

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Matters concerning the Lockyer Valley

Thursday, 7 April 2011 at 2.00pm

At level 30, 400 George Street, Brisbane, Qld

Interview conducted by: Ms Kate Juhasz and
Mr Mark Ainsworth

Also present: Mr David Kevin, King & Company
Ms Kristie Taylor, King & Company

Private interview of Stephen John Jones

Exhibit Number:

QFCI

Date:

28/4/11

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1 MR AINSWORTH: The time is 2.15pm on Thursday, 7 April
2 2011. This is an interview between Detective Inspector
3 Mark William Ainsworth and Steve Jones, the mayor of
4 Lockyer Valley. Also present is Kate Juhasz, a solicitor
5 from the Commission of Inquiry into Floods, Mr David Kevin,
6 a solicitor from King & Company and Kristie Taylor, a
7 solicitor from King & Company. A transcript will be taken
8 by Jenny Jansen from Merrill Corporation, and it will also
9 be recorded, for the purpose of accuracy.

10
11 For voice identification, can I just get everyone
12 around the table to state their name and purpose for being
13 here, please?
14

15 MS JUHASZ: My name is Kate Juhasz. I am a solicitor with
16 the Flood Inquiry.
17

18 MR JONES: Steve Jones, I'm the mayor of Lockyer Valley
19 Council.
20

21 MR KEVIN: David Kevin, solicitor of King & Company
22 Solicitors.
23

24 MS TAYLOR: Kristie Taylor, a solicitor at King & Company
25 Solicitors.
26

27 MR AINSWORTH: Thank you. Steve, I'll just read into the
28 record that you were served with a requirement to attend
29 and give information here today in a letter to you, signed
30 by the Commissioner for the Flood Commission of Inquiry,
31 Justice Holmes. That requirement was for you to attend
32 here today at the given time of 2pm on Thursday, 7 April to
33 answer some questions put to you by Kate and myself.
34

35 As you are aware, on 17 January the State Government
36 announced a Commission of Inquiry in relation to the
37 Queensland floods. I will just read to you, and into the
38 record, what the terms of reference are for that particular
39 Commission of Inquiry.
40

41 First of all, it is the preparation and planning by
42 the Federal, State and local governments, emergency
43 services and the community for the 2010/2011 floods in
44 Queensland; the performance of private insurers in meeting
45 their claims responsibilities; all aspects of the response
46 to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken
47 to inform the community and measures to protect life and

1 private and public property including the immediate
2 management response and recovery; resourcing, overall
3 coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment, the
4 adequacy of equipment and communication systems, the
5 adequacy of the community response, measures to manage the
6 supply of essential services such as power, water and
7 communications during the 2010/11 flood events; the
8 adequacy of forecasts and early warning systems,
9 particularly as relate to the flooding events in Toowoomba,
10 the Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys; and the implementation of
11 the systems operation plans for dams across the State, in
12 particular Wivenhoe and Somerset relief strategy; an
13 assessment of compliance with and the suitability of the
14 operational procedures relating to flood mitigation and dam
15 safety, and all aspects of land use planning through local
16 and regional planning systems to minimise infrastructure
17 and property impacts from the floods.
18

19 If you want to have a look, I'll just leave that
20 there. There is a copy if you want to have a look at it at
21 any stage.
22

23 MS JUHASZ: Marked by us, many times.
24

25 <STEPHEN JOHN JONES, interviewed: [2.15pm]
26

27 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Just for the purpose of the interview,
28 as Kate has explained the format that it'll go through,
29 I'll just cover off initially with some antecedents. So
30 can I just get your full name, please, and address?
31

32 A. Yes. Stephen John Jones.
33

34 Q. And your home address?
35

36 A. [REDACTED] Blanchview.
37

38 Q. How long have you resided at that address?
39

40 A. Oh, since about '93 or something like that. A fair
41 while it's been a while.
42

43 Q. Your date of birth?
44

45 A. [REDACTED]
46

47 Q. Your current occupation?
48

49 A. Mayor.
50

51 Q. How long have you been mayor of the Lockyer Valley?
52

53 A. Since March '04.
54

1
2 Q. So that was prior to the amalgamation?
3 A. That was in the Gatton Shire Council and then the
4 amalgamation occurred in March '08.
5
6 Q. '08, yes.
7 A. Yes.
8
9 Q. No worries. Can you just give me a brief career
10 history - employment, and that - prior to your time as
11 mayor in '93?
12 A. Up until that time, virtually from the time that I -
13 when I left school, I went to Queensland Agricultural
14 College for three years and then the rest of the time was
15 with the State Government.
16
17 Q. What sort of roles in the State Government?
18 A. As a stock inspector.
19
20 Q. A stock inspector?
21 A. What was then the Department of Primary Industries.
22
23 Q. Then straight into the council in '93?
24 A. Yes, yes.
25
26 MS JUHASZ: Q. Was it mainly around that area, the
27 Lockyer Valley, as a stock inspector or were you more out
28 west - west of Toowoomba?
29 A. Oh, no. Look, I was in varying places.
30
31 Q. Yes.
32 A. Varying places, and I spent a considerable time at a
33 place called Cadarga, which is north of Chinchilla.
34
35 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Can you just explain to us, as the
36 mayor of Lockyer Valley, what do your duties entail?
37 There's many of them, I'm sure.
38 A. Yes. Well, I guess it's - the main role is to
39 facilitate the council meetings but obviously to be
40 involved in all the various aspects of council business
41 that a mayor is required to be in, and the disaster
42 management and chair of the local disaster management
43 committee, and all those sorts of things, of course, are
44 part of that.
45
46 Q. Yes, okay.
47 A. But the list of duties is very wide and I guess in a

1 rural area like ours, it's even wider because you don't
2 have the staff specific to the roles that you do in other
3 areas.

4
5 Q. Since amalgamation with the Lockyer Valley Council,
6 how many councillors do you have working in the Lockyer
7 Council area?

8 A. Okay. Since March '08, we've got six, plus myself; a
9 total of seven.

10
11 Q. Seven, okay. Are you able to give us a breakdown of
12 who they are and what areas they cover at all?

13 A. Yes, okay. We've got the deputy mayor, who's Graham
14 Moon. First of all, we don't have divisions. We've got
15 undivisional representation, so they represent the entire
16 shire, as such. He's the deputy mayor. They've got loose
17 portfolio type areas, so his is engineering, that
18 engineering type area generally.

19
20 You've got Tanya Milligan. Her portfolio area is
21 around the, sort of, social aspects of council, the
22 community service type - that role that relates to the
23 human type element. Peter Friend, he looks after those
24 aspects of community service that's more related to the
25 health aspects - animals, all that type of thing. Janice
26 Holstein, she looks after, you know, tourism and the
27 various corporate type matters. Dave Neuendorf, planning
28 and environmental matters. Who else have we got? Peter
29 Friend. Did I mention Peter Friend?

30
31 MS JUHASZ: Yes.

32
33 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Jim McDonald?

34 A. Jim McDonald, yes. He actually looks after matters to
35 do with assets; the workshop, all those types of things,
36 those sorts of facilities, and the like, and was previously
37 in charge of the water and sewerage aspect up until July
38 when QUU took over.

39
40 MS JUHASZ: Q. He is also the OIC of Laidley, isn't he?

41 A. That's right.

42
43 Q. The officer in charge, sorry.

44 A. Mmm.

45
46 MR AINSWORTH: Q. So prior to the amalgamations in March
47 2008, as the mayor of Gatton, what were your duties? Did

1 you have the same area that you've currently got now?
2 A. No, no. Look, the area - when Laidley and Gatton
3 amalgamated, we've increased our area - well, it would
4 probably be approximately 35 percent, something like that,
5 extra or 35 percent of the current area we've got would be
6 the area which was extended upon what was the former Gatton
7 Shire. I'm pretty loose with those figures, obviously, not
8 having them in front of me. In terms of population, we've
9 probably got about 37,000. Gatton has slightly more than
10 Laidley. So, those figures would need to be adjusted now,
11 of course, but you've probably got 1000 or 1500 or 2000
12 more in Gatton than Laidley.

13
14 Q. With the SEQ 2021 plan, I think that's expected to
15 increase significantly over the next --

16 A. Very significantly.

17
18 Q. -- few years?

19 A. It's part of that western corridor type concept.

20
21 Q. Just one question I should have asked before: were
22 you affected by the flooding in your private premises at
23 all during the floods?

24 A. No. Look, the creek actually runs through our
25 property, but other than the loss of a bit of fencing and a
26 few tanks and minor things, no issue.

27
28 Q. You mentioned about going to the Queensland
29 Agricultural College and being a stock inspector. Do you
30 have any qualifications pertaining to management and/or
31 leadership?

32 A. Oh, look, not tertiary qualifications, only those
33 skills which I would've received during that process and
34 those that I've received as councillor because I've been a
35 councillor since '97 and attended a number of conferences
36 and courses since that time - too many to mention today, of
37 course.

38
39 Q. You mentioned before about the Disaster Management
40 Act. As the chair of the Lockyer Valley Disaster
41 Management Group, how would you describe your knowledge of
42 the Disaster Management Act?

43 A. Look, I would - I guess with every Act there's a lot
44 of detail in it. In broad terms, I think I understand it
45 reasonably well. I guess the specifics of right down to
46 the deepest regulation type level, I may not, but of course
47 we've got staff that I can rely on to get that information

1 and it's part of the process that's put in place now
2 through Emergency Management Queensland, isn't it, that we
3 network and work through that to obtain that information.
4

5 Q. You mentioned before that you're the chair of the
6 Lockyer Valley management group. So you're aware of your
7 requirements and responsibilities as the chair?

8 A. Look, I believe that I am and, of course, we - I've
9 attended numerous courses and conferences, I suppose you'd
10 say, the last being up at Home Hill at Ayr, where there was
11 significant change in the emergency management structure
12 and at that course, it was just prior to that time and I
13 received some briefings, of course, through that.
14

15 Q. So that was about April --

16 MS JUHASZ: May.

17 MR JONES: I think it was the end of May 2010.
18

19 MR AINSWORTH: May, yes.
20

21 MR JONES: We have had staff and others attend previous
22 ones.
23

24 MR AINSWORTH: No worries.
25

26 MS JUHASZ: Q. I suppose, just quickly, you say - in your
27 actual statement - and we'll deal with that a bit later as
28 well, but there's a recommendation from yourself that
29 perhaps there should be a dedicated section within the
30 Lockyer Valley Council that deals with disaster management.
31

32 A. Yes.
33

34 Q. How did you come to that opinion, that that was
35 something that was needed by the council?
36

37 A. I made that - I've made that decision since the time
38 of attending that conference in Ayr.
39

40 Q. Yes?

41 A. We've obviously been working quite deliberately on
42 emergency management since that time and as our shire
43 grows, our potential to move forward into a more dedicated
44 arrangement like that is actually also growing. Our
45 population is growing and it's - like all these matters,
46 the more you can put into it in terms of resourcing, the
47 more that you can expect to get out of it when you need it.

1 Most rural councils aren't in a position to be able to do
2 that but we'd like to move towards that to give ourselves
3 the best possible opportunity to respond.
4

5 Q. Just practically, though, you attended the information
6 session at Ayr - at Home Hill in May?

7 A. Mmm.
8

9 Q. Then you had the Exercise Orko, which was in --

10 A. That's right.
11

12 Q. -- about November after the legislative amendments?

13 A. Yes.
14

15 Q. Did you attend that exercise yourself?

16 A. I wasn't involved directly with the exercise; I was
17 being briefed almost daily.
18

19 Q. Yes?

20 A. Our staff were very consciously involved in it and
21 they were in constant contact with me throughout that
22 process and it was something that we very much backed them
23 being involved in and encouraged them to be involved in,
24 and I think it was a very useful exercise and probably an
25 exercise that quite a few resources have gone into, in
26 relation to previous exercises over the years.
27

28 MR AINSWORTH: Q. So you got feedback about the outcomes
29 of that?

30 A. Yes, yes.
31

32 Q. In your time as the mayor in Lockyer, prior and after
33 amalgamation, have you been involved in any natural
34 disasters in that particular area, like fires or floods
35 and, if so, can you just give us a run-through of --

36 A. Yes, several very - reasonably major fires. In
37 Queensland, I think it was around 2002, there was a major
38 fire involving the western part of the shire, the
39 escarpment; in fact, a large part of the eastern part of
40 Toowoomba was evacuated and there was no loss of houses,
41 fortunately, through a huge effort. I was very much in a
42 lead role in terms of the council in that episode and we've
43 got a fair history of some of those things that happened
44 there.
45

46 We had a second one in about 2004 in Helidon, an
47 absolute extreme emergency where it was a miracle almost

1 that there wasn't significant property loss or even loss of
2 life, where the fire literally burnt into the town. I was
3 in a similar role there where I was involved very heavily
4 with the emergency services and their operation and working
5 with them.

6
7 Q. How would you describe those events in comparison to
8 the flooding in 2011?

9 A. Sunday school picnic.

10
11 MR AINSWORTH: I'll just pass you over to Kate now, who
12 just wants to go through some clarification in relation to
13 the statement.

14
15 MS JUHASZ: Thanks.

16
17 MR JONES: It's probably important I just tack onto that
18 last statement that the natural disaster that we've just
19 experienced on 10 January is probably one of the most
20 significant, in terms of loss of life and property, that
21 Queensland has ever experienced; hence, I think that's an
22 important comment to make behind the one I just made.

23
24 MS JUHASZ: Yes.

25
26 Q. I might just take you through your actual statement.
27 You've got a copy of it there, obviously. If we could just
28 really go through it paragraph by paragraph, so we can all
29 follow it. There's a comment when you're talking about
30 preparation and planning, in answer to the request that we
31 made, and you're saying that since amalgamation in March
32 2008 and especially in the last 18 months, considerable
33 work has been undertaken by the Lockyer Valley Regional
34 Council in disaster planning - which you were alluding to
35 previously?

36 A. Mmm.

37
38 Q. Is the work that's been undertaken - you've spoken
39 about going to the course in Home Hill and taking part in
40 that, and you did that yourself as well?

41 A. Yes.

42
43 Q. There's been Exercise Orko in November?

44 A. Yes.

45
46 Q. Although you didn't go, you were briefed by persons
47 who did go.

1 A. Mmm.
2
3 Q. What sort of other work has been done by the council
4 in order to plan for potential disasters?
5 A. Right. We have had the deputy mayor attend a previous
6 similar conference to the one that I went to at Home Hill
7 and I just can't give you the date and time of that, but
8 that did definitely occur. We have councillors who are
9 involved with attending various meetings, and the like, of
10 the rural fire service. We have a group which regularly
11 meets amongst the emergency services in Gatton at a level
12 below the local disaster committee. It's a localised
13 group. People from the hospital, police, and so forth,
14 meet on a regular basis.
15

16 We have done considerable work post-amalgamation on
17 bringing our management plan together and it was about
18 September '09, I think, that the amalgamated plan was put
19 in place. That's been an ongoing process, bringing the two
20 shires together.
21

22 There's a lot of work which continues in an informal
23 fashion because, being a rural council, our officers are
24 slipping in and out of my office. Obviously the people who
25 are in the SES are members of our community, some of those
26 people work for us, so there's a constant communication.
27 The communication between the fire brigade and police, and
28 so forth, being the type of community that it is, there's a
29 lot of informal discussion where we frequently discuss
30 points of improvement, of how we can do things, and being
31 the size community that it is, that communication is quite
32 frequent and quite open and occurs continually.
33

34 Q. In some of the documents that you've provided - and
35 I've pulled it out and, unfortunately, I don't have a copy
36 in there, but you probably do. It's the Lockyer Valley -
37 you've probably seen it already, but it's just an ordinary
38 council meeting minutes of 22 September 2010.
39

40 MS TAYLOR: Yes, we have a copy with us.
41

42 MS JUHASZ: Q. The author of the document is a fellow by
43 the name of Justin Fisher.

44 A. Yes, that's right.
45

46 Q. Who is employed by the council, I understand?

47 A. That's right.

1
2 Q. And he's manager of road infrastructure, it states
3 here.
4 A. Yes.
5
6 Q. This is as at 14 September.
7 A. Yes.
8
9 Q. I just want to take you through what he says in
10 relation to that. Under the section "Discussion" in the
11 second paragraph, it's his view in the briefing --
12 A. Yes.
13
14 Q. -- that he gives to the council that since
15 amalgamation, little work has been done to improve LVRC's
16 disaster response capability, there have been no LDMG
17 meetings for 12 months.
18 A. Yes.
19
20 Q. The plan requires updating, there's no sub-plans for
21 emergencies and there's no dedicated disaster response
22 command centre. So that obviously is something which is in
23 contrast to what you're saying --
24 A. Yes.
25
26 Q. -- in relation to the fact --
27 A. Right.
28
29 Q. -- that the council was prepared?
30 A. Yes.
31
32 Q. I suppose what I want is your comment in relation to
33 that.
34 A. Well, first of all, that's his view.
35
36 Q. Yes?
37 A. That's his view that he put to the council. Now, at
38 that time, up until July 2010, disaster management wasn't
39 handled by the engineering area, of which he is an officer,
40 it was handled by a bloke called Howard Karl, who has since
41 moved on to Queensland Urban Utilities. Now, Howard was
42 very much a person who did handle a lot of this work
43 himself, whereas now it's actually - the engineering
44 portfolio or the engineering manager, Gerry Franzmann, has
45 taken on that role and Justin Fisher is his understudy.
46
47 Now, in terms of the meetings, you're quite right that

1 up until that time it was quite common that the local
2 disaster committee would only meet six monthly or
3 12 monthly. We weren't anywhere near as conscientious in
4 those times as we are now because in my attendance at that
5 conference at Home Hill, I got a better understanding of
6 where the new legislation was heading, what the
7 requirements were, what the changes were in Emergency
8 Management Queensland. Their role changed very
9 substantially, where council took on some of the roles that
10 they previously attended to and they became more of a
11 support organisation. They were a lot more at the cutting
12 edges, it would be, at the time you're talking about. So
13 it was very much a different focus then to what it is now.
14

15 When I attended that conference and I realised that
16 this is where it was heading, we then started to change our
17 focus. Now in terms of budgetary requirement, in those
18 days, council didn't budget large amounts of money for
19 specific emergency management work. As we talked about
20 earlier, now we're getting to a stage where it might be a
21 dedicated role or a dedicated budgetary item.
22

23 It was very much done by staff who performed other
24 duties, as in the case of Howard Karl. So a percentage of
25 his work would be involved in that type of work. You could
26 simply go to the attendance at district disaster meetings,
27 and things like that, and you'll see that he was quite
28 active in being involved in that. I've attended some of
29 those myself. There was quite a deal of work that went on,
30 but not by the engineering area and that's what's
31 represented by Justin Fisher.
32

33 Q. You're talking about "in those days" there wasn't much
34 preparation for disaster management. You mean prior to
35 around the time that you attended the meeting in Home Hill
36 in about May or prior to September 2010 when this minute is
37 drafted?

