

QFCI

Date:

09/05/11

Jm

Exhibit Number:

319

STATEMENT OF JANET ANN CARPENTER

I, **JANET ANN CARPENTER** of [REDACTED] (Fernvale), Queensland 4306 (Date of Birth: [REDACTED]) make the following statement:

1. I give this information in relation to the flood events of 10-12 January 2011 ("the Floods") as requested by the Queensland Flood Commission of Enquiry.
2. I have been a resident of the Fernvale area for five years
3. Whilst I have never participated in a disaster management/response scheme, I volunteered in the clean up after the 1974 Floods in Brisbane and I have had some involvement in emergency responses for plant/animal disease incursions in 2004-2007 while working for what was then the Department of Primary Industries. I lived for some years on the central Queensland coast and experienced tropical cyclones and severe tropical storms.

Flood Information

4. In relation to an emergency response plan, I understand that there has been a broader Somerset Region plan in place, however this did not specifically consider the Fernvale region.
5. I do not know who our local Disaster Co-ordinator is and I have never been advised if there is in fact a Disaster Co-ordinator for the Fernvale area.

Events of Sunday 9 January 2011

6. On Sunday morning, I travelled up to Dundas, northeast of Fernvale near Wivenhoe Dam, where my horses are agisted with my friends Lynn Patchin and Bob Jennings. I took my dogs with me.

[REDACTED]
Janet Carpenter

[REDACTED]
Solicitor

7. At this time, it was raining heavily but there were no warnings of flood though the Brisbane River was running high, close to the Geoff Fisher Bridge north of Fernvale. Lynn and Bob advised that they would be happy to look after my dogs as I had indicated that I would like to go to Toowoomba to visit my family.
8. I went to Toowoomba through the Lockyer valley via Lowood and Gatton, Lockyer Creek was running strongly but the low crossings were still open. When I returned on Sunday afternoon, it was still raining heavily and Bob phoned me to advise that their property was completely cut off and I should not attempt to get to Dundas: he advised there was local creek flooding from stormwater runoff and that the dam was spreading via Kipper Creek over the Wivenhoe-Somerset Road. I responded that I would pick the dogs up after work on Monday evening: there were still no official warnings of flood and we all assumed that what we were seeing – including the local flooding around Wivenhoe Dam - was minor and transient (like previous flooding that had occurred in the area in October-December 2010).
9. I decided to return to Fernvale via the Warrego Highway and the Brisbane Valley Highway, to avoid the low crossings in the Lockyer Valley. I did consider going through Marburg to Fernvale but the creek in Marburg near the Warrego Highway exit was untrafficable (not marked as closed but I judged the water to be several meters deep, and running fast).
10. I travelled to Fernvale via the Brisbane Valley Highway and arrived safely without incident. When I arrived home, I saw that there was minor flooding in the gully (nameless) behind mine and the adjoining property.
11. Attached and marked "JC01" are photographs of the minor flooding in the gully taken at 5.45pm.

Events of Monday 10 January 2011

12. In the morning I prepared as usual to go to work (in Brisbane). It had rained all night and was still raining heavily.


Janet Carpenter


Solicitor

13. The Brisbane Valley Highway was closed – there was a “Road Closed” sign and a person – I believe a member of the Rural Fire Brigade – advised me that all roads out of Fernvale were now closed by flooding.
14. I returned home, advised my employer by email that I would not be at work and began to prepare for what I thought was a medium risk of minor flooding. My home was built some 15 years after the 1974 floods and was, I understood, well above the Q100 level. My Dundas friends, Lynn and Bob, forwarded me an email they received from Somerset Regional Business Alliance (sent at 10:36am) saying that people 'might find it useful to know that the Brisbane Valley Highway is closed at Shines Gully' (i.e. just north of the Geoff Fisher Bridge). There was still no sense of alarm, no official warning.
15. Attached and marked “JC02” is a copy of the email from Somerset Regional Business Alliance dated 10 January 2011.
16. I packed up my car with everything that I thought I would need to camp overnight (with a cat), and started securing my home and putting valuable/vulnerable items as high as I could.
17. During the day, I monitored the Bureau of Meteorology website and I could see that, amongst the general rain, there was an intense storm cell heading for Toowoomba. My daughter, who usually resides with me in Fernvale, was at the time staying with my brother in Toowoomba while attending the McGregor Summer School at USQ.
18. I texted my daughter to warn her, urging her to stay at the University and not to attempt to drive in the storm.
19. I was extremely stressed about my family in Toowoomba and was aware of the sheer volumes of water that were hitting the area. I saw the initial coverage of the flash floods in Toowoomba and heard on the radio the plight of the residents of the Upper Lockyer – Grantham, Withcott, Helidon, Murphys Creek. Clearly, this water was heading downstream and it was still raining heavily: this made me very concerned about the downstream impact in the lower Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys.

