

STATEMENT TO QLD FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

NAME: Mr Anthony Martini

OCCUPATION: Executive Officer - Moreton Bay Region Local Disaster Management Group

DATE OF STATEMENT: 4 May 2011

I, ANTHONY MARTINI of c/- Moreton Bay Regional Council (MBRC), 220 Gympie Road, Strathpine, Queensland, Executive Officer of the Moreton Bay Region Local Disaster Management Group, being under oath, say as to the points raised in the letter:

In relation to preparation and planning by MBRC:

- Allegation that MBRC's Local Disaster Management Plan was not adequate

MBRC's consolidated Disaster Management Plan (DMP) was developed in conjunction with Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) and their respective 'Content for Local Disaster Management Guidelines'. The DMP was reviewed by the MBRC Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) and EMQ.

The plan was endorsed by the DDMG at its meeting of 10 February 2010. EMQ approved the DMP in March 2010. MBRC approved the DMP at its 23 March 2010 Coordination Meeting. Plan signed by the chair of the LDMG on 13 April 2010 and by the DDC on 16 April 2010. LDMG advised of the adoption of the DMP on 12 May 2010.

Copies of the DMP were placed in MBRC libraries and on MBRC's web page in late May 2010.

- Allegation that MBRC should have but did not provide regular information on evacuation procedures and centres prior to a disaster occurring

MBRC notes that this is an area where improvement is needed.

MBRC has made a number of decisions since the 11 January 2011 event which will improve its ability to effectively work, engage and consult with the community about disaster management within the Moreton Bay region.

MBRC has, or is currently:

1. establishing a dedicated, fully equipped LDCC at Strathpine. All future events will be conducted from this facility;
2. providing more water (stream) level monitoring gauges;
3. examining early warning systems, which will provide improved advance warning of events which may threaten lives and property;
4. hiring senior staff experienced and dedicated to MBRC disaster management;

5. improving the information content on MBRC's web page dedicated to disaster (emergency) management, including a portal to be employed during events which should enhance information on the event to residents;
 6. examining social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter;
 7. continuing its work on the Regional Flood Database (RFD) which will provide enhanced flood information, mapping and modelling for residents;
 8. reviewing its DMP (and sub plans);
 9. reviewing its communication processes and systems;
 10. established 15 evacuation centres across the Moreton Bay region and published these on the MBRC web page;
- Allegation that MBRC should have but did not provide free access to detailed individual flood maps on its website

As per previous advices to the Flood Commission of Inquiry, MBRC embarked upon a three year study (Regional Flood Database (RFD)) well in advance of the 11 January 2011 flooding event to refine existing data and to provide quality information where there is little or no information at present. The RFD, once completed, will provide flood information from the following perspectives:

1. river, creeks and waterway;
2. over land flow;
3. storm tide/surge; and
4. climate change/sea level rise.

At the time of the flooding, the flood maps for MBRC were (and are) incomplete. This was the main reason that the maps were not provided on the MBRC web page. Part of this 'gap' is associated with the Burpengary Creek catchment. There are large sections of the region, predominantly in the former Caboolture region, which had little or no flood information, which could be relied upon, to advise of low lying and flood prone areas; certainly very little information for use as a modelling and predicative tool.

In relation to the response by MBRC:

- Allegation that information provided by MBRC to the public, other elected officials, and the media, during the flood events was inadequate. In particular, that MBRC:
 - did not provide information on where to evacuate and how to get there safely

The centres within the Caboolture flood affected area were largely either unavailable – by being deemed not accessible, being under renovation or in the form of another use, for example the Caboolture Memorial Hall, which was (and is) being used as a temporary library. (People were accommodated in this latter facility during the 11 January 2011.)

The Strathpine Community Centre was opened at operated (by Red Cross) as an evacuation centre during 11 January 2011.

(The evacuation centres across MBRC were reviewed after the 11 January 2011 event, using the event's flood information. The web page now provides information on 15 evacuation centres (and their status) across MBRC.)

Due to problems with communication systems and stranded media staff, communication generally about the event was limited until later in the afternoon

/ early evening of 11 January 2011, other than BOM, EMQ and QPS information.

Routes are not normally defined, as these may be the subject themselves of change / flooding.

- did not provide information on what areas were low lying and expected to flood, or on expected flood peaks and times

MBRC's response is as per the above dot point regarding the Regional Flood Database study.

In addition, the ability to provide information was limited following the release of the Emergency Alerts (EA) where communications were hampered.