38 A. Well, what happened when I attended that meeting - of
39 course, that was just prior to the changes in that
40 legislation and at that conference they explained to us how
41 things were changing, how council would need to take more
42 of a hands-on role and, as a result, we decided that we
43 would have a different focus. Of course, very soon - if
44 you have a look into the detail or the events that occurred
45 after that conference, very soon after that conference,
46 within a week or so, you'll see that we were initiating all
47 sorts of actions. I mean, soon to follow that was a flood

1 study, etc, and a whole range of things that happened in
2 the months following that.

3
4 Q. Because we probably require at some stage - if what
5 you're saying is that from May there were big changes in
6 relation to the preparation that you did, is there anything
7 additional which wouldn't have been provided to us in the
8 course of your documentation?
9

10 MR KEVIN: We have provided you with --

11
12 MS JUHASZ: All the plans.

13
14 MR KEVIN: -- some documents, which has a - it does have a
15 chronology and those documents are referred to there.

16
17 MS JUHASZ: Yes. So everything that - I mean, all the
18 preparation and everything, I don't require you to list
19 them out for me again, but it really would've been provided
20 in the documents that we've got from the Lockyer Valley
21 Regional Council and that would be representative of the
22 preparation and --
23

24 MS TAYLOR: Yes. Those documents there were under the tab
25 request number 15 and then the first couple of documents
26 under that tab are those two bundles that are on the table
27 there, which have all the attachments of what happened
28 after the middle of last year.
29

30 MS JUHASZ: So that's really it. Nothing in addition to
31 what you've provided is in relation to preparation.
32

33 MR KEVIN: That's right.

34
35 MS JUHASZ: That we wouldn't know about.
36

37 MR KEVIN: That was done on the basis of documents
38 supplied from the council. So it's just then a case, from
39 Steve's point of view, of which documents he has
40 familiarity with and that's quite significant.
41

42 MS JUHASZ: Q. What I mean, though, is there's nothing -
43 there wouldn't be any additional training or preparation
44 that would have occurred which wouldn't be representative
45 in those documents?

46 A. There would've been all sorts of informal meetings,
47 discussions, etc - as I outlined earlier - and that's a

1 continual process in a council like ours because it's a
2 relatively small council.
3
4 Q. That's informal, so there's not meetings called and
5 there aren't minutes of those meetings?
6 A. No.
7
8 Q. But it's more an informal process of discussion about
9 disaster management?
10 A. Yes. The relevant manager or officer would be
11 discussing things with me, with the CEO, or whatever, and
12 that would be - that's a continual process. I mean, almost
13 every aspect of our work, at the end of the day, could
14 involve this. If we buy a new water truck, we get them
15 outfitted so they're compatible with both the rural fire
16 service and the urban fire service, in terms of filling and
17 discharging and all those sorts of things. We do a huge
18 amount of detailed work which is just part of our normal
19 process and most of that's informal.
20
21 MR AINSWORTH: Q. So the disaster management working
22 group, was that established after the Home Hill?
23 A. Yes. Soon after I returned from Home Hill, we had
24 discussion, most of it at an informal level, about how
25 these changes were to occur, and I guess the real crux of
26 that was that Emergency Management Queensland's role was
27 changing. They were very much more hands-on and they were
28 involved in providing a lot of the services and roles that
29 we now have to do ourselves. They were more of a support
30 organisation. So it meant that we had to change our focus
31 to make sure those issues were covered to the same level
32 they were when they were involved and that was the reason
33 why we moved ahead with this and we changed and put all
34 these things in place.
35
36 MR KEVIN: Can we just clarify something there? There's a
37 distinction between the working group, which is more
38 informal, and the Local Disaster Management Group, which is
39 the formal --
40
41 MR AINSWORTH: The formal one, yes.
42
43 MR KEVIN: Yes. Some are more easy to organise --
44
45 MR AINSWORTH: Organise, yes.
46
47 MR KEVIN: -- for a meeting than others.

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MR AINSWORTH: Q. My understanding of a disaster management group would be a group of people in council who have got their heads together in a committee or some other way to enhance the response to disaster management.

A. Mmm.

MS JUHASZ: Q. But not formalised in accordance with the Disaster Management Act?

A. No, no. That's right and that committee, if you like, or that group of people, in our case - which is principally now Gerry Franzmann, head of engineering, myself and it may involve other councillors or specific officers, depending on the issue - is continually meeting because of the size of the council and that's continually being discussed.

The other thing with our local disaster management committee, I think it's really important to bring forward, is that when we changed focus as a result of that conference, we then had to formalise the procedure more and made sure that the meetings were more often. We had difficulties in the time prior to that because obviously a lot of members of our committee are quite difficult to get there for meetings. They're from organisations - being not in a city, as such, some of those organisations are represented by people from Ipswich, Brisbane or wherever and it's not always easy to get them together.

MR AINSWORTH: Q. Just going back to the disaster management working group or the group of people, is there any external agencies on that, giving you direction, like EMQ or anyone giving you direction as to which way they think you should probably travel, enhancing --

A. Oh, we've got a very close relationship with EMQ. David Fraser in Toowoomba is constantly in discussion with us, not always on a formal basis but obviously through his role and our relationship to the SES, and other things, there's a lot of communication between us and EMQ through him.

Q. So would it be correct to say that this particular group is reasonably crucial in what you raised earlier about setting up, like, a full-time disaster group within council?

A. Well, if council's intention is to go that way, they would be a key role in how that would be set up and I think it would be important that EMQ is involved in that process

1 as well because obviously if you're going to invest
2 resources, you want to get the best response out of that.
3 It's not a thing that council would rush into. We would do
4 it in such a way we'd look at other models and the way
5 other councils do it, to try and get the best response we
6 can for the dollars that are involved, because actually, at
7 the end of the day, in this case you could well be dealing
8 with people's lives.

9
10 Q. Have you gone down that path of liaising with other
11 councils at this time?

12 A. Oh, look, we've had discussion. I've been involved in
13 various committees. There was a State - an
14 interdepartmental committee for fire, for example, which
15 met and I was the local government representative on that
16 in recent years. Now, it probably hasn't met for 12 months
17 or so. I don't know why. I don't know whether for some
18 reason the government hasn't called a meeting. But during
19 those meetings, natural disasters were obviously discussed
20 at length. The Gold Coast model, for example, has been
21 discussed at those meetings and the minutes of those
22 meetings and our attendance and my attendance at those
23 meetings would be quite evident.

24
25 MS JUHASZ: Q. Can I just take you back to the minute and
26 I know that you say that it's Justin's Fisher's opinion --

27 A. That's right.

28
29 Q. -- but there are some things in there which appear to
30 be fact, I suppose --

31 A. Yes.

32
33 Q. -- or he's presenting as fact. Firstly, that there had
34 been no LDMG meetings for 12 months.

35 A. That's right, and I acknowledge that.

36
37 Q. At that stage in September. You would be aware that
38 there's a statutory requirement --

39 A. Yes.

40
41 Q. -- to meet every six months. But you're saying that
42 after May, you had these disaster management group meetings
43 which were more informal?

44 A. That's right.

45
46 Q. Or there wouldn't be any minutes of them?

47 A. No, that's right.

1
2 Q. But there was no actual formal meeting --
3 A. That's right.
4
5 Q. -- of the LDMG?
6 A. That's right. So whilst there wasn't a formal
7 meeting, there has been a continual process of those
8 informal type meetings.
9
10 Q. Why did it take so long, from May until September, to
11 get that formalised meeting happening again if you're aware
12 about, I suppose, the urgency of disaster management
13 preparation?
14 A. Well, I think we were also in a period where we were
15 trying to get that plan, the amalgamated plan in place, and
16 the plan is obviously a key point to how that committee
17 works or the structure with which that committee must work.
18 Now, we obviously had to get in place an amalgamated plan
19 because we had Laidley and we had Gatton, and it was very
20 important, I think, that that be brought together. During
21 that time - it was quite difficult, during that time of
22 amalgamation, to attend to a lot of these issues because
23 not only were we bringing together emergency management, we
24 had planning and all the other aspects of council we were
25 trying to bring together and it was quite a difficult
26 process.
27
28 Q. You had a plan done in September 2009, though?
29 A. That's right. That's right.
30
31 Q. So there was a plan --
32 A. That's right.
33
34 Q. -- from the amalgamated councils by that stage?
35 A. That's right, in the period up to - I was talking
36 about the period up to September 2009.
37
38 Q. Okay.
39 A. Yes. Post-2009, which I think was September 2009, it
40 was then May 2010 that I attended that course.
41
42 Q. Yes?
43 A. We were in the knowledge that things were changing and
44 we made a conscious effort to attend that conference to
45 make sure that we could bring things up to the level that
46 we did, and it is a pretty conscious effort, obviously, for
47 me to attend that conference. I believe that from that

1 time, we did bring it up in line with the situation that
2 existed.
3
4 Q. There's a Lockyer Valley local disaster management
5 plan, which is revised and lodged on 6 January?
6 A. Yes.
7
8 Q. So it doesn't give you much time, I suppose, between
9 then and the 10th?
10 A. No.
11
12 Q. Not that you would've known that that disaster was to
13 take place. However, with lodging that plan, we couldn't
14 find any associated meeting, or anything, with 6 January.
15 Was that just something that was lodged separately outside
16 the immediate plans or was there --
17 A. Oh, it --
18
19 MR KEVIN: Well, we don't want to interrupt --
20
21 MS JUHASZ: Yes.
22
23 MR KEVIN: -- but there is a chronology that indicates -
24 you realise that that meeting was on the 24th?
25
26 MS JUHASZ: Yes.
27
28 MR KEVIN: Well, on the 23rd there was a meeting of the
29 LDMG to adopt the disaster management plan.
30
31 MS JUHASZ: Yes, and then it passes on 6 January. Is that
32 the way in which it works?
33
34 MS TAYLOR: Yes.
35
36 MR KEVIN: Exactly, and it's not signed off until February
37 of the following year.
38
39 MS JUHASZ: Yes.
40
41 MR KEVIN: As I said, I don't want to interrupt but
42 there's a great deal of work went into, perhaps,
43 formulating the disaster management plan so that it could
44 be adopted in September on the 23rd. So it's just a matter
45 of looking at --
46
47 MS JUHASZ: Prior to the legislative changes.

1
2 MR KEVIN: That's why I'm suggesting if you want the
3 chronology, I think we did tender that with the documents.
4
5 MS JUHASZ: Yes, we do have that.
6
7 MS TAYLOR: We did.
8
9 MS JUHASZ: We do have a chronology.
10
11 MR KEVIN: It's very helpful in those circumstances.
12
13 MS TAYLOR: I don't think that the disaster management
14 plan was, in fact, adopted in 2009. It didn't occur until
15 2010.
16
17 MR KEVIN: But we're not giving the evidence, so --
18
19 MS TAYLOR: No. I know that there's one there that's got
20 that date on it.
21
22 MS JUHASZ: Yes, but not in relation to the changes
23 following the legislation. It wouldn't have been adopted
24 until 2010.
25
26 MR KEVIN: If it becomes important, we will produce a
27 chronology that may be of assistance. It was just my
28 concern that you're asking a question that might not then
29 go to the timing of what has occurred here.
30
31 MS JUHASZ: I suppose I wanted to now know how it worked
32 as well.
33
34 MR KEVIN: Okay.
35
36 MS JUHASZ: Q. If you're passing the local disaster
37 management plan in September at the meeting, but it doesn't
38 seem to be - well, it's revised on 6 January. When does it
39 become a published document for council members and various
40 members of the community to have access to your plan and
41 associated sub-plans?
42 A. Well, I guess that whilst it may not necessarily be on
43 the website, or whatever, anyone who's interested, it's
44 available to them at any time really, because it's an open
45 document. I guess the key to it is that it's also a living
46 document to some extent, because it's changing all the
47 time. When something is passed on a particular date or

1 presented, or whatever, the amount of work that goes into
2 that up to that time is very significant. It could well be
3 over a number of months.
4

5 Of course, the plan is very much a key to the disaster
6 committee and how it will operate in a disaster. There is
7 further information which is provided by Emergency
8 Management Queensland. I think there may even be something
9 on our website that tells people what to do in individual
10 disasters, and things that may be handy to them. To the
11 average member of the public, if he wishes to read that,
12 that's available at any time. However, it's probably more
13 along the lines of helping those people who are dealing
14 with the disaster than the average community, where the
15 general information is probably of more value to them.
16

17 Q. So you're saying that that's really a document, I
18 suppose, that is more valuable to people who are
19 facilitating --

20 A. That's right.
21

22 Q. -- and coordinating things during the disaster?

23 A. Yes.
24

25 Q. So whether it was posted before or after 6 January may
26 not be --

27 A. No.
28

29 Q. -- in your view, relevant. But what about the --
30

31 MR AINSWORTH: Would it be easier to read that chronology
32 into the record? Would it help Steve?
33

34 MR KEVIN: It just seems that it's highly relevant, in
35 terms of the timing of it, and it may be something that
36 needs to be looked at again later. If you were to go
37 through each one of those documents, you would see -
38 because I have - that it builds on the various meetings
39 that were occurring since probably about July and then more
40 intensely, as it turns out, in December. Some of their
41 work was directed to bushfire as opposed to flooding, but
42 then it changes as the season changes.
43

44 MS JUHASZ: We're not saying that the plan wasn't
45 developed before the time that they had to legislatively or
46 it wasn't lodged in time --
47

1 MR KEVIN: No.
2
3 MS JUHASZ: -- because it appears that it was. I was just
4 trying to work out the chronology in relation to - we've
5 got different dates. There's a meeting where it's passed;
6 the date of the actual plan is 6 January; then it seems to
7 be finally ratified in about February. I just wanted to
8 know about the process and how that worked --
9 A. That wouldn't be unusual.
10
11 Q. -- and, I suppose, when it's distributed or available
12 to the community?
13 A. That wouldn't be unusual, in any council meeting
14 situation, that something is presented to council, it's
15 voted upon; it's not until those meeting minutes are
16 actually ratified, which could be the following month or
17 later, that it actually becomes factual.
18
19 Now, in terms of the information which goes to council
20 meetings, the agenda is available to the public on the
21 meeting day and the minutes are available to the public
22 usually soon after on the website. Now, I'm very much in
23 favour of that plan being on the website; not so much for
24 the interests of the general public, but for the interest
25 of other councils, other groups, so that we can look at
26 theirs and they can look at ours, and so forth. You know?
27 I think the general public would have a very limited
28 interest in it.
29
30 Q. I just wanted to ask you about the evacuation plan.
31 You've got that in your material which was provided, and I
32 think it's at point 20. There is an evacuation --
33 A. Yes.
34
35 Q. -- and welfare management plan that we've been
36 provided with.
37 A. Yes.
38
39 Q. That obviously is required under the guidelines --
40 A. Yes.
41
42 Q. -- and under the Act.
43 A. Yes.
44
45 Q. But from what we can see, the document that we've got
46 that was lodged here is a proforma document without any
47 details filled in.

1 A. Yes.
2
3 Q. Are there any other documents which have actually
4 specific evacuation centres or that were lodged along with
5 the local disaster management plan?
6 A. Look, there may well be. I couldn't answer that
7 question now. But in regard to the evacuation centres for
8 flood in the Lockyer Valley, there is a specific factor
9 that's important and that is those points which are
10 accessible. Now, in this case, I made a very conscious
11 decision that the Gatton shire hall be the evacuation
12 point.
13
14 Q. Was that a decision that you made after the actual
15 event?
16 A. It was made, I believe, very soon after the event.
17
18 Q. At the time of 10 January, it doesn't appear from the
19 material - and correct me if I'm wrong - that there was any
20 real evacuation and welfare management plan in place for
21 the Lockyer Valley.
22 A. Well, I'm not sure if there was in writing but
23 certainly we had practised the process of using evacuation
24 centres and we had fairly detailed knowledge of where they
25 would be and how they worked, because we had used them
26 before.
27
28 Q. So that was prior to amalgamation you'd used those, is
29 that what you're saying?
30 A. Prior to amalgamation they had. Well, we hadn't faced
31 a disaster post-amalgamation but, obviously, geographically
32 they're still in the same situation and the same disasters
33 tend to apply to the same areas. So those centres for
34 particular disasters would still be quite applicable.
35 Flood is a little bit different to bushfire, of course.
36
37 Q. Yes. So you're saying that the evacuation centres and
38 those processes were common knowledge to councillors and
39 people, from an administrative point of view?
40 A. Certainly to a number of councillors and I can be
41 quite specific about that.
42
43 Q. Yes?
44 A. Graham Moon, the deputy mayor, is a former mayor of
45 Laidley, who had experience in previous floods back as far
46 as the 90s, etc. Janice Holstein, one of our councillors,
47 was involved, at the time of the bushfires, in the

1 evacuation centres that were used. Tanya Milligan was a
2 former deputy mayor of Laidley Shire and had seen the flood
3 situation in Laidley many times and I'm quite certain would
4 be quite familiar with the evacuation centres which would
5 be suitable. Peter Friend is an ex-council employee of
6 many years and was involved in numerous disasters within
7 council and those centres over the time. Dave Neuendorf is
8 a fairly long-term councillor as well and was certainly
9 involved in some of the previous disasters, particularly
10 with evacuation in the Helidon area. Of course, Jim
11 McDonald, from his other role in life, would have a
12 knowledge of that as well.
13

14 Q. I suppose the issue with - and I hear what you're
15 saying about councillors having knowledge of the evacuation
16 centres but, obviously, something which has been raised in
17 the course of submissions we've received is that the
18 community didn't have the knowledge of where these
19 evacuation centres were and it doesn't appear as though
20 there's anything formal which has been published on your
21 website or part of an actual formal plan, in accordance
22 with the Disaster Management Act.

