

[REDACTED]
Oxley 4075

2 April 2011

The Queensland Flood Commission

Brisbane

Dear Sirs,

We have lived at [REDACTED] Oxley, Brisbane for the best part of thirty years. There have been a number of episodes of flooding over the years but nothing like the recent event of January 2011. In January this year our house was underwater – the downstairs area flooded completely, the upstairs living areas were flooded up to the top of the kitchen bench. Naturally the house suffered significant damage and consequently has been gutted (carpets ripped out, wall cladding ripped out throughout with cupboards (kitchen, master bedroom dressing table, lounge room display unit) destroyed by the water. Naturally many possessions (white goods, electrical goods, beds, mattresses, furniture and personal effects) were also destroyed. The house is presently uninhabitable though with the help of our insurance we have made a start on the repairs.

I would like to comment as follows:

- a) The preparation and planning for the 2010/2011 floods: The authorities haven't used Wivenhoe Dam as it was meant to be used. It is supposed to be there for flood mitigation. There has been a serious lack of planning. As far as infrastructure is concerned, nothing has been built since the days of Sir Joh Beljke Petersen. For almost 20 years we have had nothing but inactivity. Yet the population has grown enormously which has led the government to look upon Wivenhoe primarily for water storage. That was not its intended purpose.

I am also of the opinion that if Wivenhoe had been run properly, the operators should have been letting out water much earlier than they did. The various levels of government officials and MPs responsible for overseeing the running of Wivenhoe earn big bucks for the jobs they do and they are not being paid to take the weekend off during an emergency.

I am also concerned about the issue of public health. On the Friday before the floods (Friday 7 January) I and one of my neighbours noticed sewage bubbling up from a grate in the road outside number [REDACTED]. This has happened repeatedly in times of flood and it is always from the same vent. The matter was reported to the Council.

- b) ---

- c) All aspects of the response to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community and measures taken to protect life and private property...

There was a lack of notice. We needed more notice of the impending floods. If we had been warned earlier we would have had time to salvage more belongings. If family, friends and neighbours had at least been advised to stay home from work on Tuesday 11 January, we would have been able to salvage so much more which would have been, financially, a better outcome. As it was, we were only able to start moving goods out with the help of friends and family who only arrived home from work late on the afternoon of Tuesday 11 January. This was way too late. And I just fail to see how there could be any excuse for the warnings being so late. After the catastrophic flood in Toowoomba which was reported on the evening news on TV on Monday 10 January, why was no warning issued for the area downstream of Wivenhoe?

Furthermore, we feel that the communication when it did finally arrive was inadequate. The information we received was not adequate for what was going to happen. We (in Oxley) received word to go to Darra to collect sand bags. But our house (like every house in our street) ended up about fifteen feet underwater so what good were sandbags for that? I wasted two hours standing in a queue for sandbags at Darra when, instead, I should have been at home packing up as much of the house as I could.

It was reported in the press that Campbell Newman cancelled his annual leave just prior to the floods as he knew what was about to befall the city. Why was he not allowed to give out the flood warning? Why did we have to wait for an announcement from the Premier? Why the delay?

I also feel very strongly that there has been a lack of support, since the flood, for those who were seriously affected. Wivenhoe has not been managed for the purpose that it was intended. Much of the flooding was caused by the water releases being made too late. The responsibility rests with the state government. They caused the cataclysmic convergence of the releases from the dam, which made the flooding worse. But they haven't really supported people after the floods which they, the government, exacerbated. After the 1974 floods, the government paid for new kitchens, new internal walls and repainting for anyone who was uninsured. This time, the average person has received \$1 000 from the Federal Government and \$2 000 from the Premier's Fund. This is hardly good enough from a government which was asleep at the wheel and didn't even bother to give adequate warning for people to salvage their possessions. And on top of that the Premier has the nerve to ask us to "dig deep" to fix up her mess. The fall out from these January floods is a big financial burden on thousands of families. *And the people are supposed to "dig deep"?* Where was the Premier when she should have been doing her job to protect Queenslanders? She didn;t manage to "dig deep" to Many people are now faced with major repair bills if their insurers are not prepared to accept their claims.

- d) Essential services: Well done.
e) ---

f) Implementation of the operation plans for dams...and in particular the Wivenhoe and Somerset release strategy

It would seem that operations plans for Wivenhoe need to be reviewed and updated more regularly by more people than are involved in this process at present.

If Wivenhoe had been run properly, the operators should have been letting out water much earlier than they did. The various levels of government officials and MPs responsible for overseeing the running of Wivenhoe earn big bucks for the jobs they do and they are not being paid to take the weekend off during an emergency.

g) All aspects of land use planning through local and regional planning systems to minimise infrastructure and property impacts from floods

Given the level of the 1974 floods, given the fact that the 1974 floods were not a 'one in 100 years' event but a 'twice in 40 years' event, given the area's history of repeated flooding episodes since, it seems only practical to suggest that our street, [REDACTED], Oxley should have been left as a green area.

Yours faithfully,

Vivienne Rogers