

David Findlay

12<sup>th</sup> April 2011

To whom it may concern,

I'm am writing this submission to the flood inquiry in order to raise the issue of media publication of warnings issued by the BOM. I believe the media response is an area of critical importance and should be carefully examined by the inquiry.

On the Tuesday the week of the flood, I was working in Strathpine. Due to my interest in weather I was aware of the potentially looming situation. At the location where I was working I was only able to listen to FM radio stations. I alternated between Nova 106.9 and B105 throughout the day. I was quite frustrated at the general lack of information being broadcast. The information that was broadcast was limited. It was either paraphrased or abbreviated from BOM forecasts and warnings and didn't provide much practical useful information.

Early in the day the BOM added the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal for it's warnings. The purpose of this emergency signal or "cyclone siren", is to get the listener's attention so that he or she realises that extremely important information is about to be broadcast. The BOM only uses this in the most severe emergencies. Despite the request, it would seem that many commercial broadcasters did not use the signal. Nova 106.9 did, but only in a token fashion. They played it at low volume for a few seconds then just continued with an abbreviated paraphrased warning that did not contain all critical information. If you weren't paying attention you could easily have missed it entirely. This may have delayed some people realising how serious the Brisbane Flood situation was.

I would invite the inquiry to investigate all commercial broadcasters, checking recordings of the broadcasts during the flood event. This would reveal how well the radio and TV stations performed in this event. I would suggest that even had the BOM issued a warning for Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley flooding event, most people would have not noticed it. Those who did would have not understood it's true importance.

I would also like to propose some changes be made to the Broadcasting Services Act(1992). It should be ammended so that all broadcasters in a warning area where the BOM has requested the use of the SEWS, be required by law to do use it. There should be guidelines that require them to play the SEWS for ten seconds at full audio volume, followed by a complete unaltered reading of the BOM issued warning. They should be required to do this at least once every 15 minutes. There should be criminal penalties for both corporations and individuals who breach.

This measure would ensure that when the BOM is able to get warnings of severe natural disasters to the public clearly, accurately and in a timely fashion.

I would also like to suggest consideration of requiring the commercial broadcasters to inform listeners of the ABC Local Radio frequencies in the area. ABC Local Radio is the offical emergency services station. During a natural disaster they provide rolling coverage with the most up to date

information. Many younger people do not listen to the ABC and wouldn't even know their frequency. Many don't even have an AM radio. Providing the additional information of where to tune to get more up to date information would be effective for reaching these people.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. I apologise for the lateness of this submission.

Yours sincerely

David Findlay