23 A. Well, I think that's - I think actually there's
24 something in that which I'm not saying was deliberate but I
25 think it was fortunate, and that is it's a good job, I
26 believe, that some of - that that was the case, because in
27 the case of, say, Murphy's Creek, if some of those people
28 had tried to move towards an evacuation centre - and, to be
29 really honest with you, in terms of flooding, there really
30 can only be one and that is Gatton, because things are cut
31 off, and if they had tried to move towards that then we
32 could've had many further issues.
33

34 You have to imagine, immediately after this flood, for
35 some days our shire was completely cut off. The Warrego
36 Highway itself, I don't know that ever in its history
37 before it has been cut off for so long. We literally had
38 hundreds of people in some situations in cars on the
39 highway. Now, it's almost impossible to utilise the normal
40 evacuation centres that you would use because of the
41 desiccation of the highways and the roads. I believe that
42 any plans that would've been in place in regard to that
43 would've been most difficult because of the way it
44 happened.
45

46 I don't think we've ever seen before a situation like
47 this and the loss of life could've been, I think, worse if

1 people had been directed to move around more than they had.
2 For example, the people in Withcott were contained there,
3 the road was closed, and I think that was very much a life
4 saving thing.
5

6 Q. Is it the case that - were any places prepared as
7 evacuation centres and ready to be used for that purpose
8 when the event of 10 January took place?

9 A. Well, for flooding - for flooding, for example, Gatton
10 was - the hall there has most of the facilities.

11 Obviously, things like bedding and actual fresh food you
12 can't keep for any length of time, but the emergency type
13 accommodation in a dry situation - water, power, all that
14 sort of thing - in Gatton was available almost immediately.
15 In fact, even backup power supplies, and everything, we had
16 in place prior to the event because, remember, our flooding
17 issues started on Boxing Day. So what happened on Boxing
18 Day, we actually went into a response mode and we had
19 backup generators, for example, connected to the Gatton
20 hall and to our office in Gatton. We had lots of things
21 like that already in place. However, in this case, it was
22 a case of getting people to those centres.
23

24 MR KEVIN: Are you looking for the date when the
25 evacuation centre issue was decided and started?
26

27 MS JUHASZ: I'm just looking for some sort of material
28 that would have been lodged in support of the fact that an
29 evacuation centre or plan was prepared, because an issue
30 which has been raised is that the community weren't aware
31 of any nominated evacuation centres, and did they exist,
32 were preparations put in place for evacuation in times of
33 disaster, those sorts of issues. We can't see it because
34 there isn't anything formalised in accordance with the Act
35 and there isn't a plan.
36

37 MR KEVIN: Have you got all the media material that
38 relates to it?
39

40 MS JUHASZ: We've got media material, obviously, following
41 10 January, where we've got places like the Withcott school
42 and Gatton established after the event, but I was just
43 really talking about preparation for disaster.
44

45 MR KEVIN: The chronology, once again, becomes important.
46 The 25th was Christmas Day, the 26th was Boxing Day - as
47 the statement reads - the LDMG control centre commenced

1 operation at 6.30am the next day, that was the 27th, and I
2 think that day was critical in terms of the decision about
3 evacuation centres and the notification of that.

4
5 MR JONES: I think it's important that we also keep in
6 mind the point that I made before: never in my lifetime
7 can I ever remember the Warrego Highway being disrupted to
8 the level it was. In most emergencies that we contend
9 with, 1-in-100 year flooding, etc, that access is still
10 open and the evacuation centre - which was equipped with
11 auxiliary power, all those things - in Gatton would have
12 been capable of doing the job.

13
14 MS JUHASZ: Q. So you're saying that if it hadn't been
15 splitting up the smaller communities in the way in which
16 this event had, the plan would have been for the council to
17 evacuate everybody to Gatton?

18 A. That's right.

19
20 Q. Because that generally could have housed the community
21 of the Lockyer Valley?

22 A. Well, for a particular reason - there's a number of
23 particular reasons. Let me first say, for example, people
24 from the west, which is where a lot of the catastrophe
25 happened - the Gatton bypass was specifically constructed
26 to avoid the flooding issues of Grantham many years ago and
27 there's only one bridge which was even disrupted on that
28 for a very short time. So that is normally open.

29
30 In Gatton, we have a specific reason why we would
31 evacuate people there: (a) it's above flood height and was
32 proven throughout this to be well above flood height; (b)
33 you've got access by choppers to the showgrounds which is
34 just across the road; you've got a hospital in Gatton;
35 you've got various supermarkets and places with adequate
36 supplies of floods; you've got reasonable supply of water
37 in terms of the reservoirs; we already had in store, before
38 the event, backup power supplies; the hall itself is a
39 large hall and it's complete with showers, toilets
40 commercial kitchen; all that sort of thing is in place.

41
42 Now, we have a similar facility at Withcott. However,
43 in this case it too was cut off by the flood and we had so
44 much substantial damage to roads and bridges that places
45 that you would never normally, even in the '74 flood, see
46 cut off, were cut off. The main bridge at Helidon, which
47 is a very significant structure, didn't have anywhere near

1 the water over it that it did on this occasion.

2
3 Q. So since the incident on 10 January, has the council
4 or will the council revisit where they're planning to place
5 evacuation centres and formalise these into some sort of
6 plan to disseminate amongst the community?

7 A. Since this event has occurred and we now know that
8 it's possible that such an intense event could occur - and
9 keep in mind that on the morning of 10 January, I doubt
10 whether there was anyone in our shire who would've
11 anticipated the water heights that we saw. We already have
12 in place a number of actions which would allow that to
13 occur. For example, there's already been some structures
14 put on the Murphy's Creek ground, in terms of a facility
15 there; there's plans underway to work with Rotary to build
16 a fairly major hall and kitchen at Murphy's Creek; rotary
17 have already purchased the old butter factory in Grantham
18 to turn into a community centre come accommodation area.

19
20 So, all these things have already happened since
21 10 January and are already in place, because the thinking
22 is now very different. It's probably fine, in hindsight,
23 for us to say did we do this. However, the levels and the
24 heights that occurred on that day were way, way above what
25 any of us have seen before and there's varying factors,
26 measurable factors, that we can mention which suggest this
27 is much more than a 1-in-100 event.

28
29 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Just looking at the chronology here,
30 Steve, on 23 December there was notification to the LDMG
31 advising predicted weather conditions over the Christmas
32 period and notification of contact details. I know that
33 BoM was in regular contact with various sections of the
34 emergency service, advising them.

35
36 As you mentioned, there was flooding that occurred on
37 27 December, commencing up around Spring Bluff/Murphy's
38 Creek, where the creek rise, and all the way down. It
39 receded reasonably quickly. On 6 December it came up again
40 and didn't recede as quickly because of, one can assume,
41 all the wet weather and moisture, and that, around and the
42 continual rain during that period of time; it never really
43 let up.

44
45 I understand what you're saying about Gatton. Was
46 there any consideration given at that stage to perhaps
47 identifying areas that could be used as a suitable area,

1 considering there was forecasts, I think, of four cyclones;
2 BoM were coming across with predictions. Was there any
3 consideration given to higher areas like Murphy's Creek,
4 Postman's Ridge, and that?

5 A. There definitely was consideration given and even the
6 Withcott school, for example, which has been used for that
7 purpose before. We had all those things in mind. However,
8 I think the important thing that we have to remember is
9 that when this hit, very soon afterwards communications
10 were completely lost to a lot of these areas. Keep in
11 mind, I was right in the middle of this. It wasn't until
12 the Wednesday after this event hit that I was actually
13 aware of the extent of damage at Murphy's Creek because
14 there was no road access from our shire. I believe there
15 was some limited access from Toowoomba, be it fairly
16 dangerous. We had no access to Toowoomba; the Toowoomba
17 range was completely closed. The battery backup on the
18 landlines in the complete western part of the shire had
19 gone dead. Some of the mobile phone towers were destroyed
20 or had no battery backup, so we had no communication at
21 all. In my own case, I couldn't - because I was in Gatton,
22 I couldn't communicate with my own family for a week, so we
23 didn't know.

24
25 Q. I know the communication was pretty poor, things being
26 knocked down, and that, but there's some talk about the
27 repeater station at Mount Kynoch of UHF radio, and things
28 like that. Had it been used in previous circumstances?
29 You talked about the bushfires of 2002. Had that form of
30 communication been utilised previously at all?

31 A. Actually, I tried to use UHF radio quite a lot because
32 I've got one in my ute; I use it all the time. The problem
33 was exactly the same with phone communication. When this
34 hit, you could imagine, we had a few hundred people at
35 Withcott on their way home from work, going to work -
36 whatever - that were just stopped in that little village.
37 Now what happened was each one of those was trying to get a
38 message to home, or wherever, as to where they were because
39 it was just a total disaster area. So everyone was trying
40 to utilise communications, even if it be UHF, and the
41 possibility of utilising it was quite remote. Things were
42 just overloaded unbelievably; hence, the reason the battery
43 backup was so poor, in terms of the normal communications.

44
45 It was very difficult for us to get communication to
46 anywhere and we were basically relying on physical messages
47 coming in from people. Even to cross bridges to go out and

1 physically have a look, some of the things - the issues
2 that we encountered. Obviously, in a disaster one of the
3 golden rules is you don't endanger yourself to the point
4 where you become entrapped or anyone else and, of course, a
5 lot of our bridges and roads were so sufficiently destroyed
6 it wasn't even safe necessarily to drive on them to go and
7 physically have a look at the circumstance. It was very
8 difficult.

9
10 Q. I think the suddenness of this event, in particular in
11 your council area, the western part of it and coming down
12 to Grantham, we'll never be able to change that --

13 A. Yes.

14
15 Q. -- but in preparation for the wet season and
16 Christmas, and that, I notice on this here that you email
17 the staff, providing staffing details over the Christmas
18 closures and all that, and it's well-known that Christmas
19 in Queensland is the wet season, and all that. Does the
20 council meet prior to the holidays or the wet season to
21 discuss issues in case of flooding, considering that
22 there's some low-lying areas in the council area?

23 A. Yes. Look, our staff or our manager of the area -
24 Gerry Franzmann, in this case - was in constant contact
25 with us. In fact, he rang me at some ridiculous time on
26 Boxing Day morning or whenever it was; he was talking to me
27 throughout the night, so our communication was happening
28 all the time.

29
30 Keep in mind, those events we talked about in December
31 and so forth, early in December and that, those times,
32 those events were just the normal events that we get over
33 Christmas and, yes, the ground was very waterlogged because
34 we'd been through ten years of drought. However, the
35 heights in the creeks and the crossings, and the like,
36 weren't unusual for that time of year.

37
38 There is another factor with that, I think, that we
39 need to consider. At the time when this hit, I was
40 actually in Withcott at that time. Now, it's quite common
41 over Christmas that we get a very significant rainfall
42 event in a specific area over a specific catchment. When
43 this hit, and I was at Withcott at that time, I assumed the
44 normal circumstance of a cloud burst, or whatever you want
45 to call it, in that area which affected one catchment, one
46 creek. There's some six of those that run into the Lockyer
47 before it gets to Grantham.

1
2 Now, no-one in their wildest dream would've imagined,
3 given my 49 years of being around that area, that that rain
4 would've fallen over the catchment of all six creeks, but
5 in this case it did and that's why it was such a fluke
6 event and that's why everything that you wish to talk about
7 is so difficult because every means of communication, every
8 road, everything was in some way affected.
9

10 Q. Just getting to what I was alluding to there, with the
11 preparation every year for a wet season, is there any
12 communication in a rates notice or letters going out to
13 people saying, look, in the event of flooding around this
14 period of time, for Murphy's Creek your evacuation centre
15 is such and such, Postman's Ridge is the community hall,
16 just so the community are aware of where they go. Has that
17 ever occurred before?

18 A. Not to my knowledge and I would be very - I think we'd
19 have to be very careful about doing it. Given the
20 circumstances of what I've just discussed, I think it would
21 be quite dangerous for us to be encouraging people to move,
22 given the circumstances of the roads, creeks, and so forth,
23 in an event of the intensity that we've just had. I think
24 it's an absolute miracle that people weren't killed
25 actually in trying to travel after this event to points, as
26 we're discussing. In a normal flood, I think that would
27 work quite well.
28

29 Q. But I guess when you look at it, we're looking at
30 Murphy's Creek, you're looking at an area there, you've got
31 - Postman's Ridge was the next one down and you're
32 capturing Spring Bluff, and that, so the distance - I know
33 the distance from Spring Bluff to Murphy's Creek Hotel was
34 a little bit, it was a reasonable distance, but the number
35 of houses nearby, on foot, getting over to an area, you've
36 got - people have to have somewhere to go. Their houses
37 are washed away, they can't stay put, so how do we - and I
38 know we couldn't pre-empt that was going to happen but in
39 preparation and planning for wet seasons and floods, there
40 must be some consideration about advising people to go to
41 higher ground or to an evacuation centre?

42 A. I think what you're saying is a good idea but I guess
43 it's the issue of pre-empting how high it would get. Now,
44 let me give you an example of that. When this hit
45 Withcott, I actually made a phone call to a person in
46 Grantham. It's the only number I had that I knew, because
47 I was stuck in the water myself. I rang the person and I

1 told them that there had been a big event in Withcott, it
2 was likely there would be some flooding in Grantham, not
3 realising the other catchments had got the same rain.
4

5 Now, that person or other persons in Grantham went to
6 the high points where they have normally been safe for the
7 last 100 years, but in this case we've got buildings which
8 are over 100 years old that have been washed away. So you
9 get to a point of what is a safe point in an extreme event.
10

11 What you're saying I agree with, I think it's a good
12 idea to have those evacuation points, I think that we would
13 like to work that way, but what does concern me in doing it
14 is at what point do we advise people of the issue I just
15 spoke of in Grantham, because there were places that
16 completely disappeared this time that have never been
17 underwater before.
18

19 MS JUHASZ: Q. I understand that, but just to get it
20 clear, in the material that we have got, though, there is
21 no formalised evacuation plan?
22

23 A. That's right.
24

25 Q. There's local knowledge about the fact that it would
26 be in Gatton, you think, because usually you've had
27 flooding to the degree where everybody from your area can
28 access Gatton?
29

30 A. Mmm.
31

32 Q. But even with the wet season leading up to Christmas,
33 there wasn't really an anticipation of having to set up
34 additional evacuation centres in those more localised
35 shires and regions within the Lockyer Valley; is that --
36

37 A. Well, I would think that under that normal flooding
38 circumstance, it wouldn't be a good idea to have the
39 evacuation there; it would be better in a centralised
40 point. It's just with the extreme nature, you couldn't get
41 there.
42

43 Q. Since this time, you've established the butter factory
44 in Grantham and then there's also been an establishment of
45 an evacuation centre in Murphy's Creek or a place to
46 congregate?
47

A. Well, we're working with them to build a community
hall on ground which didn't go underwater, which is a real
key to this factor, because I wouldn't like to recommend we
evacuate anyone to any area which went underwater. Keep in

1 mind that the evacuation point in Murphy's Creek was the
2 hotel, which did go underwater. To me, that's a really big
3 concern because I don't want people evacuated to anywhere
4 that went underwater.
5

6 We also have an issue in Murphy's Creek because, as I
7 said, it was some days before we got physical word of what
8 had happened in Murphy's Creek. Now I'm not aware of all
9 the communications but I do understand that they did
10 receive help from some of the emergency services on the
11 night of the disaster but, to my knowledge, that
12 information wasn't passed through to us, so we still
13 weren't aware of the full extent.
14

15 MR KEVIN: You are aware that certainly the council,
16 through the LGQ, is obtaining a flood study done by Neil
17 Collins.
18

19 MS JUHASZ: Mmm.
20

21 MR KEVIN: That report is meant to identify not only
22 historically what happened in the event, but also it may be
23 of assistance that he will be, sort of, advocating, I
24 imagine, the concept of the worst-known probable flood,
25 probable maximum event, and it's from that that you can
26 then identify effective evacuation centres. One of the
27 issues that Steve has mentioned in the past is that people
28 were going to places that they knew, as a matter of course
29 from historical knowledge, would be regarded as safe zones,
30 but they weren't in this instance.
31

32 MS JUHASZ: No.
33

34 MR KEVIN: So that's part of it. That process hasn't been
35 completed, though, and Steve wouldn't have had the benefit
36 of this report, which is only about to be finalised and
37 available shortly.
38

39 MR AINSWORTH: So is that like a 1-in-500 year plan or
40 1-in-1000 year plan? I know most of them are a 1-in-100.
41

42 MR KEVIN: The probable maximum flood event is based on a
43 scientific concept of how much precipitation would occur in
44 a particular area in its maximum capacity. It's related to
45 the hydrology and the hydraulics of the area and it gives
46 you the most extreme event you could possibly imagine and
47 it's from that you then look to determine where,

1 physically, a place would be - for evacuation purposes,
2 where a person could be with a very low probability of it
3 being, obviously, inundated.

