

## Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

Submission by:

Merthyr Village Shopping Centre

Jezreel Pty Ltd

Sostenuto Pty Ltd

C/- Alf Sorbello and Matthew Sorbello

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Jezreel Pty Ltd (Jezreel) and Sostenuto Pty Ltd (Sostenuto) together own in excess of 13,000 square metres of mixed use property at New Farm (including the Merthyr Village Shopping Centre) that was directly affected by the flood event in January 2011. These properties are bordered by Merthyr Road, Brunswick Street and Welsby Street.

The damage caused was extensive and the costs of repair associated with this flood event are significant. At this point in time we estimate the costs incurred as a direct consequence are in the order of \$400,000. These costs are however on-going as are numerous other future potential problems which will result in further cost. Add to this the considerable financial setbacks that most of the retail traders have experienced and will continue to experience for an uncertain and lengthy period of time.

It is our understanding that the primary purpose of the Wivenhoe Dam being built was a flood mitigation measure. **The fact that the Wivenhoe Dam has for numerous years also been considered South-East Queensland's primary source of water supply is unacceptable.** An alternate water supply would allow the Wivenhoe Dam to operate solely as a flood mitigation measure (as we understand was intended). Had the Wivenhoe Dam been available solely for flood mitigation the flood event experienced in January would have been significantly reduced if not avoided completely.

**It is simply unfathomable that South-East Queensland relies on one piece of infrastructure (the Wivenhoe Dam) for both flood mitigation and water supply. These are two absolutely critical purposes that should never be subject to conflict.** It should be noted that the Merthyr Village Shopping Centre would not exist in its current form if the Wivenhoe Dam had not been built for flood mitigation.

As a result of the unnecessary conflict between purposes for the Wivenhoe Dam the long range weather became significantly more critical. However it is alleged that the long range forecast by most weather experts advising that the 2010/2011 summer would experience considerably more rain than normal was ignored. The Queensland government may be proved to have been negligent in this regard.

There was a reluctance to lower the Wivenhoe Dam level despite this forecast. In fact there seemed to be a desperate need to retain 100% water storage in the Wivenhoe Dam. However, somewhat confusingly, when concerns were raised over water quality during and after the flood as a result of damage and contamination of water infrastructure, the State government spruiked the benefits of the recently constructed desalination plant and other sources of water supply (the water grid) for South-East Queensland.

If these alternate water sources were available in a time of emergency, why couldn't they also be available during usual operations? Or at least to provide comfort to the operators of the Wivenhoe Dam that releasing the water supply to below 100% in light of unprecedented rainfall was not a difficult decision. Rather it should have been a decision of common sense. **Why if these apparently reliable alternatives are available in an emergency should holding a level of 100% water storage within the dams be the most critical consideration?**

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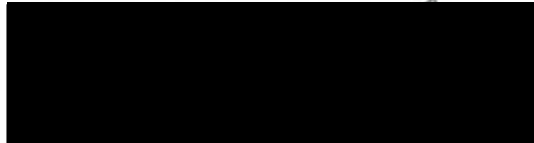
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It is our understanding that the property industry is the largest private sector contributor to the Queensland economy and also the single largest source of the State's tax revenue providing 35% of the State's revenue. Additionally the property sector is the State's largest employer, providing over 300,000 jobs. Sostenuto and Jezreel alone pay in excess of \$350,000 in Land Tax per annum. It is unconscionable that the State government does not use this revenue to fund further flood mitigation and alternative water supply infrastructure. These options include, increases the height of the Wivenhoe Dam wall, new flood mitigation or water supply dams, desalination plants etc.

It should be noted that the cost of these infrastructure assets will pale in insignificance to the cost of repair to property, person and business experienced during the January 2011 flood event alone. Not to mention that the infrastructure is not a once off benefit but will continue to provide certainty of water supply and / or flood mitigation for the people of Queensland for generations to come.

**If South-East Queensland chooses to utilise, inhabit and develop areas that are subject to flooding, then effective and dedicated flood mitigation infrastructure is not an option but is simply a necessity. Anything short of this is unacceptable.**



DIRECTOR.