

Submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

Amendment to the submission of March 2011 by Geoffrey Cossins
to the Floods Commission of Inquiry

In the last two lines on page 2 and in the last three lines of paragraph 1 on page 3 of the above submission I stated that a rough estimate the discharge from Wivenhoe Dam had added "something like 1 000 cumecs to the river out of the 11 000 cumecs recorded at Savages Crossing" and that it made nonsense of the claim that this release formed 80 percent of the peak flood flow in Brisbane.

I wish to retract that statement as the "rough estimate" was based on a misunderstanding of the inadequate data then available to me and clearly is not supported by the presently available data. I now suggest that the Wivenhoe contribution to the peak flow was more like 5 000 cumecs which is a sizeable proportion of the Brisbane flood flow.

In spite of the above I still consider that the operators carried out a magnificent professional job in the most difficult of circumstances. It may be said, and I am certain that it has been, that if the release from Wivenhoe had been increased earlier at a low rate when the third storm started it would not have been necessary later to have released at such a high rate on to the peak of the Brisbane River flood. This effect could be evaluated but it would have required all personnel concerned in the forecasting and operation to have foreseen the timing, the spatial distribution and the detailed rainfall distribution of the forthcoming storm before it happened. In my 27 years as operator of Somerset Dam I always wanted to know where, when and how much. Meteorology has advanced enormously since my early days and meteorologists are extremely cooperative in flood situations but the science has still not developed to the stage where it is possible to predict these requirements to the level desired for the practicable operation of flood mitigation dams. There is a fortune awaiting the first to crack the secret.

And O the wisdom of hindsight! One group has worked out a marvellous system of releases from Wivenhoe which would have resulted (according to them) in only minor flooding in Brisbane by ramping up the releases from the dam as early as January 7th before even the primary storm, let alone the other two storms, and keeping up the discharge until January 14th. Did I say hindsight? The amount of foresight required would have outclassed even the most experienced clairvoyant. My remark at the end of the above paragraph still stands.


G COSSINS
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