4
5 MS JUHASZ: Q. So you're waiting for that as well, in
6 relation to long-term planning issues in the area and
7 rebuilding and that sort of thing?

8 A. Well, it's very important in the whole emergency
9 management thing. If you look back through the list of
10 activities, that was commissioned a very long time ago,
11 long before this event, and that was one of the proactive
12 things that we were participating in. I really do think a
13 lot of the discussion that we're just having about
14 evacuation centres does really need that information as to
15 what is really safe, and that Murphy's Creek one I think is
16 a classic case of that, where the building that was used
17 was actually flooded.

18
19 Q. Can I just ask a question which is unrelated to
20 evacuation centres?

21 A. Mmm.

22
23 Q. I want to know the council's involvement in relation
24 to where the rural fire service is situated. Is that a
25 planning issue for council?

26 A. The rural fire --

27
28 Q. Sorry. The rural fire brigade is in Murphy's Creek
29 and there was a station there with fire trucks, and things
30 like that, and the building was washed out, essentially?

31 A. Yes.

32
33 Q. Does council have a role in stating where that --

34 A. Well, I might just address --

35
36 Q. -- building --

37 A. That's probably not a simple question to answer.
38 There's a rural fire service building in most of our
39 regional sized towns or areas. Most of those buildings
40 were built many years ago, or at least the initial
41 buildings were put there many, many years ago, when it was
42 back and it was the old bush fire brigade setup. It was
43 completely different legislation and they were very much
44 local volunteer type organisations. Many of them started
45 off with literally a wet bag, and a lot of those buildings
46 were actually constructed by local volunteer groups of a
47 weekend, or whatever, usually on some land that the council

1 or someone else provided. The one at Murphy's Creek has
2 been there a very long time. I'm not sure just how many
3 years but most of my lifetime that I could remember, at
4 least the last 30 years, or something, and it was probably
5 in the most convenient point at that time.

6
7 Keep in mind, also, where those buildings are is
8 usually an indication that it's not normally flooded at
9 that particular spot. If you have a look at Grantham, for
10 example, it's on very high land. In most of the towns and
11 villages, the rural fire shed wasn't flooded. However,
12 what happened in Murphy's Creek was exceptional again.

13
14 I think the important thing we've got to keep in mind
15 with those type of buildings and with the evacuation
16 centres, and all these things, is it's quite common
17 knowledge that eight and a half inches of rain fell in half
18 an hour, so when you get that amount of rain, even if it be
19 in the city here, you will have enormous consequences and I
20 think the Murphy's Creek fire shed is one of those
21 consequences.

22
23 Q. I was just wondering, though, has council given the
24 approval to rebuild in the same spot? Are you intrinsic in
25 then giving your approval about where the fire station will
26 rebuild?

27 A. No. That's obviously a State Government issue.

28
29 Q. Yes.

30 A. It's a State Government issue now because the rural
31 fire service is not as it was.

32
33 Q. No.

34 A. It's obviously under different legislation and that's
35 handled totally through the fire service now, and I haven't
36 been involved in any discussion about where they will
37 rebuild.

38
39 Q. Okay.

40 A. I know they've just been given some new fire vehicles
41 and I guess that's a decision for the fire service to take
42 up, as to whether they repair that building or whether they
43 build a new building. If they were to build a new
44 building, I think it would be wise to build it on higher
45 ground.

46
47 Q. They'd need to go through council, obviously, for

1 planning purposes, and things, if they were to rebuild?

2 A. I would think they'd be exempt.

3
4 Q. Because it's a State --

5 A. I would think, if it was going on State land, they
6 would be exempt.

7
8 Q. So you haven't had any involvement with that at all?

9 A. And I'm not even - even that piece of land that that's
10 actually on, my guess, and it would be no more than a
11 guess, would be that it would be on road reserve because
12 it's between the road and the railway line and I would
13 think it's on road reserve. I'm not sure - well, road
14 reserve is generally Crown land anyway, so I guess it
15 probably is on State land. That would've been the old
16 highway many years ago, or the old road many years ago.

17
18 Q. I might keep going through your statement because it's
19 probably taking a bit longer than we anticipated. Going
20 through, you read about paragraph 7, and you make a comment
21 that long hours and constant pressure took its toll on the
22 effectiveness of personnel over time. I just wanted you to
23 really expand on that and what you actually mean by it.

24 A. Well, it was - in very many cases, in the early stages
25 of this event, we really couldn't get too much help in, for
26 a couple of reasons: (a) they physically couldn't travel
27 to our area because the roads were cut, given the Warrego
28 Highway was cut. Obviously it was difficult to bring
29 people in by aircraft. Well, fixed-wing aircraft was
30 impossible because we don't have an airport; helicopter was
31 difficult because they were all involved in search and
32 rescue type work, and keep in mind at the time this was
33 happening there were a lot of people missing.

34
35 Our staff were obviously very - we've only got a given
36 number of staff and we had this disaster not in one town or
37 one village, but virtually from one length of the shire to
38 the other. As such, we had to make the most of what staff
39 we had and they worked long hours. In my own case, I sort
40 of didn't go to bed Sunday night because we had a minor
41 flooding in Grantham Sunday night; I didn't go Monday night
42 and I didn't go Tuesday night. So I slept for the first
43 time on Wednesday and obviously when there's loss of life,
44 and so forth, involved, that's what has to happened.

45
46 Q. What could assist you with that?

47 A. Look, I think it's very difficult because if we put

1 into perspective exactly what happened, we had our event on
2 the Monday. We had flooding the next day and day after in
3 Forest Hill and Laidley, where we had to evacuate a fair
4 portion of Forest Hill town by air. What then followed
5 that was the flooding downstream at Ipswich and Brisbane
6 and all those places. It was unreasonable to expect people
7 to have to leave those areas and come and help us when
8 within 24 hours they could well suffer a similar fate.

9
10 So there was generally a shortage of people across
11 south-east Queensland and very difficult to bring them in
12 from interstate; in fact, very difficult for us to
13 communicate, given the fact of our communication status.
14 We did retain telephone communication, and so forth,
15 throughout the whole time at Gatton at the office there,
16 but the information coming in from the field was very
17 difficult.

18
19 Q. I know that you got some assistance from, I think,
20 Murweh Regional Council --

21 A. Yes.

22
23 Q. -- a little later in the piece?

24 A. Yes.

25
26 Q. What sort of assistance did they provide?

27 A. Well, we got assistance from a number of councils, you
28 know, throughout the whole event on varying levels. The
29 assistance you're talking about was in terms of a chap who
30 I think is the deputy CEO out there. He was experienced in
31 the Charleville floods, which is many years ago now, but we
32 contacted that council because of their experience in the
33 Charleville floods. Obviously people like Gerry Franzmann
34 needed to take a break as the days progressed, so that they
35 could retain efficiency, and when the opportunity came on
36 board to bring that type of person on, we did, given their
37 experience, and it was quite successful in my opinion.

38
39 Q. You go through that your coordination and deployment
40 around this time worked reasonably well, but your resources
41 were becoming stretched.

42 A. Mmm.

43
44 Q. In what sense? What sort of resources and what
45 additional things would you need?

46 A. I need to talk - there I'm talking about the bigger
47 picture.

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Q. Yes?

A. Now, in terms of equipment and the initiative to use that equipment for the particular job, I think it was very good. For example, when darkness hit Grantham we still had a lot of people in houses. We used our equipment, our loaders and so forth, to take them out very successfully. As the days passed, keep in mind the Warrego Highway was closed, so even resources such as fuel became quite difficult. For the comfort of people and keeping the whole place going, fuel was obviously in big demand. The supplies were dwindling; they didn't run out, but they went close. Even resources of our own - road building materials - we managed, we got sufficient. It would've been nicer at times to have more, and so forth, but it was simply a case of flooding occurring down here and we couldn't do much about it.

Q. How did you coordinate that? We saw in your past disaster plans, before the amalgamation of council, you had lists of business owners --

A. Yes.

Q. -- and resources, but that's not really included in the most recent plan. Were you able to draw on local business owners or --

A. Yes, no problem at all. That all worked very, very well. In terms of getting our local people and what they could supply on board, it was excellent. They were excellent in their response and what they provided to the best of their ability. Keep in mind, though, because this disaster was so widespread, obviously the army and so forth needed to come in, because it was something that a local council or even a State Government would've had to find difficult, because we had disasters throughout Queensland in all sorts of areas and it was something that couldn't be handled by the normal mechanisms.

We had a search and rescue effort in place, a lot of people missing and just the sheer number of people that would be required to operate that and feed them and do all those sorts of things couldn't be done by any local community. So it worked very well. I think that, everything considered, it was pretty - it was good, but obviously you are stretched when you're using such a number of resources.

1 Q. Did the system where, as the chair of LDMG, you
2 contact the DDC and then you get those further resources,
3 did you find that that was timely and you were delivered
4 with those --
5 A. Oh, it worked well.
6
7 Q. -- resources as you needed them?
8 A. Oh, I think it was working quite well. I really don't
9 have a complaint about that in any way or form. We worked
10 through Brett in Toowoomba and it went very well. The army
11 came in without any hesitation and took the people out of
12 Forest Hill, and they're all pretty expensive sort of
13 exercises. Obviously the decisions had to be made at the
14 time to ensure that we did the very best, in terms of
15 people's lives, and I was very comfortable about that.
16
17 Q. I just wanted to ask you - and I'm, sort of, jumping
18 around a bit.
19 A. No, that's all right.
20
21 Q. But you mention in your statement at paragraph 15 that
22 helicopter flights were organised to make direct contact,
23 particularly with a number of isolated families, to assure
24 them of support?
25 A. Yes.
26
27 Q. Was that through your disaster management system or
28 was that something that was privately arranged by the
29 council, and I just wanted to know who the isolated
30 families were and where they were?
31 A. Okay. Well, look, we would have a full list of all
32 our helicopter charters or our involvement with
33 helicopters. Obviously some of those were with - were
34 through EMQ.
35
36 Q. Oh, okay. Yes?
37 A. There were varying arrangements because there were
38 varying providers of those services, and I'm sure that we
39 could provide that list without too much trouble at all.
40 Now, when the flooding commenced, which was Boxing Day, we
41 had a number of people that were stranded and they were
42 stranded for some weeks up in that Black Duck --
43
44 Q. Mount Sylvia?
45 A. --- Mount Sylvia, that area. The damage there was
46 quite extreme. We had a number of politicians, and so
47 forth, who came and actually inspected that in the time

1 prior to the disaster of 10 January. Now, those people
2 were being serviced and supplied food and what they needed
3 by air during that time. It's not a simple case of
4 evacuating people out of those areas. They're not highly
5 urbanised areas. Most of the buildings are well up from
6 the dangers of water but you obviously need to keep some
7 people in there because there are animals and there are all
8 those other factors which go on in farming communities. So
9 a number of the people who didn't need to be there did move
10 out and moved to relatives, and so forth. Those that were
11 there remained and we kept them supplied through that whole
12 period, and those movements would be on that list.

13
14 Q. So that's something through council but not through
15 your local disaster management group?

16 A. Well, it's through - the disaster management group was
17 fully aware of the whole thing. Our council officers were
18 very proactive in looking after the individual people.
19 We're not talking about large numbers in this case. It
20 might be just, in some cases, two or three properties and
21 there are varying ways that we would supply those people.
22 If we could get it in by land, obviously we would; if it's
23 chopper, it's chopper. Sometimes we coordinate those
24 activities with inspecting roads and bridges to see if
25 they're safe, etc. But our staff are very conscious of
26 that and they're very conscious of looking after the people
27 first and they do that their normal process.

28
29 Q. So it was more of a reactive thing? You found out
30 about this and then you would order those helicopters
31 through EMQ, but it wasn't done through the Disaster
32 Management Act channels, where you usually go through the
33 LDMG and then ask --

34 A. Not necessarily, no. However, the minute that the
35 flooding occurred in that Mount Sylvia area, we were
36 immediately out monitoring that because we are aware of the
37 dangers of those crossings and those creeks. They are
38 quite intense when they run over a short period and the
39 damage is quite extreme. Even in the big event of
40 10 January, the road danger aspect was handled quite well.
41 I know the police drove most of the roads in the days
42 immediately after it and we had a pretty good handle on it,
43 because I guess one of our key factors then is further
44 danger.

45
46 MR AINSWORTH: Q. You mention, Steve, in paragraph 7
47 about resources, and that. How many actual council

1 employees did you have at your disposal?
2 A. Look, we've got about 340 or 350 employees normally.
3 Obviously it was over that Christmas period and some of
4 those would be away. A number of those are office based
5 persons in administrative type roles, who wouldn't
6 necessarily be involved in this anyway. I guess we
7 could've pulled in the biggest majority of our outside
8 workforce if we needed to. We did contact - people were
9 put on alert immediately when the disaster started to
10 happen after Boxing Day. We've obviously got to be careful
11 in doing that, too, that we rest people because we've got
12 maximum hours, and the like, in terms of operating
13 machinery and that type of thing. I think we would've had
14 - probably close to half our workforce was available.
15 However, I think the important thing to keep in mind with
16 that is 150 people may be adequate if this disaster
17 occurred in one community; we've had it happen in all of
18 our communities almost.

19
20 Q. In saying that, you'd also have members of your
21 council staff spread out through Lockyer Valley?

22 A. Yes.

23
24 Q. Like, you might have some living at Murphy's Creek or
25 Spring Bluff. So you would have people there who were
26 isolated who were council employees that could --

27 A. Oh, very few in that area. In some areas there's
28 obviously more council employees than others. For example,
29 in Gatton town area there would be a number. As you move
30 up towards Withcott, and the like, there are relatively few
31 because you're getting further away from - our council
32 operations were essentially in Gatton and Laidley and I'm
33 not saying there's not the odd one, but there really isn't
34 very many.

35
36 Q. I think you've already said this, but who was
37 coordinating the council resources from Gatton?

38 A. Well, Gerry Franzmann was essentially in - it was a
39 cooperative effort. He had a number of people around him
40 as well, of course; his foreman and all that type of thing.

41
42 MS JUHASZ: Q. Just continuing through the statement, you
43 mentioned a little before in relation to communication.
44 Obviously with the events of 10 January, there was serious
45 problems with it.

46 A. Mmm.

47

1 Q. But in relation to that, it destroyed a lot of
2 conventional modes of communication, then how did the
3 council get out and start to communicate with the
4 community? Did you do doorknocking?
5 A. Physically. Physically travelled out. Look, we used
6 our whole networking thing; people in the rural fire
7 service or people that we had connections with, people that
8 we could contact who were prominent, old-time residents,
9 all that type of thing, and we had a pretty strong network
10 of people we contacted by all sorts of means. But I guess
11 the problem we had to always keep in mind was that anywhere
12 we had to travel out to could have been treacherous itself.
13
14 Q. Did you have much involvement with getting a temporary
15 tower in, because we know that Murphy's Creek has pretty
16 poor reception. Did the council have much involvement with
17 getting that temporary tower placed?
18 A. No, very limited, very limited involvement in that.
19 The Murphy's Creek community did do a lot of that initial
20 stuff themselves and that was necessary because, as I said,
21 I wasn't even aware of what happened in Murphy's Creek
22 until the Wednesday.
23
24 Q. Part of what has been said by some residents of
25 Murphy's Creek is that there weren't - I think probably
26 about three or four days after the actual event, there were
27 two quite junior representatives of the council --
28 A. On the Thursday.
29
30 Q. -- two female representatives who arrived but, apart
31 from that, there wasn't much involvement of the council at
32 all until about 21 January, so some couple of weeks
33 afterwards.
34 A. No. I think you'd need to get the facts from council
35 on that. Those two officers that were sent out, they were
36 actually sent out to investigate the circumstance because
37 we hadn't had communications from that area. As I said, I
38 believe there was a response from some of the emergency
39 services on the night of the disaster - I've since found
40 out - to Murphy's Creek. If that's correct?
41
42 Q. Yes.
43 A. I don't believe there was any formal process of that
44 information being passed through to us, that I'm aware of.
45 If there had been, the circumstance may have been
46 different.
47

1 MR AINSWORTH: Q. So the DDC or the major incident room
2 at Toowoomba never passed anything on?
3 A. I don't know that it was their fault, because I'm not
4 - keep in mind, the whole communications thing was a mess.
5 I'm told by someone at Murphy's Creek that the urban fire
6 brigade responded to a call on the night of the disaster at
7 Murphy's Creek. Now, where that got lost in the path I'm
8 not sure but I certainly wasn't aware of it until the
9 Wednesday and, of course, very soon after that, I think it
10 was the Thursday, we sent those two officers out to have a
11 look, in fact, if there was any damage in Murphy's Creek
12 because we weren't aware of it. We were at Postman's
13 Ridge, and the like, because it was easier to access those
14 places, but not Murphy's Creek. Now, the response from
15 council was certainly much, much sooner than 21 January
16 because I know for a fact that I was out there.

17
18 MS JUHASZ: Q. On the Friday?
19 A. Way before 21 January.

20
21 Q. So you've got the girls that go out there on the
22 Thursday, and do they report back to you about what's
23 happening in Murphy's Creek?
24 A. They reported back to - the council system, the
25 operational system, Gerry Franzmann and that area, because
26 obviously by this stage the processes had started to set
27 in. I was involved in a more strategic type situation than
28 I was operational. At the time when these sort of things
29 happen, it's all hands on deck, isn't it, to save life
30 there and then but, of course, as the days goes by, it
31 becomes a more strategic exercise.

32
33 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Steve, just looking at minutes of the
34 meetings, and that, that went on up there - which was
35 material that we requested through Lockyer Valley Regional
36 Council, was there any issues with communication up to you?
37 The reason I ask is on 12 January it says here that Energex
38 power was lost at Grantham, Murphy's Creek, Ma Ma Creek and
39 Postman's Ridge. Then again, on 13 January it talks about
40 the water situation as follows: Withcott, zero; Gatton,
41 half a day; Helidon zero; Murphy's Creek, zero. That's on
42 the 13th, so obviously the Lockyer Valley disaster
43 management group were aware that there had been a situation
44 of quite significant events in the Murphy's Creek area, and
45 that, but no-one has advised you about it until the 14th.
46 A. Well, could I explain that?

