

**IN THE QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No.1) 2011**


STATEMENT OF MAYOR, COUNCILLOR PETER MAXWELL TAYLOR

I, PETER MAXWELL TAYLOR care of Toowoomba Regional Council at 153 Herries Street, Toowoomba in the State of Queensland, Mayor of Toowoomba Regional Council, can say as follows:

1. I became Mayor of the Toowoomba Regional Council following the election of 15 March 2008. Prior to this, I served on the Jondaryan Shire Council as Councillor from March 1979 to 14 March 2008. I was Mayor of Jondaryan Shire Council from April 1994 until 14 March 2008.
2. Before the flash flood in Toowoomba city, I was kept informed of ongoing flooding in the Toowoomba region. Some parts of the Toowoomba region, such as Millmerran and Cecil Plains had suffered significant flooding before the flash flood in Toowoomba city. Some of the rural areas in particular had been isolated and had suffered quite a lot of flooding.
3. At the time of the flash flood in Toowoomba city on 10 January 2011, I was attending a meeting of the Local Disaster Management Group ("LDMG"). The LDMG was activated on 10 January 2011 when we held a meeting to discuss the ongoing flooding in the region and the high rainfalls occurring at that time. Councillor Noel Strohfeldt chaired the LDMG meeting. This was Councillor Noel Strohfeldt's responsibility as I had appointed him to this portfolio sometime previously.
4. I attended the 10 January 2011 LDMG meeting and I continue to attend all of the LDMG meetings so that I am up to date on events and issues. By staying up to date, I have been assisted in my tasks of managing media communication and personally fielding public inquiries and phone calls.

Statement of Peter Maxwell Taylor
Filed on behalf of:
Toowoomba Regional Council

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5. My roles during the flooding event included being the liaison and the public voice of the Council, providing information and advice to the public, and providing interviews to the media.

6. After the LDMG meeting on 10 January 2011, I walked down the streets of Toowoomba as the water was receding. I walked throughout the city areas including along Victoria Street past the Library and the West Creek area, and down into Russell Street. I walked across to East Creek while Emergency Service workers were working and pulling vehicles out of flooded areas. I noticed a huge Emergency Services response including from Emergency Services workers, Police and Council workers. I believe they had responded very quickly to everything that was happening.

7. I estimate that in the week following 10 January, alone, I would have received hundreds of media enquiries. One of the issues that became apparent from the enquiries directed to me was that there was some public misconception about the region's dams. It seemed that some people believed that Council was about to release water from its dams. This was not the case, because Council's dams don't have flood gates, but have spillways. Spillways allow the water to spill over once it reaches the top, but they don't provide the ability to regulate releases as through flood gates. Another misconception that seemed to have been held was that Cooby Dam had cracks in it and would possibly fail, leading to additional flooding in the town of Oakey.

8. I fielded many enquiries about what had actually happened in Toowoomba, such as how flooding could happen on top of the Great Dividing Range. I was continuously, day and night, contacted by local media, radio stations wanting updates, television stations wanting updates and journalists from Australia and around the world wanting interviews so much of my time was involved in liaison. I was continually attending the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and making sure that I was up-to-date and then as best I could conveying that information to the media and others enquirers.

9. At all times, the operational side of disaster management was handled by the LDMG, particularly, Council's CEO, SES head and the other Agencies which were all gathered together at the LDMG.



10. The main contacts I had from both State and Federal levels were from the Premier, Ministers, and Prime Minister. I spoke with both the Premier and the Prime Minister about the events very shortly after they unfolded. They were offering support. Other Ministers of the State and Federal Governments also offered support. Early on, Mr Simon Crean, the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, following the Prime Minister's call, was in contact with me. A number of members of Parliament and others were contacting me about what they could do to help. As things eventuated, we did not need to call on the offers of help. During the flood, such help could not get to where it would have been useful. When the floods subsided, that help was no longer required.

11. The Singaporean Air Force Commander from the Oakey Army Aviation Base contacted my Office offering operational support in the form of a helicopter which they were able to get approval from Singapore to operate.

12. At one point when we weren't able to get our own helicopter, I contacted the Commander of the Army Aviation Centre from Oakey who was acting in another position at that time in Brisbane to be assured that when we did need a helicopter, one would be available. We had towns isolated such as Cecil Plains, Millmerran and Jondaryan. In the Lockyer Valley at that time there were people being searched for, so there was a high priority for helicopters. I was assured that if we needed to get a helicopter to get people or supplies in and out of our isolated towns, we would be able to get a helicopter. There seemed to be some delay in getting that organised before that time.

Dated:

30th

March 2011.


Councillor Peter Maxwell Taylor