

Submission to Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry by Barbara Newton

I reside at [REDACTED] Jindalee - a property which was not flooded in 1974 or 2011. (I did not live in the area at the time of the 1974 flood so I had no knowledge of local flood levels.) I am making a submission to give voice to so many local people who are unable to do so as they are still trying to put their lives back together. I have made a point of encouraging people to tell me their flood story.

These are my concerns:

1. No “fail safe” warning system existed to ensure people were informed that their property would be inundated.
2. Any warnings issued required further research and interpretation when time for action was limited.
3. Why did predicted flood levels at Centenary Bridge escalate from 9m on the morning of Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January to 14.2m mid afternoon without, to my knowledge, progressive level warnings being issued?
4. Why were the local suburbs which flooded not mentioned in the lists being issued/broadcast until those suburbs were being flooded?

My concerns arise from these facts:

Family members (including 3 children under the age of 6) lived close the T intersection of Curragundi Rd and Arrabri Ave so out of concern for them I was keeping up with information for Brisbane on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January this year by simultaneously listening to ABC 612 and watching Channel 9. By Tuesday morning certain low lying areas were being identified as likely to flood. Jindalee was not mentioned.

A Police Beat is located in a converted house at 31 Lanena St Jindalee and it is being claimed locally that the Police Beat was evacuated at 9am on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January. According to the BCC Floodwise Property Report for that property the lowest ground level is 8.8m above sea level and the highest is 11.9m above sea level. To my knowledge the expected flood level at Centenary Bridge at that time was 9m. I had to make a number of searches to establish whether that meant height above sea level or depth of water at that point. I discovered there is no standard system in Queensland. Further investigation from reading a Report post the 1974 flood revealed that the water level at the Centenary Bridge was most likely to be metres above sea level

I had been able to access the relevant BCC Floodwise Property Report for the house in which my family members resided but they could not before, I believe, problems arose with the website. On the Tuesday I did email the report so the family members and I could interpret the information. According to the report the lowest ground level was 9.9m above sea level and the highest ground level of the living area of the lowset house was 12.2m. This meant that on Tuesday morning with an expected flood peak of 9m at Centenary Bridge the family members’ residence would not flood and water would not even be present in the garden area.

That afternoon about 3.25pm I watched the Premier’s press conference where it was announced that the flood levels would be above 1974 levels. There are no markers locally showing the 1974 flood level or even showing height above sea level so people who were not living here during the 1974 flood simply would not know what the warning meant for

them. I am aware that people who were living here during the 1974 flood did warn neighbours, friends and business owners. After the press conference I checked online for the expected water level at Centenary Bridge and found it was now shown as 14.2m which would mean the family members' residence would be inundated – information I passed on to the family members who had not been watching TV or listening to the radio. Before the water reached their driveway, and they fled the property at 11.30 that night, we did what we could to save items. I am aware that about 11pm they had sought information by phone about when they should evacuate and understand they have complained to their State Member of Parliament about the lack of a helpful response. I know people at Westlake and Jindalee who relied on the broadcast lists of suburbs subject to flooding and were taken by surprise when the water encroached on their properties. They had also missed hearing the Premier's press conference. Flood water was present on Burrendah Rd near the park early on the evening of Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January and I understand the bridge on Sinnamon Rd inbound from the Jindalee Bowls Club may have been covered by water even earlier.

#### Further concerns

I am concerned with the lack of maintenance of natural drainage systems throughout Queensland and the ways in which that affected flood levels e.g. debris damming water etc. I have concerns also about the adequacy of drainage systems to cope with the rainfall intensity. Singapore has a well established drainage system to cope with intense rain - Brisbane does not.

The location of essential services resulted in many residences not flooded being left without power for days (and in some cases longer). This prevented many of those residents from providing support and assistance to flood victims.

Barbara Newton 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011