20. I heard via the media and from friends I talked to on the phone about the increasing levels in the Wivenhoe Dam, flooding around the dam, and the flooding in Redbank Creek at Esk which cut the highway and inundated the business area including the Somerset Council.
21. I kept a vigilant watch on the Bureau of Meteorology website, and I saw that there was a significant rain depression over and near our area which was not moving.
22. There was still no specific warning for the Fernvale region from the Bureau of Meteorology (or elsewhere) at this time. There was a generic warning, which I believe to have originated with the Bureau of Meteorology that people in low lying areas of the Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys should self evacuate.
23. I did not know whether this generic warning applied to the Fernvale area, or to my specific location in Fernvale. I discussed this with my neighbours, Annette and Kevin Burchmann, and we thought it would be prudent to be prepared for at least some flooding.
24. Consistent heavy rain caused the storm water drains to fail and the small (nameless) gully which runs at the rear of our properties to flood. Water was beginning to flow into my property. To avoid any risk of being trapped by rising water at night, I evacuated my house that evening. My neighbours decided to do the same.
25. There were no evacuation points I was aware of at the time that I could go to so I drove up to the ridge on Beetson Drive, the highest point I could access. I found a lay by and stayed there for the night in my car.

Events of Tuesday 11 January 2011

26. Early on the Tuesday morning, I went back to see what was happening in the Fernvale area and specifically my property.

27. I was able to drive to my house by about 9:30am, though the water was still over Banks Creek Road. I could see the water level in our gully had receded. Whilst the gully was still running strong and it was still raining, I thought that the extent that the water had receded was a sign that the worst of the flooding had passed.
28. Attached and marked "JC03" is a photograph of flooding on Banks Creek road taken at 9.35am.
29. When I reached my property, there had been water through the shed and some had come up to the house as it was wet around the doorways.
30. There was considerable damage in other parts of the town from flash flooding on Monday-Tuesday, caused by the rain. As did my neighbours, Annette and Kevin, I thought we dodged a bullet and that the flood was over. We were thankful we had survived so well.
31. We discussed the residual risk from the water coming down Lockyer Creek and Kevin mentioned the high tide in Brisbane due at 4:00pm that day. We knew - anecdotally and from the media - that water was being released from Wivenhoe Dam but assumed that it was more-or-less a constant. We thought that there was still ground for concern - the additional water from Lockyer Creek, the continuing rain, and the river systems possibly backing up with the high tide, as well as the alarmingly high levels we were hearing for the Dam. Therefore we should be prepared for at least a repeat of the flood levels of the previous day, and be prepared to evacuate.
32. During the day I was actively seeking information from the internet, through the Bureau of Meteorology website and other news websites. There were no warnings specific to the Fernvale area. There were reports that levels in the Wivenhoe Dam were raising at a rapid rate and were well in excess of 100% - closer to 200% on some reports.
33. There were still no warnings regarding flooding in the Fernvale area. I visited the Fernvale Futures centre on the Brisbane Valley Highway, where an emergency

centre had been set up. There wasn't really any more information available, beyond what I already knew.

34. Some of my neighbours sandbagged their doors and moved items and furniture as high as they could. I also continued to secure contents as high as I could, I did not see the need to sandbag as I was only expecting a couple of inches of water at most.
35. Due to the lack of warning, I feel that I was complacent regarding my flood preparations. If I had been given some indication of the severity of the flood that we were likely to endure, for example the additional water that was to be released from Wivenhoe Dam as well as the Lockyer flood peak and the high tide, I would have prepared differently.
36. By the afternoon the power was off and remained off for a number of days. However I stayed tuned on my battery powered radio for any further updates or warnings for the Fernvale area.
37. I watched the creek near my house and waited as there was nothing else that I could do. I had no family in the area and had nowhere I could go. At approximately 6.30 pm that night at around dusk, I could see the creek appeared quite full. I went into the house thinking that I should get some sleep.
38. I heard a noise behind me and when I looked back I saw that there was water at the door. From the time that I left my back porch to when the water was at my back door was approximately five minutes.
39. I grabbed my cat and my laptop and went to the car which I had left parked outside on the road. I came straight back into the house to get some other items which took me about 2-3 minutes to return. When I arrived back in the house the water was knee deep.
40. I went back out to the car and there was a young man and his wife that live on my street that had come down to see if I needed any help.

