to adequately communicate the flooded roads situation in the western suburbs. The fact that Moggill/Anstead/Bellbowrie and other suburbs such as Karana Downs were cut off was not acknowledged.

This neglect of basic communication was responsible for generating the anger that had people calling radio saying the region had been forgotten and neglected. This response was unreasonable given the scale of the disaster, but

understandable and totally preventable had simple lines of relevant communication been kept open.

The reliance on websites for information was another great failure of the communications plan as the BCC site crashed and vast numbers of flood-affected residents had no power to access the web.

Issue 2

I will keep this matter brief and it relates to the regulation of the water level in Wivenhoe Dam.

On Sunday the 2nd January 2011, I had a telephone conversation with Lord Mayor of Brisbane Campbell Newman (who I know personally) in which we discussed the dam level.

We both agreed that the level should be reduced to 80% or less in the face of the dire rainfall outlook we faced at that time.

It was obvious to him, obvious to me as a person with a significant interest in this area and it should and would have been obvious to those who had the authority to do something about it.

Campbell Newman and I had regularly discussed the SOI/La Nina aspects in the weeks before this conversation and we both recognised the extremely high SOI (higher than '74) was cause for alarm and reason to let more water out of Wivenhoe.

I have no doubt Campbell Newman would acknowledge and endorse the account of our conversation.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

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