47

1 Q. Yes.
2 A. Where it says the water at Murphy's Creek is zero,
3 that's because the Murphy's Creek town is not reticulated.
4 We have a line to Murphy's Creek which services a new
5 estate where they're only building the first houses now.
6 There is no reticulated water supply in Murphy's Creek, in
7 the township itself. So if I read an issue or I read a
8 statement which said zero supply in Murphy's Creek, I'd
9 take no notice of it because the town itself isn't
10 reticulated.

11
12 In terms of the power supply, I think the power
13 outages were even before that. Now, what happens is the
14 power to that whole sector of our shire is principally
15 supplied through the Postman's Ridge substation. The
16 Withcott --

17
18 Q. That's the big one on the corner there?
19 A. The big one on the corner. Withcott town itself, a
20 very small part of the central town did retain power
21 through the entire event because there is a dedicated line
22 built from Murphy's Creek to supply the Tyco factory at
23 Withcott and that line actually kept the very central part
24 of Withcott alive. Basically, everything else west of
25 Postman's Ridge was out.

26
27 Now, I know in areas around Blanchview, and so forth,
28 it was out from Monday through until at least about the
29 weekend - I think it was Sunday. So, if anyone reported to
30 me that there were power outages in Murphy's Creek,
31 Postman's Ridge, I would've once again taken no notice of
32 the fact of flood damage; it was simply a power issue
33 because I know that that whole area is fed through that
34 power station and I was aware that the one line to Tyco was
35 the only line that remained live. There were issues with
36 that and I am concerned about that because, at the end of
37 the day, I think that the power distribution from Postman's
38 Ridge needs to be revisited in an emergency situation
39 because there may well have been opportunities to bridge
40 that line and return power to some areas in the west much
41 earlier.

42
43 That is extremely important in the response because
44 keep in mind that only 40 percent or less of our shire has
45 reticulated water. So a lot of the areas that you're
46 talking about, like Murphy's Creek, don't. Power is vital
47 because water, pumping bores, all that type of thing

1 requires power and with the power outage, that is a further
2 issue; not necessarily a complete emergency issue, as in
3 the flooding and the devastation, but a comfort issue.
4

5 Q. They were only two things that I highlighted but what
6 I am getting at is, from reading the minutes here, as I
7 alluded to, in the Lockyer Valley Regional Council
8 material, it's quite obvious there hasn't been efficient
9 briefing up to you. Again on 12 January, "SES, more
10 volunteer staff unable to access Gatton to help. 20
11 additional SES members due to arrive in Toowoomba today
12 and will be tasked at Murphy's Creek under PS searching for
13 deceased." That's on the 12th.
14

15 Again, we go over to the 13th, where there's a command
16 post set up in Grantham for recovery tasks in Grantham,
17 Postman's Ridge and Murphy's Creek. Now, surely that would
18 be - we referred earlier a number of times to deceased
19 people and events and houses being washed away and a
20 significant event we've never seen before, yet no-one has
21 briefed up to the mayor prior to 14 January about a
22 disastrous situation at Murphy's Creek.

23 A. It was the Wednesday, I think, that I became --
24

25 MS JUHASZ: It's the 13th, isn't it?
26

27 MR AINSWORTH: Q. The 14th, I think you said earlier.

28 A. The 13th - well, the 10th was a Monday, wasn't it?
29

30 MS JUHASZ: Q. Yes.

31 A. Okay. So the 11th is Tuesday. Yes, it was the
32 Wednesday.
33

34 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Wednesday the 13th, so that's from the
35 12th - again, that was --

36 A. That I was aware of the extent of it.
37

38 Q. Yes.

39 A. Now, you're quite right, we were hearing these
40 comments that there's issues all the way down the creek
41 system and it's quite evident in some areas and anyone who
42 travels through Helidon would see what happened in Helidon.
43 However, the extent of the damage in Murphy's Creek was
44 completely a surprise to me when I travelled there. I
45 couldn't believe what had happened in Murphy's Creek. When
46 you say that there's been a death, wherever there's a
47 situation of a creek crossing or whatever, it's possible

1 that there will be a death. Keep in mind that we had no
2 indication of the number of people who had died at that
3 time.

4
5 Q. No. That came later on.

6 A. That was very, very hazy until much later, the total
7 number of people who died. It was all rumours, and so
8 forth, as to who might've died or what might've happened
9 and there was no indication to me until that Wednesday that
10 there was any serious loss of life in Murphy's Creek. I
11 fully expected, with the amount of rain that we had, that
12 in any creek crossing someone could be washed off the
13 crossing or those things that normally happen with road
14 incidents, and the like. But to consider that there was
15 the damage to houses and sheds the way there was in
16 Murphy's Creek, I couldn't believe it when I first went up
17 there.

18
19 Q. Well, I guess what I'm saying is that --

20
21 MR KEVIN: Can I just ask a question about which minutes
22 you are reading from because the minutes I have --

23
24 MR AINSWORTH: It's a summary of the Lockyer Valley
25 Regional Council minutes of the --

26
27 MR KEVIN: Are these the ones at the Stubbersfield Room?

28
29 MS JUHASZ: Yes, just on that second page, 2 of 4, under
30 QUU I think Mark was reading from previously and it's
31 just --

32
33 MR KEVIN: The only reason I interrupt is because it does
34 mention deceased people and it indicates who attended
35 there.

36
37 MS JUHASZ: It says there's apologies from Steve Jones.

38
39 MR KEVIN: Sorry. We must have a different set of
40 minutes.

41
42 MS JUHASZ: Is that the one that we're looking at? Oh,
43 there's numerous ones on the 13th.

44
45 MR KEVIN: This is on the 12th.

46
47 MS JUHASZ: There's the 12th but the next one that was

1 referring to was on the 13th, that was the Wednesday.
2
3 MR JONES: See, there were meetings occurring continually.
4 The majority of those people from the local disaster
5 committee were almost permanently in the building, if you
6 know what I mean, so there were permanent - there were
7 meetings just occurring regularly.
8
9 MR AINSWORTH: Q. I guess what I'm alluding to is the
10 main event happened up there on 10 January and you're
11 saying it's three days later before you become aware of the
12 severity of what happened?
13 A. To the extent.
14
15 Q. But there's documentation here showing that there were
16 searches for deceased in Murphy's Creek prior to you
17 becoming aware --
18 A. Yes.
19
20 Q. -- of the severity of the situation in Murphy's Creek?
21 A. Oh, that could well be the case and, as I just
22 addressed that before, I wouldn't be surprised if someone
23 said to me that there was a loss of life. Even in the
24 normal, lesser flood events that we have, given the nature
25 and topography of our shire - the steep crossings, the
26 number of crossings, all those sorts of things - if someone
27 said that there was a life lost, people do go into
28 crossings, cars are lost and we've had a number of those in
29 the lead-up to this major catastrophe. So that wouldn't be
30 an issue, unless it was stated to me that there was
31 multiple lives lost, that I would've taken notice or even
32 considered it was to the extent that it was.
33
34 MS JUHASZ: Can I just ask, do you want me to provide you
35 with a copy? We might have different ones. I think the
36 one that Mark is reading from is that one there, which
37 might be different from yours. (Handed) That's the 13th
38 that he read from previously.
39
40 MS TAYLOR: You've got this one on the 12th.
41
42 MR KEVIN: Okay, I've got the one on the 12th.
43
44 MS JUHASZ: Yes, the 12th. Does that read the same as
45 well?
46
47 MR KEVIN: The one on the 12th predates that and it refers

1 to the fact that police were searching for deceased in
2 Grantham and Murphy's Creek. That's all.

3
4 MS JUHASZ: That's right. So I suppose what Mark is
5 saying is there's minutes there but it doesn't seem to be
6 filtering through, I suppose.

7
8 MR KEVIN: But Steve Jones is there as a --

9
10 MS TAYLOR: Is that the 12th of --

11
12 MS JUHASZ: Yes.

13
14 MR AINSWORTH: Well, Steve is saying that he wasn't aware
15 of it until the 13th, when --

16
17 MS TAYLOR: No, it is on the Wednesday.

18
19 MR KEVIN: Sorry, I am just trying to clear something up.
20 You are putting to him that he wasn't aware of something on
21 the Thursday but, in reality, the minutes indicate that he
22 was present at a meeting in which it was discussed, is all
23 I'm saying. I'm just trying to work out what the --

24
25 MR JONES: Well, there's two factors. Let me clarify this
26 a bit more. I'll just clarify this a bit more. There's
27 two factors in this. There's the extent of the possible
28 loss of life, which we just discussed. There's also what
29 is termed "Murphy's Creek" and this is very important for
30 the purpose of this discussion. Generally, people are
31 referring to "Murphy's Creek" as Murphy's Creek and
32 Postman's Ridge. They are two specific places and someone
33 who knows the area as well as I do would know that they are
34 two separate places.

35
36 I knew there was loss of life at Postman's Ridge. I
37 was there very soon, as soon as I could get through, to see
38 that. But in many of these documents and discussions,
39 people have referred to "Murphy's Creek" as including
40 Postman's Ridge. For the purpose of everything I tell you,
41 they are two separate destinations. There was significant
42 loss of life at Postman's Ridge, and I live very close to
43 that area so I'm quite familiar with what happened there.
44 Referring to Postman's Ridge as part of Murphy's Creek I
45 actually find quite difficult, because it's just as close
46 from Postman's Ridge to Helidon and, for that reason, I
47 think throughout this, a lot of the documentation and

1 discussion you'll find Murphy's Creek people, in
2 particular, are including that area in their discussion.

3
4 MR AINSWORTH: Q. We're on the same path as you because
5 Postman's Ridge, we're aware of the deaths there.

6 A. Yes.

7
8 Q. And Murphy's Creek --

9 A. Yes.

10
11 Q. -- and then Spring Bluff, which - some people also tie
12 up Spring Bluff as part of Murphy's Creek.

13 A. Yes, yes, and that is really difficult because with
14 the Spring Bluff episode, where there was loss of life
15 there, that loss of life was above a major landslide --

16
17 MS JUHASZ: Q. Near the railway.

18 A. -- creek incident with the road and, essentially, if
19 there is an emergency in that Spring Bluff area, it would
20 be handled from Toowoomba anyway because it's essentially
21 closer to Toowoomba than it is to Gatton. So that sort of
22 same dialogue applies up there as to what I'm saying with
23 Postman's Ridge.

24
25 Q. It appears, from some of the submissions that we have
26 received, there's a perception from the community at
27 Murphy's Creek that there wasn't an organisation and
28 provision of services from the Lockyer Valley Regional
29 Council in a timely manner to that community. I hear you
30 saying that you become aware of things on the Wednesday,
31 which is the 12th, so we can see that in the minutes.

32 A. Yes.

33
34 Q. Or you knew of things but, I suppose, not the gravity
35 of it.

36 A. That's right.

37
38 Q. Then some representatives from the council are sent
39 out to Murphy's Creek --

40 A. That's right.

41
42 Q. -- on the Thursday?

43 A. That's right.

44
45 Q. I understand that you visit Murphy's Creek yourself on
46 the Friday.

47 A. That's right.

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Q. What involvement did Lockyer Valley Regional Council have in Murphy's Creek, that you're aware of, after that and you became aware of the gravity of the situation?

A. Okay. Well, the community there very much had things in hand.

Q. Yes?

A. They were at the hotel, they were supplying them with basic foodstuffs, with water and a dry place to be out of the weather. On those particular days you're talking about, that was about the same level of circumstance we had in a number of communities; for example, in Withcott and other places. So what was being provided there was pretty much on par with that.

In a lot of our areas, because of our involvement in Grantham, Postman's Ridge and other areas, our resources were very much tied up with the immediate safety situation and further persons being endangered, assisting in terms of the search with equipment and the like, because remember there could've been people entrapped that were still alive, and a lot of the response to people's needs for comfort, and the like, was provided by organisations other than council.

The evacuation centre in Gatton itself, volunteers played a huge part in that, not necessarily council staff. At a later point, Red Cross, and so forth, came on board. A lot of the humanity type issues were supplied by those organisations. Now, obviously we worked with them, provided them with what they needed, whatever.

However, our resources were very much aimed at those two issues: stopping further loss of life and the search and rescue. I really don't make any apology for that because if we'd found people entrapped that were still alive, it would've been quite tragic if our resources were providing food to someone else who could be provided by an alternate source, when in fact we weren't searching for someone.

Q. So you made an assessment of that community on the Friday --

A. Yes, yes.

Q. -- and through the information you received, and

1 thought that they were being provided for. Well, I suppose
2 they were stepping up for themselves and they --
3 A. That's right.
4
5 Q. -- had been provided for.
6 A. Which happened in other communities as well.
7
8 Q. If we could just move to the - there's minutes within
9 the material on 21 January and I think you chair the
10 meeting, Steve.
11 A. Yes.
12
13 Q. Just at page 3 of 4 there's a heading "QFRS" that
14 you'll see there, and then it's a bit of a - it says
15 "Neil P" and then a hyphen and then "due to staffing issues
16 within council", and something might have been missed out
17 but, "However, there is a team of six coming in today to
18 act with council as coordinators in the area at outlying
19 points in Murphy's Creek." Is it your perception that it's
20 not until about the 21st that you send in councillors, due
21 to staffing issues and the assessment that you'd made in
22 Murphy's Creek?
23 A. No. Well, there were various people communicating,
24 travelling to and from Murphy's Creek. One was an
25 ex-councillor, a fellow called Cam McDonald, who was there
26 almost continually from the Friday when I visited there
27 until the period you're talking about, who was continually
28 communicating with me and seeing that various needs were
29 provided - a volunteer type person. The people that we're
30 talking about there, that Neil sent in, was more of a
31 formal nature to take over the longer term and bring in
32 things like other government organisations, etc, which are
33 needed for the more formal response to these people being
34 there.
35
36 Q. So a formal liaison officer --
37 A. That's right.
38
39 Q. -- from the council was set up on the 21st?
40 A. That's right. But various councillors, various
41 volunteers who were relaying information to us, and so
42 forth, were in fact communicating with, travelling to,
43 visiting Murphy's Creek and reporting back.
44
45 Q. Okay.
46 A. Now, I guess there is a very important issue here that
47 we bring up: when you have you been displaced from your

1 house and you are out of your house for three or four days
2 and you've been wet, and all that sort of thing, obviously
3 everything is quite depressing, it's quite difficult, and
4 you'll see all the negatives in all the things around you.
5 We have to remain in a fairly independent assessing
6 position to make sure that the most life saving needs are
7 attended to and I believe that's what this council did
8 through all that earlier phase. A lot of those comfort
9 things were attended to by these people.

10
11 Neil's response was to move in there with the more
12 formal response of getting the roads up to a higher
13 standard so people can travel out much safer, doing all
14 that type of work, rather than the stuff of making sure
15 people were alive and feeding them.

16
17 Murphy's Creek was in a lucky position, in some ways,
18 because a basic road was able to be cleared down through
19 Ballard on the northern side of Toowoomba, to allow some
20 access to Murphy's Creek from Toowoomba City through most
21 of the disaster. Most of our other villages and towns,
22 like Withcott, were completely cut off; there was no
23 travel. It was too dangerous to bring trucks down with
24 goods on. Even to the east the highway was cut, so in
25 places like Laidley, the supermarkets literally ran out of
26 food. Whereas Murphy's Creek did have an opportunity to
27 access a city of 120,000 people, be it by only a limited
28 number of vehicles for most of the time. So their level of
29 emergency, in running out of food and the like, was a much
30 lesser risk than it was in the other towns. However, in
31 the very early stage, we didn't know about it.

32
33 Q. Just a question about the Murphy's Creek pub acting as
34 an evacuation centre. Within the council or the LDMG
35 minutes as at 3 February - so it's a little bit later --

36 A. Yes.

37
38 Q. -- there's been more recovery, the Department of
39 Community Safety reports to the LDMG and there is an issue
40 raised from the publican at Murphy's Creek that he is
41 concerned about issues of liability and also being
42 reimbursed for the costs that he's incurred in relation to
43 running, I suppose, an evacuation centre through his
44 property. Did the council address those issues of
45 liability and reimbursement of costs?

46 A. Look, it wasn't an issue that I needed to deal with;
47 it was obviously an issue that staff needed to deal with

1 and we would need to talk to the relevant staff about that.
2 I do think it's really important that I mention - and it's
3 probably not proper for me to say this, but I don't care
4 I'm going to say it --
5

6 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Sorry. Yes.

7 A. It's probably not proper for me to say what I'm going
8 to say but I think I need to say it; it's important. The
9 publican or the pub at Murphy's Creek is only a fairly
10 recent facility. There was quite a protracted issue in the
11 establishment of that pub with council and there certainly
12 is no lost feeling between the publican and council. Okay?
13

14 MS JUHASZ: Q. Yes, that's noted.

15 A. So I'm not trying to speak out of turn, but I think
16 it's --
17

18 Q. But any question about that sort of issue would need
19 to be asked of administrative staff, in relation to
20 reimbursement of costs and liability issues, whether
21 council enquired into those for this centre?

22 A. Yes, I think you need to talk to them but I think you
23 also need to ask them about whether, at any point, staff
24 from the pub - the manager, the owner, whoever - may have
25 requested it not be removed from the pub.
26

27 Q. That the evacuation centre not be removed?

28 A. Well, there may have been offers to relocate the
29 centre away from the pub and I think it highly likely that
30 persons associated with that establishment may well have
31 said that "We don't want it to go from the pub", because it
32 may well have been quite good for business.
33

34 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Do you know when that was at all?