41. He came inside with me one more time to help me get some final items and at this point I was in a state of shock.
42. We were only able to get in a short distance into my house and I saw that the fridge had tipped over, the furniture was tipping over and that the water was swirling around our waists and moving fast. From the time I left and returned to the house the second time was only five minutes
43. We knew that it was too dangerous to get anything else and that we needed to get out of the house immediately. The young man told me to leave the doors open so that we would not be trapped and also so the pressure of the water would not shatter the windows.
44. I went back to my car and drove to the same lay by on Beetson Drive that I had been the night before.
45. As with the previous evening I did not know where else to go but to seek higher ground.
46. Attached and marked "JC04" is a photo of the inundation of my property at 17 Carralluma Crescent taken at 5.30am on Wednesday 12 January 2011.

Warnings

47. On 11 January 2011, I received no warning regarding flash flooding or any other kind of flooding from any person or government agency.
48. All at material times I had access to either a battery powered radio, the internet and the television and my mobile phone. None of these methods were used to warn Fernvale residents of flooding or even the large releases of water from the Wivenhoe Dam.

Flood Preparation

49. I believe that the Somerset Regional Council needed to get more information out to the Fernvale Community, especially considering that an extremely wet season was predicted for the beginning of 2011. In addition to getting information to residents regarding preparedness and the risks involved, I believe that this message would have needed to be reinforced so residents were aware of how to survive in a disaster event.
50. If I only focused on the information available in the Fernvale area, I would not have been able or ready to evacuate on the day of the floods. Due to my experiences with tropical cyclones and with the 1974 Floods, and my acute awareness of the flooding which threatened my family in Toowoomba and my friends and animals at Dundas, I decided to take early preparation measures.
51. In relation to preparation, the Somerset Regional Council has failed to provide sufficient infrastructure by way of storm water drainage for the Fernvale area to cope with any prolonged period of rain.
52. Over the last few years, there has been large scale housing development in Fernvale – mostly around the higher areas - and all indications are that this urban development will continue. It appears that this development has taken place without Council performing any overall hydrology studies and without appropriate increase in stormwater drainage capacity.
53. Established older properties such as mine are subjected to greater flood risk as a result of the new development.
54. In 2010, I placed my 1.5ha property on the market and made enquiries regarding subdivision potential (as a selling feature). I engaged surveyors from the Ipswich area, but they were unable to obtain information from the Somerset Regional Council regarding the actual Q100 levels. These levels determine whether proposed buildings will be above the 1974 flood levels.

55. A 500 unit development (with stormwater retention on-site) has been approved adjacent to my property and the nameless gully. I have had some discussions with the developer regarding an easement to carry stormwater from this development across my property to the gully. It appears from these discussions that there is little usable hydrology information regarding this gully, despite extensive development along its course – including recent construction by Council of a multimillion dollar sports centre beside the gully.
56. Upstream and downstream, once it reaches level ground – except for on my property and the 4 adjoining – the gully runs through land zoned as “open space” and its management is within the control of Council. For part of its length it is maintained as a storm drain, but this appears ineffective if the same treatment is not applied downstream.

Disaster Response

57. The original response to the floods was that of a community effort. By Monday afternoon there was a make shift Emergency Response Centre at the Fernvale Futures centre, set up by local emergency services personnel (Rural Fire Brigade, SES)..
58. Food and water was provided at the Futures centre, the local bakery also put on a barbecue and some businesses donated what they could that was not damaged to be distributed through the Emergency Response Centre.
59. I understand that at the time of the floods the Rural Fire Brigade were the only emergency response that we had and were operating on an ad hoc basis as they had not been given any warning, were not kept up to date with relevant disaster management information and they had not been sufficiently resourced to deal with such emergency.
60. I heard (after the event, in a media report quoting the Somerset Mayor) that the Somerset Regional Council had called the Australian Defence Force (“ADF”) for assistance for the region, including Fernvale. However due to flooded access and



Janet Carpenter



Solicitor

poor weather, the ADF were unable to get to Fernvale at the material time and make any steps towards preparing the region for flood.

61. The published Somerset Regional Council's Local Disaster Management Plan focuses on a centralised control point (the first two preferred locations are in Esk, with alternatives in Fernvale or Kilcoy). This assumes that a disaster would not impact communications or infrastructure, and that towns would not be isolated. The published Plan is lacking in detail and refers to other (possibly more detailed) documents which are held in Council's document management system. The Plan is dated 2008 and there is no indication that it has ever been revised or tested.
62. It was reported in the media that the Somerset Regional Council offices in Esk were inundated on Monday 10 January, the day prior to the serious floods that we experienced in Fernvale.
63. With no warnings and the limited emergency response that was in the area during the floods, it was apparent that the Somerset Regional Council took no steps to rectify their failed disaster response system even after it became apparent that it was no longer applicable to assist the Fernvale area.
64. It is apparent that this disaster response plan was not tested and did not take into consideration the susceptibility that Fernvale to isolation due to flooded crossings and loss of power due to rain which has been a current and ongoing feature of the area.