The ability to estimate the timing of peak flood events was also difficult, in that the event was not like other events for the period, where forecast predictions of when a (river/creek) system would peak and at what height a number of hours in advance of the peak occurring.

- did not give residents information on where to get sandbags

Sandbag information was put on MBRC's website on 29 October 2010 with instructions and availability of sandbags, i.e. addresses and depots where they would be available.

The SES Local Controller also made local media statements prior to the 11 January 2011 event about sandbags being available at SES depots. He continued to include this information in his media releases for SES. The intention being, that sandbags were to be available at the SES depots through to Feb 2011.

- did not provide accurate and timely information about road closures

MBRC communicates information about road conditions, such as road closures, roads passable with care etc, via the methods of communication listed below. On 11 January 2011, reports were published at the following times:

1. 0644;
2. 0908;
3. 1226;
4. 1251 (Gympie Rd – TMR road);
5. 1436; and
6. 1612

Another update report was in progress at about 1700 hours but was terminated when the Petrie depot (where reports are generated from) lost power. Power was not restored until later that evening.

The roads report is sent to many agencies and media outlets as per the following list:

1. Channel 7
2. ABC TV and radio
3. Austereo radio stations
4. Traffic network

5. Caboolture News
6. Quest
7. Queensland Newspapers
8. Brisbane Times
9. 101.5 FM
10. 99.7FM
11. Australian Radio Network
12. Prime radio
13. RACQ
14. Redcliffe City News
15. Channel 10
16. Channel 9
17. 4BC
18. Nova
19. River 949
20. QAS (x2)
21. Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals
22. Energex (x2)
23. SES
24. QPS (multiple)
25. Unitywater
26. QFRS (x2)
27. TMR
28. DCS
29. EMQ
30. Internal MBRC Councillors staff (multiple)

The accuracy of the reports on the day was subject to the rapidly changing conditions and staff's ability to get to locations or to get to any locations on multiple occasions during the event, particularly on 11 January 2011. Reports continued to be provided for 11 January 2011 to the same distribution list.

- o did not provide regular, timely updates to the media

See above dot point with regard to road condition reports. MBRC media representatives were caught for five hours on the Bruce Highway, (between Burpengary and Morayfield) and were affected by loss of mobile communications for a significant period of this delay. The first updates, other than that through BOM, EMQ and QPS were as follows:

1. 0840 – Mayor speaks with Rebecca Livingstone (612 ABC radio) – provides update;
2. 1249 – draft release completed – however unable to contact LDCC to check content and accuracy of information, consequently release not issued. Media representatives then endeavoured to get to LDCC and were stranded en route for many hours, most of which without communication generally, and particularly with the LDCC. Media team eventually arrive at LDCC approximately 1800 hrs.
3. 1644 – Deputy chair of LDMG speaks with Phil Smith (612 ABC);
4. 1859 - Evacuation centre update;
5. 2022 – Situation update; and
6. 2042 – Situation update

There were various releases on 12 January 2011 continuing through the next few days. The releases on 12 January 2011 were as follows:

1. 0627 – Road closure report;
2. 0709 – Evacuation centre update;
3. 0842 – Road closure report;
4. 1046 – Road closure report;
5. 1050 – Situation update – waters receding;
6. 1358 – Situation update;
7. 1455 – web information;
8. 1526 – Road closure report;
9. 1622 – Situation update;
10. 1624 – Road closure report;
11. 1724 – Situation update;
12. 1739 – Mayor interviewed – 4BC – Gary Hargrave;
13. 1807 – Mayor interviewed – 612 ABC – News;

In addition, the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) was provided with formal situation reports from the LDCC throughout the event.

- sent evacuation messages in some instances after residents were isolated by floodwater

The evacuation messages were not sent by LDMG or LDCC. MBRC understands that these messages were authorised by the DDC.

- did not brief its call centre officers about evacuations before the evacuation message was sent

The evacuation messages were not sent by LDMG or LDCC.

- Allegation that MBRC was not 'visible' during the flood events (i.e. Councillors were not on television and radio to provide information, directions and reassurance). In particular, that the Deputy Mayor, Greg Chippendale, or another senior Councillor did not 'take charge' in the Mayor's absence on 11 January 2011.

The event coincided with the Council being in recess, from 14 December 2010 through to 18 January 2011 inclusive. The chair of the LDMG was overseas, the deputy chair was at the Sunshine Coast (and stranded by the flood waters). The Mayor was on Moreton Island (and as the day progressed stranded on Moreton Island). There were no Councillors present in the Council's Caboolture Office. The decision was made, to not wait, but to establish the LDCC immediately.