35 A. You'd have to check with the people. I wasn't at that
36 level. By the time we got to discussing this, because
37 we're now into February, obviously my focus was then on
38 matters at a different level.
39

40 MS JUHASZ: Q. Another issue, as we're going through
41 areas in Murphy's Creek - and we'll get back to your
42 statement - there is commentary about the fact that
43 waterways and creeks weren't appropriately cleared prior to
44 the wet season and before 10 January.

45 A. Yes.
46

47 Q. I'm not making a comment about the effect that this

1 had on the flooding, but is that the case, that council
2 hadn't really been attending to those issues?

3 A. Well I'd like to comment on it.

4
5 Q. Yes?

6 A. Firstly, I believe it is a factor that should be under
7 consideration with the larger waterways. I obviously
8 couldn't gain the information before today's meeting, but
9 the larger waterways are under the control of DERM and we
10 have a very long and serious history of requesting
11 permission and requesting cooperation with the State
12 Government to have those cleaned. Some of those requests
13 were made only a matter of months for a particular
14 watercourse where a residence was affected. That's the
15 first issue.

16
17 The second issue, with regard to culverts, bridges,
18 pipes and drainage structures, particularly if it's in
19 relation to the Murphy's Creek area, I think it's really
20 important to say that the main through-road through
21 Murphy's Creek is actually a State-controlled road. There
22 are a number of instances, one in particular near Laidley -
23 which I could name - where we had a long and protracted
24 debate with Main Roads over the clearing - in fact, the
25 installation of a second culvert.

26
27 The same can also apply to very many places along the
28 railway line. In fact, the railway line forms an
29 artificial dam in many, many areas of our shire. It is a
30 key factor. The provision of more and adequate culverts
31 and the cleaning out of some of those culverts has been a
32 long and protracted issue with council as well.

33
34 Q. You're saying that you are aware of these issues --

35 A. We have been --

36
37 Q. -- but because of arguments with DERM and also the
38 State Government, that hasn't been able to be actioned
39 prior to the 2010/2011 wet season?

40 A. We've got a long history of that lobbying and
41 debating, and none of it's rocket science, it's all really
42 basic stuff. There's a long history of that.

43
44 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Would that account for the same in
45 Forest Hill, I think --

46 A. Yes.

47

1 Q. -- when the residents there took you on a walk-around
2 about March last year?
3 A. Yes.
4
5 Q. And I think the councillors had a drive around?
6 A. Yes.
7
8 Q. It's the same issues of culverts and again the damming
9 effect and then the grass. So is that a State Government
10 issue, you're saying?
11 A. It's a combination of a number of things. Forest Hill
12 - in fairness to the railway, one of its biggest issues is
13 it is very, very flat so you've got little fall to move the
14 water. That's exaggerated by the artificial damming effect
15 of the railway line. I guess in Forest Hill there is a
16 further complication to the north of Forest Hill, just past
17 the road that turns off to Gatton, there's two culverts -
18 that's the Forest Hill Fernvale Road. Those culverts, if
19 you have a look at them, there's one culvert, there's a
20 filled in section and there's another culvert. On many
21 occasions - one of them was actually to the Premier, when I
22 had the Premier in a car on a previous flooding event, I
23 actually spoke of the need for those culverts to go right
24 through.
25
26 Now I'm not saying that they can run and fix that
27 immediately because I mentioned it to the Premier, but
28 there is a lot of issues there in terms of drainage. None
29 of those are simple jobs. Most of them are outside the
30 control of council and we would like to do further drainage
31 works in both Laidley and Forest Hill. The problem is
32 there is not much point in doing any drainage until the
33 water can get away, because that water obviously flows out
34 of our drains into a point which is dammed by the railway
35 line.
36
37 Q. So who is clearing up around Forest Hill at the
38 moment? Some of those culverts are being cleared and
39 graders are clearing some of the drains.
40 A. We're doing all the drains and not just in Forest Hill
41 but in a lot of places; the reason being, because we've had
42 such an intensive event. There was so much silt in the
43 water, and you've only got to have a look at the muddy
44 water that's gone through houses, the mud remains and the
45 water's evaporated. So, because the water contained so
46 much sediment, it's necessary for us to desilt, I would
47 think, almost every drain and every culvert and pipe in our

1 entire shire because they're just so full of sediment.
2
3 MS JUHASZ: Q. Is that a separate issue? If you've got
4 the build-up of silt and things like that, then there's a
5 relaxation of having to go through - you said you'd had the
6 fights with DERM and the State Government. Does this mean
7 that you've now --
8 A. No.
9
10 Q. -- had an easing off of that?
11 A. No, no. Let me clarify.
12
13 MR KEVIN: Could I just say, there's a difference between
14 a defined watercourse and a waterway and what amounts to a
15 drain or some other thing. I just don't want to have a
16 confusion about which is which.
17
18 MS JUHASZ: Q. But I suppose the issue was, wasn't it,
19 that you'd had arguments with the State Government and DERM
20 before and that's in Murphy's Creek, but then also the same
21 in Forest Hill, but now there's an ability for you to clear
22 out?
23 A. No, no, no.
24
25 Q. Or is that something different?
26 A. No, no. You've got a confused view of what's happened
27 there.
28
29 Q. Yes?
30 A. We've had discussion with the State Government -
31 whether it be DERM, Railways or whatever - not just in
32 Murphy's Creek, not just in Forest Hill, in almost every
33 creek and every tributary in our shire. Number one. That
34 hasn't been relaxed and we aren't doing any work in those
35 water courses.
36
37 Q. So that's the waterways and water courses?
38 A. They are State Government controlled.
39
40 Q. Yes.
41 A. What we are talking about and what we mention in
42 Forest Hill is just the ordinary drains in the street, or
43 wherever. Because we've had such an intensive event,
44 there's so much rubbish that's been washed down into those
45 drains. Keep in mind, you just don't have a huge amount of
46 sediment but sometimes there's nasties in that because
47 there's been over-land flow; it's been through people's

1 houses, there could be chemical drums, or whatever. In
2 many cases, wherever possible, just any of the ordinary
3 drains, we will try and clean them out. We take out any
4 contamination that could be in there, any sedimentation
5 which has come from this extreme event. In places, we've
6 had 30 or 40 acres of soil washed away which has been in
7 that water. So for those drains to work, we now have to
8 make sure that they're all clean and we're doing that.

9
10 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Getting back to Forest Hill, since the
11 walk-around with the councillors and some of the community
12 back in March 2010, did council do anything in relation to
13 clearing of those drains, and that, or make any
14 representations to Queensland Rail with the issues there?

15 A. Well, first of all, the main area where we walked
16 around was down the street there where the fire station is,
17 and so forth. Some of those gutters - and they were
18 gutters, they weren't the drains, they were just the
19 gutters in the street, yes, there were some repairs done
20 there. There were some situations where culverts were old
21 wooden type culverts and they needed to be fixed. Things
22 like that, they had certainly had repairs done on those.

23
24 We have taken representation to the State Government.
25 I'm not sure that it was necessarily specifically in
26 relation to Forest Hill. Probably more on the wider scope
27 and I know there was one specific example at Junction View,
28 to gain permission to clean the creeks out because we come
29 back to the issue of before: if we can't get the creeks
30 and the inlets to the creeks clean, there's no point in
31 cleaning back further because, in fact, it could be a
32 negative; you'll create a larger amount of water closer to
33 the collection point.

34
35 Q. Just moving on to Grantham, the flooding that sort of
36 came over from the direction of Wagners Quarry and came
37 across the low-lying reasonably new estate, where you had
38 the keeps and that 18-month old house there, the water has
39 then hit the railway line, waves came back and it's dammed
40 up there. From a few inquiries and talking to people, some
41 information has come out that there is no culvert under the
42 railway line for a distance of 5 kilometres from the actual
43 rail bridge in Grantham, travelling west towards Toowoomba.
44 Has there been any - and again, as you're saying, it's a
45 damming effect and Grantham being on a bit of a flood plain
46 that side of the railway line. Has there been any
47 approaches to Queensland Rail in relation to doing

1 something about culverts?
2 A. We have certainly had discussions with Queensland Rail
3 on a number of fronts. For example, we had significant
4 discussion down near the Queensland Agricultural College.
5 Over the years there's been a number of discussions. We've
6 never had very much success with Queensland Rail. In that
7 particular area there, I'm not sure. I can't actually
8 recall myself being involved in any lobbying, but it is a
9 given fact that, right across our shire, we've got
10 localised damming everywhere because that - the original
11 railway line was probably built in 1860, or whatever.
12 Obviously the process of building and repairing the railway
13 line is outside the scope of our planning provisions, so we
14 have no say in that. When you approach Queensland Rail on
15 any front, it's very, very difficult to make headway. We
16 can give examples of trying to get crossings to improve
17 safety, things like that, where we've lobbied for many
18 years and had no headway.

19
20 I think the important thing about Grantham - and I'm
21 not sure if it's outside the scope of this Inquiry - is
22 that I even believe the railway line is in the wrong spot.
23 There was a map drawn some years ago which clearly showed a
24 proposed rail corridor which runs on the southern side of
25 the Gatton bypass. One of the key factors with that was to
26 avoid the flooding issues with Grantham. I really do
27 believe that that would be the only long-term measure which
28 would completely satisfy what we're talking about.

29
30 In terms of the culverts that you've talked about west
31 of Grantham, there probably is little point in many
32 culverts being under there; reason being that beyond that,
33 on the northern side of that railway line, is the Sandy
34 Creek. Normal flooding that occurs in Grantham is not the
35 discharge of the Lockyer Creek across land, as was the case
36 in this episode; it's normally the difficulty of the Sandy
37 Creek discharging into the Lockyer and the steady backup
38 effect.

39
40 If there were further culverts under the railway line
41 where we've talked about, what that would probably do in an
42 extreme emergency like this is allow water to go under the
43 railway line, which would then come back into Sandy Creek,
44 which is on the other side of the railway line, and come
45 down into Grantham anyway, be it via a different path.

46
47 Q. With that low-lying area where the keeps, and that,

1 is, does that normally get any water in that --
2 A. I haven't seen flooding of this type there in my
3 lifetime. Now, I pulled up there recently and there's a
4 new house being built there with the blue cladding around
5 it. I pulled up there on one occasion when they had dug
6 some post holes and I walked over and had a look.
7 Commonsense or the bushman in me tells me, when you look
8 down the hole, that the black soil or the dark soil is the
9 alluvial material that's come off the hill; the yellow is
10 the clay base type soil that's in most of the ridges around
11 there. When I looked down the hole, there was little more
12 than a couple of inches of alluvial material, the rest was
13 clay. So that would indicate to me that over the last long
14 period of time, there's been very little in the way of
15 flood waters that have come over those blocks.

16
17 When you move down into Grantham proper onto Derek
18 Shultz' land, Armstrong Road, in that area, if you drill a
19 couple of pilot holes there, you're quite likely to go down
20 30, 40 feet and still be in alluvial material. Much more
21 likely that there's been substantial flooding because that
22 alluvial material obviously all came off the hills.

23
24 MS JUHASZ: Q. Can I just go back to your statement. At
25 page 3 you deal with a number of things; measures to inform
26 the community and protect life and property. You talk
27 about the radio broadcasts which began on 27 December. Was
28 that just through River 94.9 or was that on the ABC?

29 A. No, no. We actually - look, I can't give you dates
30 and times --

31
32 Q. That's okay. We've got --

33 A. -- without going back to our particular people. I
34 know on many occasions I spoke to many other radio
35 stations. Now, the most frequent broadcasts or the most
36 organised broadcasts were probably through River 94.9 --

37
38 Q. Yes.

39 A. -- because I think they're one of the highest rated
40 stations listened to in our area, but certainly I talk very
41 frequently with the Toowoomba ABC and I know I did through
42 that period, so they'd obviously have a record of some of
43 our discussions, and many other stations as well.

44
45 Q. That's a, sort of, joint discussion between - well, a
46 role of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council or also the
47 LDMG starting to step up as well?

1 A. Look, I think the actual approach to the radio
2 stations would be principally - that operational stuff
3 would be through our media man, and we'd normally try and
4 contact the stations which had the most relevant and the
5 best coverage. One of the main reasons we would choose
6 94.9 is we have a lot of people who live in our area and
7 work in other areas and that seems to be the predominant
8 station that they listen.

9

10 Q. Did you have a media person at the time in December or
11 has somebody been appointed since?

12 A. Jason Cubit is a long-term of employee of ours and he
13 performs many roles, or he did at that time, through the
14 council. He is now focused on media pretty well all the
15 time as a full-time role, but it was still a large portion
16 of his job back at that time.

17

18 Q. Those radio broadcasts are they then mirrored on your
19 Lockyer Valley Regional Council website as media releases?

20 A. Look, we'd have to talk to our people about that. I
21 don't get time to look at the website on a frequent basis
22 but the information that was put out was principally with
23 regard to road closures and danger situations.

24

25 Q. You talk about doorknocking as well. Was that in
26 Forest Hill on the 11th, to tell people about the
27 evacuation? Is that what you --

28 A. I think there was doorknocking on a couple of levels.
29 I know that Councillor Milligan, for example, had
30 approached businesses in Laidley prior to the flooding
31 there and she certainly approached businesses after the
32 flooding there as well. There was an instance in Grantham
33 where I believe on the Monday there was some discussion
34 between - or some approach by - you know, for certain
35 emergency people and the people in Grantham, following the
36 incident on the Sunday night.

37

38 Q. That's the rural fire brigade that you're talking
39 about at 16 --

40 A. Yes. I'm not sure exactly who the persons were that
41 were involved in these things because often it's a
42 cooperative thing between council and other organisations.

43

44 Q. So these were more - tell me if I'm wrong - ad hoc
45 responses to issues that arose that you had put in place,
46 the doorknocking or the warning of residents and things
47 like that?

1 A. You'd only use that if you had significant warning and
2 it was likely that you could get the message to people by
3 no other means, because if you knocked on the door of
4 people in Grantham on the morning of the 10th and said to
5 them that there was a danger equivalent to what we've seen,
6 they would probably do what they did on this occasion, and
7 that is go to where they've always felt safe for the last
8 100 years.

9
10 Q. The railway. Because you talk about that there was
11 SES personnel and rural brigade officers that went to
12 Grantham in the early morning and were giving them some
13 sort of warning. Was that a council directive or is that
14 just something that you know about?

15 A. No. Look, it's a cooperative thing. What happened on
16 the Sunday night - there was a circumstance on the Sunday
17 night, the town started to flood by the normal way it
18 floods, you know, the backup in Sandy Creek. Now, we were
19 quite prepared from Boxing Day in a lot of ways. For
20 example, we had trucks loaded with sandbags; right from
21 Boxing Day we didn't unload those. We had all those sorts
22 of things in our depot ready to go.

23
24 So on the Sunday night, when we heard that there was
25 likely to be a problem in Grantham, one of our staff and
26 myself, we - Gerry Franzmann was at the office, we met
27 informally there at the office, we decided there may be a
28 problem in Grantham, so I actually took out one of the
29 loaded trucks with sandbags just in case. In the time from
30 when I left Gatton to when I got out to Grantham, the water
31 had risen significantly and we did unload a number of those
32 sandbags and distribute them. So we had a lot of proactive
33 stuff happening for normal flooding circumstances.

34
35 However, when we got there the water had already risen
36 on that occasion above the normal level where sandbagging
37 would stop. We went into Grantham a significant distance
38 to assess the situation. We decided we couldn't help any
39 further with sandbags so we'd pull out, and we did. As we
40 pulled out, a rural fire vehicle then drove in. Obviously,
41 I've had a lot of experience with heavy vehicles and
42 flooding and I was aware of where we could safely go and we
43 couldn't go. He wasn't, because he didn't calculate that
44 we had sand on and he didn't, and he floated off.

45
46 Now, as a result of that incident, I then spent all
47 Sunday night out there with the swift water rescue people,

1 and so forth. No big emergency; just handling the
2 circumstance. Throughout that time, we continually
3 discussed the whole situation there by the water, as it
4 would be. As a result of that discussion, some of the
5 rural fire people or the SES, or whoever it was, then
6 decided that they'd go around that morning in Grantham. Of
7 course, once again, no-one anticipating what was to come
8 later that day.

9
10 Q. Is that usual that you'd get a truck and drive into
11 Grantham and do those sorts of hands-on type things?

12 A. I've done hands-on stuff in emergencies all my life.

13
14 Q. Yes.

15 A. I would never expect anyone to do anything that I
16 wouldn't do myself.

17
18 Q. Yes.

19 A. And the circumstance, when it's dangerous like that -
20 and it wasn't particularly dangerous when we got there -
21 was simply a community service thing really, because at
22 that stage the water was only barely starting to rise when
23 we got the word and it was simply a case of taking sandbags
24 out. It was the normal thing that I would do.

25
26 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Doing that sort of task, does that
27 impact on a leadership role at all?

28 A. No, because at that stage there was no disaster of a
29 major circumstance. This was way prior to the disasters of
30 the Monday. This was the Sunday night. Not much different
31 to someone turning up in their ute with a few sandbags on
32 to unload them. I think actually in lots of ways it's
33 really good because it gives me a very firsthand
34 understanding of exactly what's going on, and I do like to
35 be pretty close to what's going on there because all this
36 country up there I know like the back of my hand, and I
37 think that we can avoid a lot of issues sometimes if a lot
38 of the local knowledge is there.

39
40 MS JUHASZ: Q. If I could move back to the topic about
41 evacuation centres, although we have spoken about them a
42 fair bit. It's stated at paragraph 25 that the Lockyer
43 Valley Regional Council set up evacuation centres and
44 supplied supplies, and you've indicated that would be after
45 the event, Gatton was set up and then there was Withcott as
46 well at the school, to a degree?