Disaster Recovery

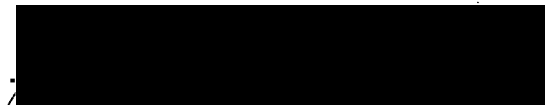
65. Prior to, during and in the weeks following the floods, I have noticed that the Balonne Shire Council Mayor Donna Stewart, Brisbane City Lord Mayor Campbell Newman and Ipswich City Mayor Paul Pisasale have all had a consistent presence on the local and ABC radio and have given specific direction to their respective communities in relation to recovery efforts and available assistance.

66. I heard nothing from the Somerset Regional Council on the radio and received no information from them regarding assistance available to affected residents until the middle of March. I received a letter dated 16 March with some information on flood recovery and their website has now been updated to include recovery information. I saw Graeme Lehmann, Major of the Somerset Regional Council for the first time on television on 13 April 2011 in relation to flood recovery. However, he referred only to the Lockyer Valley and there was no mention of the Fernvale region.
67. The Rural Fire Brigade managed to pull a community response together with the assistance of the operators of Zanows Quarry, he used quarry trucks and machinery to help people in need.
68. The ADF provided assistance in the Fernvale area on the Thursday and Friday after the floods: there was a significant amount of military that were distributing food or water or asking residents who needed assistance.
69. At first, the ADF worked from the Futures Centre (Community Hall) and within the following days they were door knocking and asking residents who needed assistance.
70. In the week following the floods when there was road access to the Fernvale area once more, the region had access to Centrelink officers who were assisting with applying for emergency funds. The Department of Communities were also there, providing cash funding to the people in need and presumably assisting with emergency housing and so on. It was quite clear why the Centrelink and Department of Communities people were there.
71. I noticed one person wearing a Somerset Regional Council badge but it was unclear what they were doing or what purpose they were serving and I did not see them provide any meaningful assistance.
72. After the time I saw that lonely Council worker, I did not see or hear anything from the Council for approximately three weeks. The Council did not use the media or any other means to communicate assistance to the Fernvale area.

73. Approximately a month after the floods there was a major community meeting where some of the Council representatives were there. I did not stay for the entirety of the meeting because it was obvious that the Council were not there to provide any assistance, but were there in a defensive role.
74. Council are now providing ongoing updates and information so it appears that the Council had managed to get some type of Flood Response and Assistance Program happening, however three months is too late and it can be hardly considered a disaster response.

I, **JANET ANN CARPENTER**, certify that the above history is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

DATED: 15 April 2011



JANET ANN CARPENTER

WITNESSED BY:



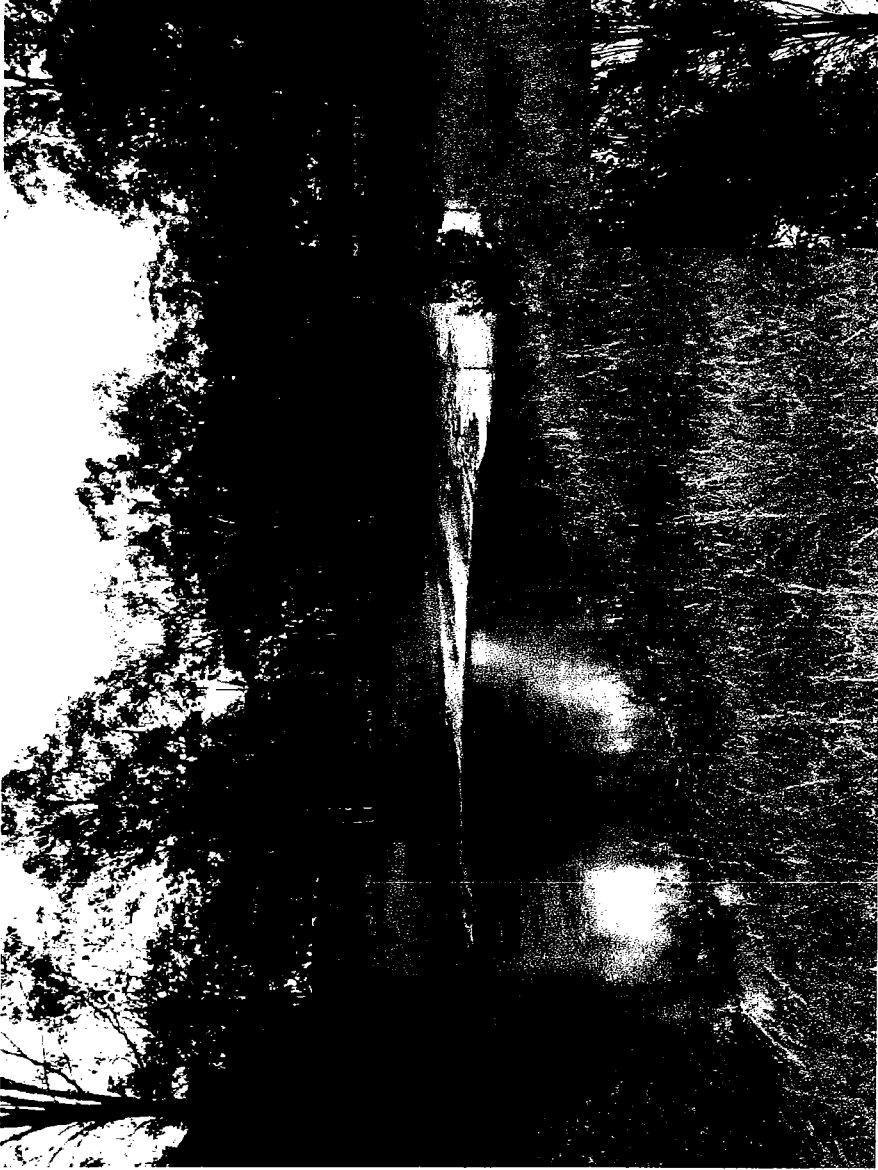
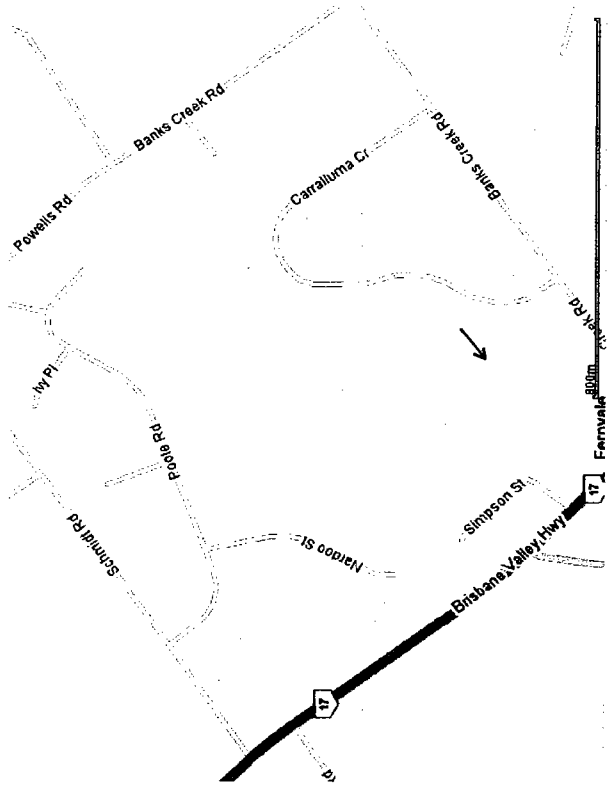
SOLICITOR

SUGATH WIJEDORU

15 APRIL 2011

DATE

UC 01



Gully behind Nos 15 and 17 Carralluma Cres Fernvale,
 looking towards Brisbane Valley Highway.
 Sunday 9 January 5:45pm