Contact was made with the deputy chair during the day, when communication systems allowed. The deputy chair made a media statement (612 ABC radio) at 1644 on 11 January 2011.

- Allegation that the creation of evacuation centres was poorly organised. In particular, that:
 - the Caboolture RSL Club was an inappropriate location for an evacuation centre because it had limited access and was not available or overnight accommodation;

The RSL was used as a temporary measure. It was not intended to be used as an overnight stay facility. As the day progressed, more people came to the CBD, largely without transport, as a result of the concern over the emergency alerts and as Queensland Rail (QR) were not providing service past Caboolture.

Temporary accommodation was provided in the temporary Caboolture Library (Caboolture Memorial Hall), the Council's office foyer and then later into Council's King Street building.

- the Caboolture Council building was an inappropriate location for an evacuation centre because it was accessible by swipe-card only;

Council's King Street (level 3) building was an appropriate facility – it could accommodate comfortably one hundred people. It had kitchen and toilet facilities. It had lift access. It was accessed by a swipe card and Council officers managed to transfer all people from the other temporary facilities (RSL, library and foyer and Hospital chapel) into this facility. Two officers remained with these people during the course of their stay to facilitate movement via swipe card and were the information conduits between LDCC and the people themselves. All people within the facility were transported by mid evening to a location they sought or were accommodated overnight at the facility established at Dakabin by a combination of vehicles, including twin cabs, a small (12 seater) and large bus by early evening.

- that informal evacuation centres were established because of insufficient information about formal evacuation centres;

The centres within the Caboolture flood affected area were either unavailable – by being deemed not accessible, being under renovation or in the form of another use, for example the Caboolture Memorial Hall, which was (and is) being used as a temporary library. People were accommodated in this latter facility during 11 January 2011.

The Strathpine Community Centre was opened and operated (by Red Cross) as an evacuation centre during 11 January 2011.

(The evacuation centres across MBRC were reviewed after the 11 January 2011 event, using the event's flood information. The MBRC web page now provides information on 15 evacuation centres (and their status) across the Moreton Bay region.)

- Allegation that MBRC in its response suffered from a lack of local knowledge

Without any context, this broad statement is unable to be answered and is disputed by MBRC.

- Allegation that MBRC's system for warning residents of expected flooding from North Pine Dam releases was inadequate. In particular, that:

- some residents did not receive a warning

The current warning system is largely set up to provide advice to the residents, media outlets, agencies and MBRC Councillors and staff when Seqwater advises that they will be releasing water from North Pine Dam. As a result, of the dam water release, Youngs Crossing Road will be closed. Residents have some forewarning to relocate any assets/belongings they have which may be affected by the release.

The LDCC, through the police had organised a door knock within the Torrens Road area (police have submitted e-mails to the Commission, as I understand,

about this matter, and the extent of the door knock) to forewarn residents of the water release from North Pine Dam and to be aware and monitor their local surroundings and be prepared to self evacuate if necessary. As the day/event progressed, Seqwater advised of greater quantities of water to be released from North Pine Dam. At this stage, the LDCC sought to send an emergency alert (EA) to residents within the deemed affected area (polygon), however, by the time it was ready to be sent, the system had already peaked.

- some residents did not know about the warning system

MBRC notes this point.

A public meeting was held on 7 February 2011 (details of which are contained within the submission to the Flood Commission of Inquiry – Dr Peter Hackney, on behalf of the North Pine Residents Association (NPRA)). MBRC has developed a series of polygons of affected areas based on certain flood events. Depending upon the scale of the event, the amount of residents/properties affected varies.

The outcome of this meeting was that MBRC would develop a data base of affected properties, based upon a number of flood scenarios. This has been done and will be discussed in June 2011 with the NPRA.

- the register for the warning system is not up to date or maintained

The current warning system is largely set up to provide advice to the residents, media outlets, agencies and MBRC Councillors and staff when Seqwater advises that they will be releasing water from North Pine Dam. As a result, Youngs Crossing Road will be closed. And residents have some forewarning to relocate any assets/belongings they have which may be affected by the release.

The current system is not to advise of a major flooding event. The current system has been augmented over the past year. The register is maintained. MBRC will review the register by no later than the end of August each year.

All the facts sworn to in this affidavit are true and correct to my knowledge and belief except as stated otherwise.

Sworn by ANTHONY MARTINI at
Strathpine this 4th day of May 2011
before me, Angus James Conaghan:

Solicitor