47 A. Oh, Withcott wasn't really an evacuation centre. What

1 happened there was you had all these people on the highway.
2 It was always intended - we never wanted to accommodate
3 those people for any length of time, given the fact that
4 there was no emergency health support, there was nothing,
5 they were isolated. Had it gone on for any protracted
6 time, they would've had to be brought out by air. So it
7 was little more than a resting place until they were able
8 to be moved and then, fortunately, the highway was able to
9 be opened to the east to a limited extent, so those people
10 could be moved on. A lot of those actually ended up in
11 Gatton in a proper facility.
12

13 Q. Was that a direction from, I think, a police officer
14 who happened to be there, who was directing traffic that
15 was stranded to the Withcott school? Is that your
16 recollection or was that something arranged by council?

17 A. Oh, what happened - I was right there.
18

19 Q. Yes?

20 A. I was right there when this happened. I got washed
21 off the road in my ute, so I was right there. People were
22 everywhere; they were stuck on the highway. We had one
23 lady who was just coming back from chemotherapy treatment
24 in Toowoomba; obviously quite a sick person. I had to
25 organise for someone to take that lady and look after her
26 at their own house.
27

28 We just simply informed all the people who were at
29 their cars that the messages that were coming through -
30 very limited, as they were - was that it was likely the
31 highway would be closed for a considerable period. They
32 obviously couldn't travel back to Toowoomba; not able to
33 travel to the east. If they wanted to leave their cars -
34 and most of their cars were on the highest part of the
35 highway, so they were relatively safe - they were welcome
36 to go up to the school, and the locals there organised a
37 cup of tea, all that sort of stuff, just to look after them
38 as best they could.
39

40 Now, the intention was that - most of us who had been
41 around there a long time had never seen that highway closed
42 for more than a few hours. I think the only other time
43 that I can recall it was probably in the '74 floods, when
44 it was closed down near the college, and in cases of
45 accidents. So we all assumed that within hours the highway
46 would've been opened. It probably went on longer than we
47 wanted but those people were opened up and moved off.

1
2 Now, Gatton as an evacuation centre is always our
3 preference. We've got the University of Queensland there,
4 there's a large number of dormitories, they've got
5 literally hundreds of mattresses and all that type of stuff
6 you need to accommodate people. The path to and from the
7 university is normally safe from flood and fire, and all
8 those sorts of things; hence, the reason why Gatton is
9 always our preferred option, because it's very difficult in
10 a lot of these other country centres to provide what you
11 need to provide. I know in the past - many, many years ago
12 - there have been places like Junction View hall that have
13 been used as informal evacuation centres. I would be
14 deeply concerned about that because if you went up and had
15 a look at how close the flood waters actually came to the
16 Junction View hall this time, the people there would've
17 been in grave danger.

18
19 Q. So were there any other places that you sent supplies
20 to and established evacuation centres, apart from Gatton -
21 Grantham?

22 A. We supported many places, in terms of the forwarding
23 on of supplies. Certainly Grantham - there was quite a big
24 effort out to Grantham. A lot of - Helidon was another
25 one, the hall in Helidon. What happened on the night of
26 the disaster - I was out there pretty soon after the
27 disaster hit Grantham. I was able to - the police actually
28 took me to Grantham - to Gatton and I came back out to
29 Grantham very soon after. We brought machinery, and so
30 forth, out so that people could be rescued and some of our
31 staff ferried those people that were taken out into the
32 Helidon hall. The reason being that it was easier to take
33 them out onto dry country to the west and they were taken
34 back into the Helidon hall.

35
36 Now, we set up a volunteers - the Helidon volunteers
37 set up a very significant centre there, completely manned
38 by volunteers. I spoke to Gary Topp, he's an old-time
39 resident, a very good organiser. He took over charge of
40 that and they looked after people well there. Now,
41 ultimately those people were relocated to other
42 accommodation or back to Gatton. But I think the very
43 important thing that's got to be considered with this, too,
44 is you're dealing with people with very difficult
45 psychological circumstances and some of those people don't
46 want to move, they don't want to go to places - there's
47 lots of issues you're dealing with it. I do think that

1 that's - in the case of Grantham, Gatton and Grantham
2 worked fairly - Gatton and Helidon worked fairly well.

3
4 Q. Some residents have spoken to us from Postman's Ridge.
5 A. Yes.

6
7 Q. There was a group there that had to evacuate to the
8 Pioneer Memorial Hall.
9 A. Yes, that's right.

10
11 Q. Part of the information they have provided is that
12 they weren't informed of an evacuation centre in their area
13 - and it seems as though there wasn't one, so that would be
14 why - but that they were forced to close their centre on
15 13 January and told that they had to go to Gatton or to
16 Murphy's Creek, and that was by a council representative.
17 Do you know anything about that?

18 A. The people at the hall at Postman's Ridge were pretty
19 much looked after by a bloke called Carlo Corneaz, who
20 lives in the house next-door. He did an excellent job. He
21 simply got people at the time when it happened, put them in
22 there in a dry spot, and looked after them. It's very
23 difficult to maintain a reasonable level of support for
24 people in that hall, given the fact that there was no
25 power. That hall is a pretty basic hall. The cooking
26 facilities, all that type of thing, are very limited. Now,
27 Energex did turn up there with their caravan and provided
28 food for people, and so forth.

29
30 The Helidon hall, Helidon evacuation centre, within
31 probably 24 to 48 hours there was a path opened from the
32 Helidon hall to that hall. You could simply come up the
33 highway, around through the western access to Postman's
34 Ridge and into that hall. Now, as the crow flies, that
35 hall is probably less than 3 or 4 k's from Helidon, where
36 there is a commercial kitchen, there is all those
37 facilities.

38
39 At Postman's Ridge, for example, there's no showers.
40 There wasn't at Helidon either, but we had installed some
41 basic temporary type showers, etc. Now, in the middle of a
42 disaster it's very difficult to keep on setting up little
43 sub-evacuation centres everywhere; (a) it's very difficult
44 to keep an eye on the people because you're dealing with
45 all these psychological and medical things; it's very
46 difficult to provide the quality of care that's necessary.

1 What was set up there wasn't a council evacuation
2 centre, it was simply a place where people huddled
3 together. Carlo is a tremendous fellow who did a
4 tremendous job, but it wouldn't be fair to him either to
5 allow that to continue. Now, I don't know who gave that
6 directive or who it was suggested from, but it was
7 certainly the right one and certainly those people
8 should've been at either Helidon or Gatton, where they
9 could've been cared for better.

10
11 Q. Did council then facilitate - and you may not know -
12 assistance for those persons to relocate to those centres?

13 A. Well, there were council staff who had gone up to the
14 hall on a number of occasions in that period. I know
15 because I was there when there was a discussion about
16 four-wheel drives being organised for that purpose.

17
18 Q. So it's your understanding that there were four-wheel
19 drives organised --

20 A. Yes. Well, they --

21
22 Q. -- to transport residents?

23 A. Well, they were - and they certainly were on numerous
24 occasions, because I know that they went backwards and
25 forwards. Even if there weren't, it wouldn't have been an
26 issue because there were sufficient vehicles available in
27 that area where people could quite easily have brought them
28 into the Helidon hall. For example --

29
30 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Carlo is a rural fire brigade fellow
31 there, is he? He's a rural firey in that area, Carlo?

32 A. Yes, I think - yes, he is in the rural fire brigade,
33 yes.

34
35 MR KEVIN: Q. What's his name? Carlo?

36 A. Carlo Corneaz. He did a great job.

37
38 MS JUHASZ: Q. That was in collaboration with, I think,
39 Ruby Jensen at that hall?

40 A. Yes. Ruby looks after the hall.

41
42 Q. Yes.

43 A. But, look, Carlo was in contact with me continually.
44 I know him very, very well. In fact, all the people in
45 that area I know well. Across the road from that hall is a
46 mechanic place where they work on trucks; my youngest son
47 works there. I know a lot of what was going on there and

1 I'm quite comfortable with the arrangements there. I do
2 think, though, the tragedy that occurred there for that
3 little one-street area was extreme.

4
5 MR AINSWORTH: Q. Was that the - Mrs Bailey?

6 A. Yes. I mean, you've got about four or five houses
7 there totally gone. It was probably the worst of the
8 disaster, in terms of the loss, and there will be long-term
9 issues with some of the people there.

10
11 MS JUHASZ: Q. I suppose we've really dealt with it.
12 When you move to paragraph 32 - and we're moving around a
13 little bit - you're talking about the assistance by
14 individuals and local businesses and you're saying that
15 much of the assistance was voluntary, and that was really
16 coordinated by your own and council's own knowledge about
17 what was in existence rather than any particular plan?

18 A. Oh, look, I think in this case it would be almost
19 impossible to have an accurate plan. Let me put that in
20 place. Never before have we ever seen any of those houses
21 flooded in Postman's Ridge let alone washed away. Just as
22 an example, no-one would've ever considered that there'd
23 even be an issue there. So had we drawn up a plan for
24 flooding in Postman's Ridge - well, for a start, we would
25 never have drawn one up because there's never been one
26 flooding there. Rocky Creek comes up and cuts the road
27 occasionally. No houses ever get flooded in Postman's
28 Ridge and never have in my life. In fact, I don't think
29 they ever have. In this case, we've had four or five
30 washed away. So how could we have really had a plan,
31 because it's a bit like saying would you have a plan for
32 flooding on Mount Coot-tha.

33
34 Q. I mean more in a general sense. You've obviously
35 devised a plan in your previous disaster management plans
36 before the amalgamation, which draws on contact details and
37 a log of resources --

38 A. Oh, yes.

39
40 Q. -- and things in that area. But there doesn't appear
41 to be one more recently, but you're saying here that you
42 drew on assistance from the community. That wasn't really
43 formalised in any sort of document or plan?

44 A. No, and to be honest with you, in flooding, I think
45 that care of the people, the evacuation circumstance, and
46 so forth - I think it's fine to have those absolutely
47 watertight evacuation centres like Gatton. In the other

1 areas, I do honestly think you're better to equip people
2 with the knowledge to make the right decisions to handle
3 the individual circumstance, because they will vary
4 greatly. Even in Brisbane here, Campbell Newman told me in
5 a meeting recently there were areas flooded in this
6 disaster that haven't been before and there were areas that
7 normally flood that didn't. Flooding is a very variable
8 circumstance.

9
10 Q. It's stated there as well that the Lockyer Valley
11 Regional Council paid for some goods and there have been
12 issues raised in relation to the Murphy's Creek pub as well
13 that there hasn't been full reimbursement with regards to
14 what they provided, stepping up as an evacuation centre
15 there. Can you comment on that or is that an issue which
16 somebody else is dealing with in council?

17 A. Yes, someone else really needs to comment on it, not
18 myself, and I think it's an issue that needs to be handled
19 very carefully and very, very accurately because I don't
20 know that there'd be any accuracy in the science behind the
21 claims.

22
23 Q. But I suppose that doesn't come into your own personal
24 realm of knowledge, that --

25 A. No.

26
27 Q. -- reimbursement or repayment of services?

28 A. How do you know how much food was actually supplied or
29 how much was in the fridge prior to the event?

30
31 MS JUHASZ: We're not going to be stacks longer but I know
32 you've been going for ages. Do you want to take five?

33
34 MR KEVIN: That would be good.

35
36 SHORT ADJOURNMENT

37
38 MR AINSWORTH: The time is about 4.34pm on 7 April.

39
40 Q. Steve, just some questions in relation to Exercise
41 Orko, which I understand you weren't there for.

42 A. Mmm.

43
44 Q. Did the Lockyer Valley Council or disaster management
45 group have a debrief of Orko back at the council, to see if
46 you could enhance things or change things?

47 A. Certainly there was discussion between the officers

1 that participated in that and myself, and I do believe -
2 look, without going back and looking at the records, I do
3 think the majority of the councillors, in some forum, that
4 was discussed with. Obviously not everything is discussed
5 in a formal council meeting, but there was a discussion
6 about how successful it was. Gerry Franzmann could
7 probably give you better details of that. I mean, I was
8 aware of various aspects to it, for example, that were good
9 and bad; I just can't recall those offhand now because it's
10 some time ago, of course, but there were many aspects that
11 were discussed.

12

13 Q. Just in your view, has the council amalgamations
14 affected your capability to respond effectively to a
15 disaster in the Lockyer Valley area?

16 A. Certainly made it more difficult.

17

18 Q. In which way?

19 A. It's made it more difficult in that the bigger any
20 local authority is, the more the grassroots approach
21 changes. Now, what I mean by that? Earlier in the
22 discussion we discussed about local people working in the
23 council. The bigger the workforce - and keep in mind that
24 in these rural areas you often have an ageing workforce; a
25 lot of our people have been there 30 or 40 years. As they
26 retire and new people come in, you often - being a bigger
27 employer, with larger gangs, and so forth, often the people
28 won't have the same local contact that they did, they won't
29 live in the same areas, etc. Also, the operation is
30 completely different in an amalgamated circumstance to an
31 unamalgamated circumstance.

32

33 Q. Has it impacted on your resources at all?

34 A. Overall, the pool of resources is probably more
35 efficient and larger. However, I guess the difficulty is
36 you tend to get a lesser local knowledge circumstance from
37 your on-ground people.

38

39 Q. What about --

40 A. Because they obviously cover less area.

41

42 Q. What about with regards to areas like the rural fire
43 service and the State Emergency Service, were they
44 amalgamated as well to a central point within the
45 community?

46 A. In the rural fire service, there is an overall
47 amalgamated view but they still operate as two separate

1 groups. Obviously council is involved in many aspects of
2 collecting funds, and the like, but their operational
3 management is obviously more of a fire service issue than a
4 council issue.

5
6 The State Emergency Service is a similar circumstance.
7 However, I guess the State Emergency Service is more
8 directly council aligned, and one specific problem we have
9 with the State Emergency Service - and it's not just in our
10 area, it's in a lot of areas - is it's becoming more and
11 more difficult to recruit numbers of people, given the fact
12 that these volunteer organisations are becoming more
13 complex in their training, the amount of input you've got
14 to have, there's no monetary return and - worst of all - a
15 lot of people are terribly worried about the liability they
16 might face in trying to help people. I know that there are
17 some western councils, for example, that now have employees
18 acting in the SES role because they simply can't get enough
19 volunteers.

20
21 I think it's a real threat to south-east Queensland
22 and I think it's also a threat in the rural fire service
23 area. Now is possibly not the time but I will mention it.
24 The people that we need in those things are the young,
25 active type people, particularly in country areas, if
26 they've that country background so they're quite capable
27 people. Unfortunately, as legislative requirements come
28 upon us and liability becomes a bigger issue, it's becoming
29 much more difficult for those volunteers to perform those
30 roles and they have to put in more time, fill in more
31 documentation. If you're a young bloke, 25 years old, that
32 looks pretty boring.

33
34 MS JUHASZ: Q. So do you think that might be assisted by
35 more State involvement from EMQ to provide you with
36 facilities and --

37 A. It comes down to one fact: dollars. Simple as that:
38 dollars. Because if, in fact, the dollars are in place,
39 then the burden on the individuals is less, and there needs
40 to be a conscious effort with those issues about liability
41 I spoke about. It's fine to insist on training, but it has
42 to be simple and enjoyable because young people today are
43 not going to go and spend all day Saturday, three or four
44 weeks in a row, training just to help someone out. It's a
45 major, major threat to us in terms of emergencies in the
46 future.

47

1 MR AINSWORTH: Q. You've sort of just touched on an area
2 that the next question is. With respect to training, as a
3 result of this disaster from January, have you had time to
4 sit down and to look at how you can enhance training of
5 your staff or training of people in the local disaster
6 management group or have you got any plans in relation to
7 that?

8 A. Look, our staff - our outside staff that do the
9 physical work, I honestly think that their performance has
10 been exceptional. I don't know that there needs to be a
11 lot more training in the physical aspects. I think the
12 training and the work that needs to be done is just ways in
13 which we can assist with the real problems; the
14 communications, all those things that we've discussed. I'm
15 really confident about that.

16
17 When you talk about training, I think we need to be
18 really, really careful because all we talk about these days
19 is training and sometimes the training is actually what's
20 getting in the road of getting people to do this work. I
21 know in the rural fire service that's a real big issue.
22 You have a look at the average age of a lot of these people
23 across Queensland. We have got a problem. When you talk
24 to the young people, why they're not in it, too much
25 training and too much formality is the reason. You've got
26 to have an extent of it, and I'm not saying that's not the
27 case, but I think it's a big issue for government.

28
29 Q. Are there plans currently afoot in the Lockyer Valley
30 with regards to enhanced preparation, warning systems,
31 communications that were, sort of, identified during Orko?

32 A. Look, we've had some ongoing circumstances where we've
33 been trying to improve communications. We've had an
34 ongoing debate with government and Telstra for the last
35 three years to try and get telecommunications or mobile
36 phone access to areas of our shire, in particular the
37 Mount Sylvia area. That has been continually ongoing, with
38 discussing things with people out there, contacting these
39 various organisations, with virtually no progress at all;
40 simply being told that it can't happen, it's not viable,
41 and this type of thing. That's been a continual, ongoing
42 circumstance.

43
44 Council, itself, is always upgrading its
45 communications. We're always putting in further
46 communication aspects or improving radio situation, or
47 whatever, and we have fairly good radio contact with our

1 own vehicles within the shire. We've got a separate system
2 that we run for that, of course, with a tower on a very
3 high mountain in the shire. But communications generally
4 are a problem. We'll go back - we've been in all sorts of
5 schemes to try and improve communications across the shire.

6
7 However, in fairness to all those organisations, even
8 if they had provided some of those facilities, a lot of
9 them still would've been rendered useless in this case
10 because of power failure and that's something that I think
11 we need to really harp on. A lot of our landline failure
12 wasn't because of the flooding, it wasn't because the lines
13 were washed out, it was because of power failure. For
14 example, the exchange at Withcott was purely power failure.