Photo: J Carpenter

Stormwater drain in foreground

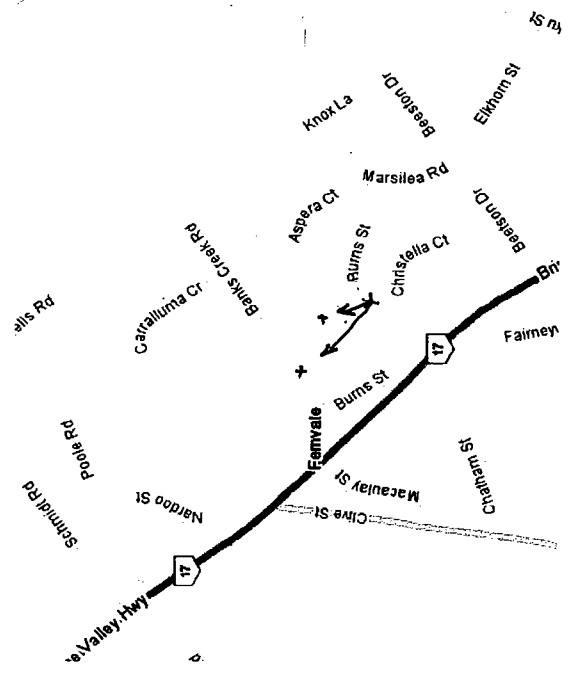
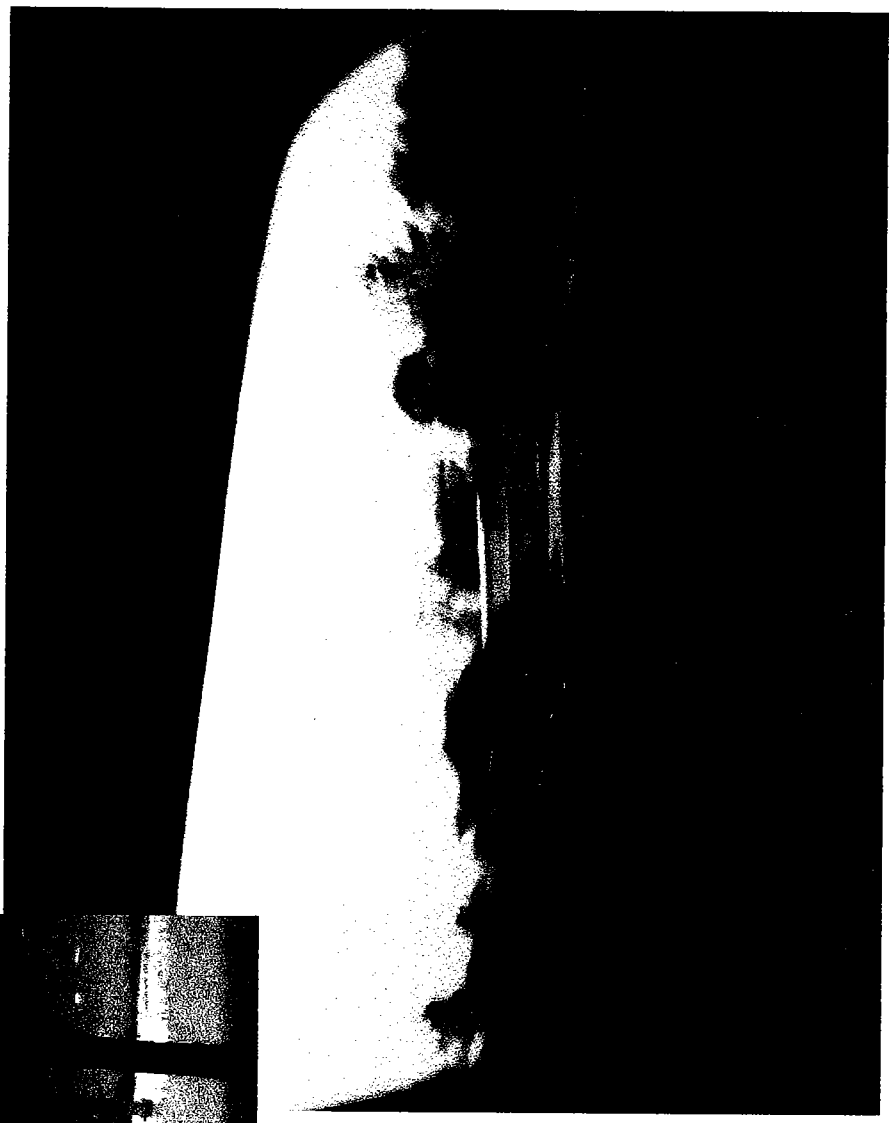
13/04/2011

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Thank you.

Paul Heymans
Deputy Chairperson
Marketing and Communications
Somerset Region Business Alliance Inc.

"JL03"



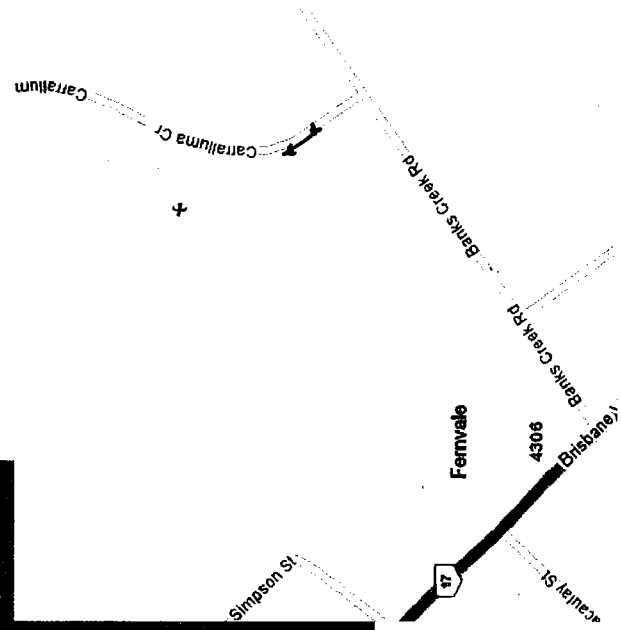
Gully over Banks Creek Road, taken from Burns Rd. St
Tuesday 11 January 9:35am

