

Re: Flood & Dam Management

Attention: Commissioner – The Honourable Justice Catherine Holmes

Dear Commissioner,

I am a simple man, so please excuse me if my terminology is not exact. However I felt compelled to correspond with you following the terrible floods that have created so much anxiety, despair and heartbreak for so many.

I was one of the lucky ones who were not directly affected by this catastrophic event. My grave concerns are as follows:-

- 1) Given that Wivenhoe Dam was never meant to have as its primary purpose the storage of water to supply Brisbane and surrounds with drinking water. It was from my recollection, built in 1984 to mitigate against floods like the 1974 event in which I was directly affected. And it was never meant to be more than 40% full for that very reason.
- 2) If in fact the issue in item one herein is true, how then was the Wivenhoe allowed to end up at almost 90% capacity, with all and sundry being well aware that an El Nina (hope that is correct) effect was going to prevail during our wet season and beyond.
- 3) How was the dam allowed to fill to in excess of 170% with no contingency plan brought to action well prior to the dam management being forced to dump some 645000+ mega litres out of the dam in one day? The flooding of Brisbane/Ipswich was inevitable given that amount of discharge in one hit. Why were they not releasing water long before a level of even 75% was reached given the obvious knowledge of the weather systems being forecast to hit the catchment areas?
- 4) How can the dam management argue that they were following the “operating manual” for dam management? If that is true, then the people responsible for creating and commissioning the operating manual are surely culpable.

Commissioner, I have read and listened with great interest over the past month to very well credentialed Hydrologists and Engineers who have all confirmed that the flood would have been avoided if the dam management had done their jobs properly.

Without wishing to appear too cynical, however I am not on my own with this one, one would be forgiven for thinking that the political pressure on the dam management was so intense, particularly in light of the damning evidence to suggest that successive governments in Queensland have been derelict in their responsibilities to their constituents, by not building proper water storage to accommodate the significant migration of people who have come to live in Queensland, in particular SE Queensland, a fact that these governments continually bragged about to anyone who would listen for many years.

Commissioner, from what I have read about you, you are certainly very much your own person, and will deliver a report that is both accurate and truthful, and importantly will be non political.

For this enquiry to properly address the issues that actually caused the problem there must be people held accountable for the obvious mismanagement that caused this dreadful event. There are times in history when society has an opportunity to demonstrate its quality of character, or unfortunately otherwise I can only hope this is one time where we can all be proud of the unbiased information given to the people.

In closing, may I say that I wish you well in what will undoubtedly be a very taxing task, even for an experienced legal mind such as yours. I also trust that all Queenslanders at the very least will be privy to all of the report, and not have someone tell us that there are parts that we cannot see due to this or that, rest assured that will not wash with the people of Queensland.

Thank you.

Edward Williamson