15
16 When we lobbied Telstra - and I did in several
17 meetings - they eventually brought on a generator, which
18 was a joke, because it was some days - many days after the
19 event, the landline was automatically operational. I think
20 in a lot of these rural areas there should be some
21 preparation and thought given to how alternate power
22 supplies can be put into those exchanges. They have a
23 relatively low kVA requirement and those type of
24 generators, now made in Asia, are very cheap and I think
25 it's something that could come out of this whole process
26 that could help a whole lot of us many times.

27
28 MS JUHASZ: Q. Would it be something that the Lockyer
29 Valley Council would implement themselves then?

30 A. Couldn't, no, because those exchanges are run by
31 Telstra.

32
33 Q. With the generators and things like that, or it's
34 something more that you would have to lobby Telstra about?

35 A. It'd have to be a Telstra circumstance. At the
36 moment, those exchanges run on backup batteries which are
37 designed to last for X number of hours at the normal
38 traffic that goes through them. In a disaster, the amount
39 of traffic multiplies many times, so the battery life is
40 shortened.

41
42 I believe - Australia is a fairly decentralised place.
43 With these natural disasters and if they're right, and
44 there's an increased incidence of those, I can't see why we
45 can't have automatic activation of generation within the
46 exchange. It's a very cheap form of technology in today's
47 world, particularly with inverter technology, and it's

1 something that I think is absolutely vital. Now, we can't
2 do it, it has to be the operator of the exchange that does
3 it.

4
5 MR AINSWORTH: Q. How would you describe the response of
6 emergency services to the Lockyer Valley during the events
7 of January 2011?

8 A. Are we talking about the various actual State
9 Government emergency services?

10
11 Q. Yes, like QPS, Queensland Fire and Rescue, swift water
12 rescue --

13 A. Excellent.

14
15 Q. -- ADF?

16 A. Excellent. Couldn't have been better. I think our
17 communication with them, their response - and don't get me
18 wrong, they've obviously had limitations in their response,
19 too, because they've faced all the things that we've faced.
20 It has been excellent. I mean, we have had very, very good
21 communication with them. I think that under the
22 circumstances, they have performed really well. Whilst
23 there will be things reported to you about in one incident,
24 such and such happened, they'll be isolated incidents and
25 when you get a huge number of incidents, that always
26 occurs, as it does with council.

27
28 Q. Taking into consideration the factors that you talked
29 about before - the Warrego Highway being closed, the
30 landslides coming down Murphy's Creek Road from Toowoomba -
31 do you think their timeliness and response was adequate?

32 A. Oh, look, I think it was very good, given the
33 circumstances that they had to deal with. Now, keep in
34 mind - and this comes back to your question before about my
35 hands-on approach - this is one thing that is very, very
36 important in the hands-on aspect. You get a very quick
37 appreciation of what the people that you've got working
38 with you have to deal with. What I mean by that is, every
39 time I travelled out, I saw the extremely treacherous
40 circumstances which our people had to deliver in.

41
42 Same with those emergency services. When they did
43 work their way through the range to get down to Toowoomba,
44 they were in very dangerous circumstances and they were
45 being careful about it and doing the best they could,
46 because we were dealing with circumstances that could turn
47 real bad real quick and I think that hands-on, operational

1 thing to anyone responding in these disasters is extremely
2 important. If they don't have a good understanding of
3 that, they put themselves at huge risk.
4

5 Q. How would you describe the response of the Federal and
6 State governments to your area?

7 A. No, look, it's been fine. We've - we've had a pretty
8 good relationship and I'm not backward in telling them when
9 it's not good, but it's been good.
10

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I mean as good as we could - once again, it comes back
13 to where we started. This is a big event, isn't it.
14

15 MS JUHASZ: Q. And feeding into that, I suppose, we've
16 had some feedback from - I suppose, because the Queensland
17 Police Service took on that role of DDC in the next level
18 up from the local government, and they make it clear that
19 it's no criticism of the council, but they've said that in
20 this circumstance, after 10 January, that Lockyer Valley
21 was really overcome by the enormity of the tragedy and it
22 seemed as though there really wasn't enough expertise and
23 training in disaster management to deal with the recovery
24 operations and the response within the Lockyer Valley
25 Regional Council.

26 A. And who did this come from, sorry?
27

28 Q. This is really from the QPS, but they're not saying it
29 as a criticism of the council itself, they were saying that
30 it is to be expected, as you have elected members of
31 council. But did you find that immediately after the
32 event, that Lockyer Valley Regional Council and the LDMG
33 was really overcome by the event?

34 A. No, I don't. I totally - I don't agree with that at
35 all.
36

37 Q. Yes.

38 A. I don't agree with that at all. I think that we
39 actually - I was quite comfortable with the way that we
40 actually handled it and in our dealings with the police all
41 the way through. I was very comfortable with that. I
42 didn't really have any issues. There was one particular
43 officer I had an issue with but you always get one in so
44 many. Maybe it was him who gave you the statement. But,
45 in general terms, the cooperation was very good and I
46 wouldn't be daunted if I had to do it again tomorrow, to be
47 quite honest with you. It's very easy to sit back and say

1 this could be better, that could be better - of course it
2 could when the disaster is so great, but I see very little
3 failure in what happened.
4

5 Q. Didn't you make the comment in your recommendations
6 that really the council could benefit from a specialised
7 team that dealt with disaster management?

8 A. Oh, only because our council has now experienced a
9 disaster which we never knew was possible before - number
10 one. Number two, because our council is now an amalgamated
11 council, it's bigger, its resource opportunities are
12 bigger. We certainly could never have afforded that in the
13 past. Also, I think once you've experienced one of these
14 disasters of this level, I think it makes you much more
15 prepared for next time.
16

17 Q. You noted though, as well, that there was a lot of
18 benefit that was gained from having the fellow from Murweh
19 Regional Council or the councillors come out and give you a
20 hand in relation to dealing with the response?

21 A. Let me be clear about that, though: I don't believe
22 that we were looking for his expertise. As I said earlier
23 in the discussion, in this interview, I said that Gerry -
24 he replaced, effectively, Gerry Franzmann so he could take
25 leave, because he had been working very long hours, and so
26 forth. We chose those people because they had had the
27 experience and it was no point in wanting to put one of
28 your officers on leave or on break and have someone without
29 the experience take over. I wasn't for one minute
30 suggesting their experience would be far, far greater than
31 how we had handled it and that we were incompetent.
32

33 Q. No, no, I wasn't saying that you were incompetent, but
34 is there any basis to the concept that you've got a number
35 of regional councils and obviously some are bigger than
36 others - for example, say, the Gold Coast Council has a lot
37 more employees and funds than the Lockyer Valley Council.
38 Would there be any benefit to having, say, a trained team
39 of disaster --

40 A. No.

41
42 Q. -- persons that could fly in and assist you and work
43 with local councillors?

44 A. It would be a total disaster and I would be totally
45 against it.
46

47 Q. Why is that is?

1 A. Local knowledge is everything in these disasters, and
2 it's fine for people to say that we are overwhelmed but
3 perhaps some of the people who said we are overwhelmed are
4 the very ones who came to me to find out about local
5 knowledge and what their next point should be.
6
7 Q. Not to say that they --
8 A. I think that to bring in local - to bring in outsiders
9 - and I can give you experience from the fires, where in
10 fact a fire engine almost got burnt after I told the bloke,
11 who was a very senior officer, not to park it there. I
12 think local knowledge is extremely important and I think
13 that any teams, as such, should really - would be most
14 beneficial in a support role not a lead role.
15
16 Q. Not to come in and take over from the Lockyer Valley
17 Regional Council, but could you see that there would be any
18 benefit if you had people with specialised skills in
19 disaster management that could come in and work with the
20 council, rather than taking over the council?
21 A. I don't think so and I'll give you another example.
22
23 Q. Okay.
24 A. I know I'm a bit hard on this point but I've just got
25 to be honest. With the circumstance of Grantham, you had a
26 huge amount of water flowing quite strongly. The normal
27 swift water techniques of rescue through the fire service
28 and their blow-up boats and so forth, simply couldn't work.
29 They'd end up in Wivenhoe Dam. Our council very quickly,
30 within a matter of no time, had a couple of loaders out
31 there, as we got one out at the quarry as well. There's
32 nothing like a loader in deep water. Their air intake is
33 high, they can go over all sorts of stuff in the water,
34 they are a very safe, heavy machine, their bucket can lift
35 up high, they can take people out of places, they can do
36 all sorts of things. That wasn't an initiative of any of
37 the emergency services, it was an initiative of this
38 council to get resources on the ground and get people out.
39
40 Q. Was that the Alan Payne fellow?
41 A. Alan Payne was one of the people who helped us.
42
43 Q. Yes.
44 A. Now, all the normal techniques of rescue were in
45 place. Helicopters, once it got dark, they couldn't
46 operate because you've got powerlines and wires down
47 everywhere. Council, itself, initiated all these means

1 that normally wouldn't be used. I took a truck out and we
2 parked it in there as a high platform for people to be
3 unloaded on. Now, they're things that don't happen through
4 the normal rescue arrangement. They're simple things that
5 have to be devised on the spot and they have to - and they
6 work. The very important part that we've got to remember
7 is whatever be the disaster - and I know there are some
8 extreme examples, like nuclear situations, and so forth,
9 but with the normal disasters, you really have to have a
10 look at what is the best and safest measure and what you've
11 got around you, and that will very rarely be achieved by
12 bringing people in.

13
14 Q. So the front-end loaders, was that council's idea?
15 That was your idea to --

16 A. Oh, no. Look, what happened was the loaders had been
17 used by council in very many rescue situations. We have
18 used them for 30 years up in that area up around Junction
19 View. The fact that our fellows got in there and they
20 started to pull those people out with loaders, that's just
21 a normal thing that council would do and it's a measure
22 that's not able to happen through any other of the normal
23 rescue means. Without that - there were literally dozens
24 and dozens of people taken out by those loaders, and
25 they're the mechanisms that can only be put in place by
26 council and by local people. In fact, some of those things
27 were disputed that we should even do them by experts.

28
29 Q. I can say this but you probably know anyway, Jim
30 McDonald, who is obviously a councillor, has made some
31 suggestions in relation to what could assist the council.
32 He has stated that the council would benefit from an audit
33 of skills and preparedness in relation to, I suppose,
34 preparing for disaster situations. Do you think that would
35 be something that might assist council?

36 A. Oh, look, yes, I've got no real issue with doing
37 anything like that that might improve things. I think
38 that's just a commonsense way to go. Whatever you do in
39 life, you can always do it better; there's no doubt about
40 that. But I think, given the circumstances of what
41 happened here, it was done pretty well. You've only got to
42 have a look around at all the sources of criticism - other
43 than those who might have a particular reason, the media or
44 whatever - there hasn't been too much in the Lockyer
45 Valley.

46
47 Q. Another suggestion that he makes is that a member of

1 the LDMG come from the Chamber of Commerce within the
2 Lockyer Valley, which could, I suppose, assist in relation
3 to utilising businesses and resources in the local area?

4 A. I think I could see some pitfalls with that, insofar
5 as depend - it's very difficult to keep the conflict of
6 interest circumstance out of that. We need to try and make
7 sure that we spread this work across the community, across
8 our businesses and, depending on who the person is, it
9 might put them in a difficult circumstance.

10
11 Q. It might be similar to a way in which you've got any
12 other government representative sitting on the LDMG or
13 you've got Queensland Health or EMQ, where you sit
14 regularly, but do you still think there'd be an issue with
15 a representative sitting on the council?

16 A. I think it could be an issue and I would be concerned.
17 Look, I'm very much for openness, accountability and the
18 like. I do think there's also a time of extreme
19 sensitivity when you're dealing with these things and I
20 think it's important that you handle that in such a way
21 that that's addressed. You certainly, in a lot of
22 sensitive matters, don't have members of the public
23 involved.

24
25 Q. In relation to input after this event, has there been
26 - I understand there's the recovery plan which has been
27 done up --

28 A. Yes.

29
30 Q. -- and that we've had a look at. Are there any - with
31 regard to your recommendations that you make in your
32 statement, have there been any movements to implement those
33 recommendations? I think they're in the final paragraph,
34 or the final four paragraphs. You deal with a number of
35 recommendations, so that each village/township have their
36 own disaster plan, that there be a review of equipment,
37 that there be that disaster section within the council,
38 that there be a flood study of the region - and we've
39 already spoken about that - but there's also that the
40 Bureau of Meteorology provide real-time stream and rain
41 gauge data to the LVRC and the LDMG. Has there been much
42 movement on those recommendations or were they just things
43 that you formulated for --

44 A. Look, no, that issue of having localised plans,
45 certainly there's been a lot more activity on that since
46 this event.

47

1 Q. Yes.
2 A. There were in some areas already some original plans
3 which obviously needed updating. There have been a number
4 of activities on that since this occurred. I think,
5 though, we've got to be - and I'm in favour of them, don't
6 get me wrong; I think we've just got to be very careful,
7 though, that we take on board some of those issues we
8 discussed earlier, to make sure that when we have members
9 of the community in these roles, that we ensure they look
10 after their own safety as well. I guess it's an issue with
11 - for example, if you're going to have some sort of flood
12 warden, that person obviously has to have the correct
13 training, be made aware of the dangers - all those sorts of
14 things - and the liability issues, before we can move
15 forward. But we have had a lot of discussion on that,
16 we're in favour of that setup, but we do need to overcome
17 some of those issues we've discussed.

18
19 Q. In relation to that correspondence with BoM and
20 getting those gauges and water courses and rain gauges --
21 A. Yes.

22
23 Q. -- has the council done anything with regards to that?
24 A. We very quickly, after the event - one of the most
25 simple gauges, of course - and it's in no way any form of
26 official measurement but it gives you an indication over a
27 particular crossing - is simply those flood markers. Now,
28 there's been a lot of those have been either ordered or
29 installed since this event. In terms of the official
30 gauges and the Bureau of Meteorology, I'm not aware of what
31 discussion may have taken place there. Our officers may
32 well be.

33
34 I just think it's very important, though - and, look,
35 I'm all for these early warning systems and to be quite
36 honest with you, I'd like to see in places, particularly
37 where they get a lot of warning, fairly elaborate systems
38 put in place where people could actually be substantial
39 warned. However, in instances like ours, they wouldn't
40 have worked; (a) it happened too quick (b) any warning
41 devices which were increased which were automated would
42 have been totally destroyed. We had buildings at Helidon
43 in the park there which were almost bomb-proof buildings
44 that were destroyed.

45
46 I think the manual read type gauges are very, very
47 reliable and very good and I know the one in Gatton we used

1 many, many times to assess the height of the creek and I'm
2 very keen to see more of those installed and I know our
3 people have been discussing that and to what stage that's
4 at, I'm not sure.

5
6 MR AINSWORTH: Q. It's an interesting topic, the warning
7 system, especially with the issues you raised before in
8 Spring Bluff and Murphy's Creek. I think Spring Bluff is
9 one of two places in Australia without internet access, and
10 mobile phone access doesn't exist. You mentioned word of
11 mouth, but it's interesting to see if someone comes up with
12 a good suggestion on how you can enhance warning systems
13 and it's a problem right across the state. Some areas have
14 the siren system that goes off, but that malfunctions a few
15 times and people get a bit blase with it. So the solution
16 to that would be very interesting.

17 A. It's very difficult and all the things you talk about,
18 you know - telemetry and landline, all that - in a
19 substantial disaster will fail and most times when it
20 fails, the result's not achieved.

21
22 Q. I've just got three last questions. In your view, what
23 worked well during this whole event?

24 A. Look, I think that the council's hands-on approach was
25 great and I don't think you can under-estimate that at all.
26 I think the cooperation between the army and the committee
27 and the council was tremendous. They did a tremendous job.
28 I think there were huge concerns with the handling of the
29 circumstance at Grantham. I realise the area had to be
30 restricted but I think it caused some very big problems and
31 I think the communication about that was a problem.
32 Generally, I think all-up, if it happened again, we might
33 be a little bit wiser but I don't know that we would've got
34 too much better a job at the end of the day than what we
35 got.

36
37 MS JUHASZ: Q. Do you think that the council could have
38 assisted a little more in relation to communicating to the
39 Grantham community about the issues with why they were
40 restricted from their properties?

41 A. Well, we didn't run those meetings. When this event
42 occurred and the lockdown occurred, the communication was
43 essentially run by the police and that wasn't our issue at
44 that stage.

45
46 Q. Could that have been improved by a dedicated liaison
47 officer there from the council from the beginning or --

1 A. Well, obviously the police put in a couple of liaison
2 officers, which worked very well. Until that point, it was
3 very difficult. No, I'm quite comfortable in council's
4 reaction to what happened at Grantham and overall, when you
5 look at the number of people who were involved in this and
6 the number of residences - we're talking 120 very
7 substantially damaged - I think it was pretty good. As I
8 said, when you look at the media, the media tells a story
9 and there's not a lot in there.

10
11 MR AINSWORTH: Q. You said before that you can always
12 learn.

13 A. Mmm.

14
15 Q. What have you taken away from this incident where you
16 think either yourself or the council might be able to do
17 things better or change things?

18 A. If I had this incident occur this afternoon again, the
19 very first thing I would do is I would go to the Premier or
20 someone equivalent and I would ask for a police liaison
21 officer - as in the two that we've got now - to be put in
22 on day one and that would help us normally.

23
24 MS JUHASZ: Oh, Mr Mackay and Rob --

25
26 MR AINSWORTH: Rob Graham.

27
28 MS JUHASZ: Rob Graham.

29 A. That would help us enormously. That's the one issue.

30
31 MR AINSWORTH: Q. No other issues?

32 A. I think the rest of the issues are fine. I'm quite
33 comfortable with the way council responded, I'm comfortable
34 that the best thing was done - or the best possible outcome
35 occurred with what we had at the time.

36
37 MS JUHASZ: Thanks, Steve.

38
39 MR AINSWORTH: It's 5 o'clock. Thanks very much.

40
41 AT 5.00PM, THE INTERVIEW CONCLUDED.