Gully from Burns Rd over sports ground to new Sports Complex
at showgrounds. Tuesday 11 January 9:38am

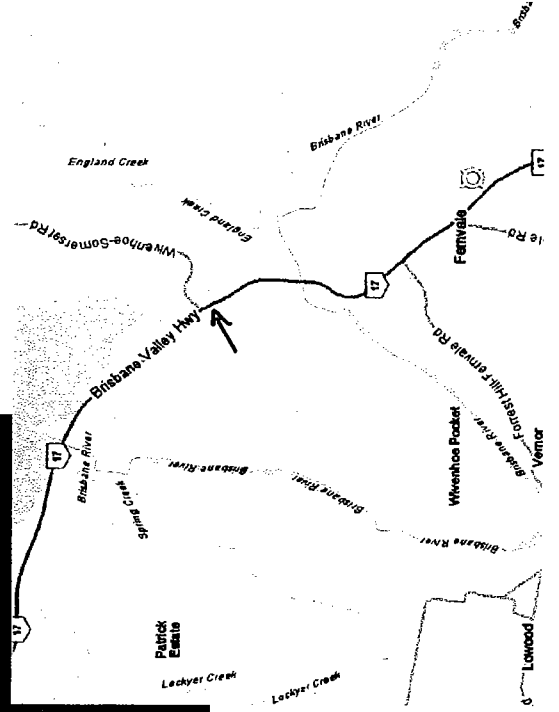
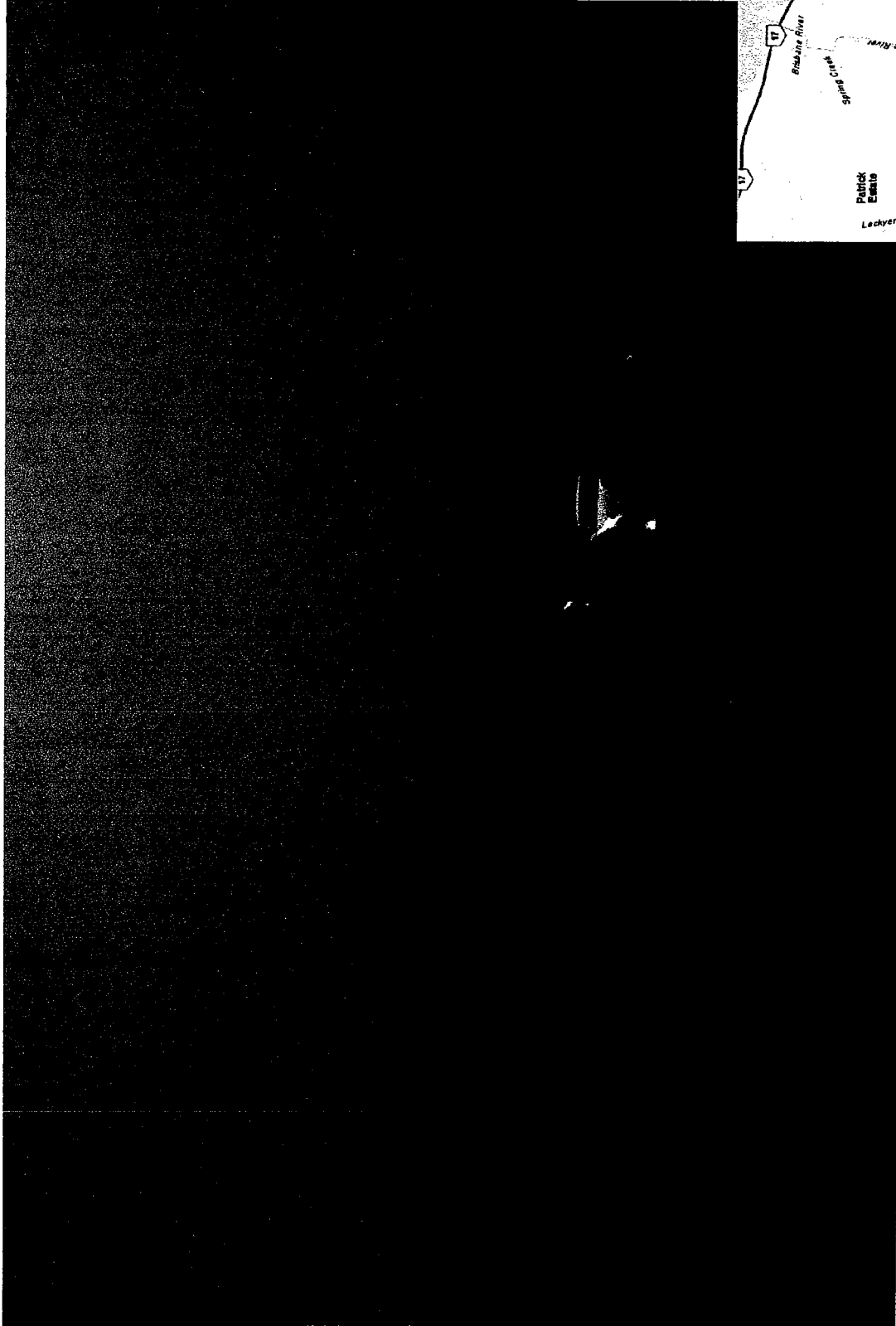
Note heavy rain and water pooling on ground.

