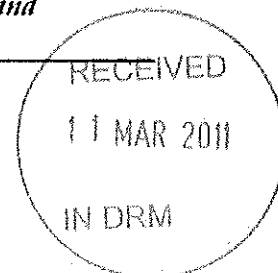


# MURWEH SHIRE COUNCIL

*in Cosmos Country ..... Outback Queensland*



The Honourable Justice Catherine Holmes  
 Commissioner  
 Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry  
 PO Box 1738  
 BRISBANE QLD 4001

#1553154  
 17/e 535379/3

Dear Justice Holmes

**Re: Submission to the Flood Commission of Inquiry.**

I am the Mayor of Murweh Shire, having held the position since March 2004.  
 I have been a resident of Charleville since 1986.

I have experienced, and suffered significant financial loss, in every flooding event since 1986.

**I submit that in small communities the structure of the LDMG and DDMG needs review.**

Firstly, in small communities, such as Charleville and Augathella, local knowledge of conditions and key people can be the difference between successful management of a disaster and a failure.

Within Murweh Shire the LDMG is comprised of;

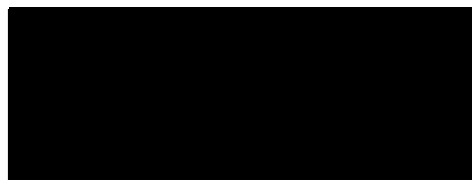
- Shire reps
- Police (local) and other emergency agencies
- EMQ and SES
- Community representatives such as Qld Health, Education, DERM, Main Roads

The DDMG is comprised of;

- Shire reps
- Police (district) and other emergency agencies
- EMQ and SES
- Community representatives such as Qld Health, Education, DERM, Main Roads

*All correspondence to be addressed to:-*

The Office of the Mayor  
 Murweh Shire Council  
 PO Box 63  
 CHARLEVILLE Q 4470



It is my experience that during 2008 and 2010-11 flooding events, other than Police, many of the other agencies mentioned are represented by the same individuals at both LDMG and DDMG levels.

During 2010 a situation arose where after the LDMG meeting at Council chambers, many of the participants walked to the Police station for the DDMG meeting. As flood water rose and access was restricted it became time consuming to bounce between these meetings.

I am quite aware that district decisions need to be made that do not affect an individual council, however, in our region, (south west), each local council is very conscious of the impact of its decisions on other councils. For example, the closure of the highway from Quilpie, at Charleville, needs to be advised at least 2 hours in advance so that Quilpie people can get to Charleville. Any LDMG decisions in Murweh, regarding the road closure take that fact into account. The problem arises that Main Roads and Police make that decision at a District level and may not be aware of the likely users of the road.

Unfortunately, it is always possible that at any one time we may have a new Inspector of Police and a new Main Roads District Manager. This is the case as I write. These officers have little local knowledge. The current arrangement puts unnecessary burdens on these two officers, slows down the decision making process and can lead to errors of information and decision.

Secondly, statements to the media in a crisis, especially in small communities should be handled exclusively by the Chair of the LDMG. This refers to statements regarding matters such as evacuations, water heights (actual and potential), the timing of information updates and many other immediate issues during a crisis.

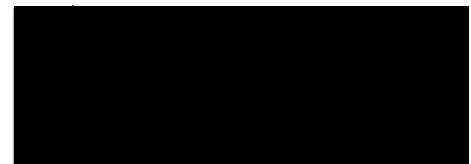
It is my experience that well intentioned DDMG representatives have made inaccurate media pronouncements based on information from people who do not have accurate information. It is worth remembering that the public do not know the difference between LDMG and DDMG and again in small communities the public look to the council for their information and support.

Thirdly, it is my experience that decisions made by DDMG on requests from LDMG are not necessarily confirmed to the LDMG. Therefore plans based on these requests may be inappropriate if DDMG does not activate an LDMG request.

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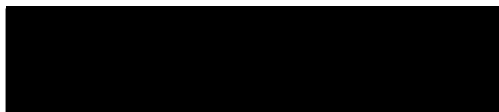


Fourthly, it is my experience that during the 2010-11 floods, an expensive food resupply was made to Charleville that in my opinion was totally unnecessary. At no time was the community without reasonable supplies of milk (fresh), bread and basic groceries. In fact, some of these fresh supplies were being offered back east to communities such as Roma and Miles. Again, in small communities, the local authority is where these decisions should be made. In the event described above, I was asked to provide council assistance for this food resupply and advised the Air Force that it was unnecessary. The resupply went ahead anyway.

In summary, I recommend that in smaller, remote communities, decision making 'emergency' powers be given to the LDMG. This should include road closures, (including state controlled roads), school closures etc.

It is a reality in remote Queensland that the local authority will be held responsible for decisions made during a disaster. Local government should therefore have authority to deliver on this responsibility.

Yours faithfully



Cr Mark O'Brien  
Mayor

9<sup>th</sup> March 2011

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