Photo: J Carpenter

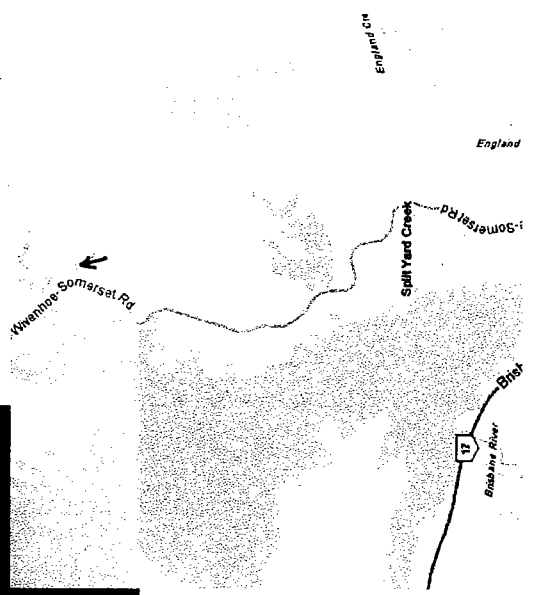
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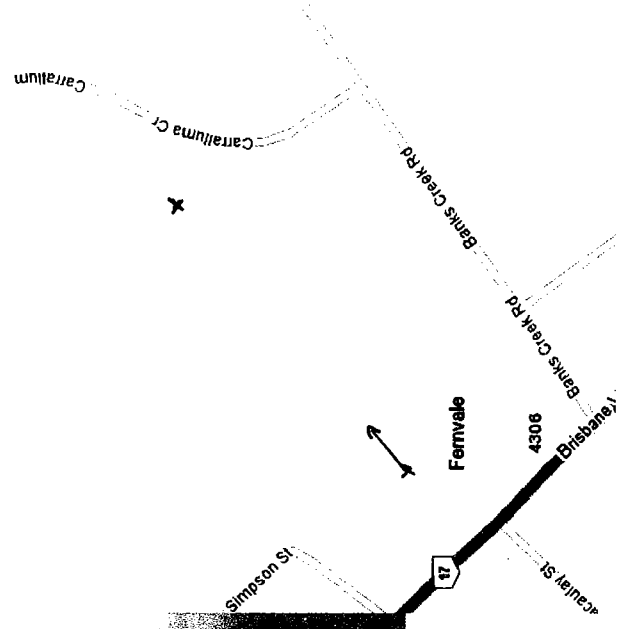
Flooding in Carralluma Cres. Wednesday 12 January 7:00am.
 Rain eased, clouds lifting, water level falling.
 Photo: J Carpenter



Flooding at the junction of the Brisbane Valley Highway and Wivenhoe Somerset Road, looking towards Fermvale. Monday 10 January. 10.42am
Photo: L Patchin (provided by)



Flooding at Framptons Road Dundas Monday 10 January 8:00 am
Photo: L. Patchin



Flooding behind Fernvale Hotel, looking toward Carralluma Cres. Wednesday 12 January 5:30am.
Zoomed on house, foreground shortened (actual distance ~400m). Note still raining.

Photo: J Carpenter

Note: Approved DA for 50 units under water in foreground