

12 January 2011

Mr. Barry Dennien
CEO, SEQ Water Grid Manager
PO Box 16205
City East QLD 4002

Dear Barry,

This letter report:

- presents my final findings on a review of the operation of Wivenhoe Dam (including controlled releases) for compliance against the Flood Mitigation Manual for the period 12 December 2010 to date (Flood Event), and;
- provides advice on the prudence and appropriateness of the decisions and actions taken during the Flood Event regarding the operation of Wivenhoe Dam in light of the Flood Mitigation Manual's requirements and the circumstances of the Flood Event.

The report follows on from my preliminary report sent to you earlier today. The findings and advice are provided on the basis of information provided by SEQ Water Grid Manager which comprised the Flood Mitigation Manual and Technical Situation Reports. The latter were daily (sometimes twice daily) reports for the subject period. They gave a log of rainfall over the dam catchments and the downstream river (Lockyer Ck. and Bremer R.) catchments; inflows to Somerset and Wivenhoe Dams; storage levels; releases from the dams; details of the operation of gates and other outlets (gate openings/discharges); proposed changes in operating strategies and impacts on the various access crossings downstream of Wivenhoe Dam. In reviewing the Technical Situation Reports, I prepared a spreadsheet (see separate attachment of Excel spreadsheet *Tech Reports – Summary*, summarising the reports so that a timeline of the Flood Event could be seen at a glance. This provided a good overview of the Flood Event as it unfolded and showed what information may or may not have been included in a particular report. The Queensland Director Dam Safety (Water Supply) informed me that the Flood Operation Logs contain much more detailed information including details of the communications that were carried out and some of the more detailed information that is not necessarily included in the Technical Situation Reports. I have been provided with a draft of the *“Protocol for the Communication of Flooding Information for the Brisbane River Catchment – Including Floodwater Releases from Wivenhoe and Somerset Dams”* developed in October/November last year and currently being used. The Technical Situation Reports appear to have been an outcome of that Protocol.

The various requirements and required actions detailed in the Flood Mitigation Manual are summarised in the Table given in Attachment A. The Table also gives my comments (where appropriate) on whether there is evidence from the information presented to me, that there is satisfactory compliance with these requirements and actions.

The main aspects of the Flood Mitigation Manual are the various strategies for operating Wivenhoe Dam and Somerset Dam as well as a number of requirements relating to flood operations personnel, flood preparedness and flood training.

At Wivenhoe Dam there are four main strategies for operating the dam (W1 to W4) and at Dam there are three (S1 to S3). These strategies are hierarchical and are based on a number of flood objectives. These in descending order of importance, are:

- Ensure the structural safety of the dams;
- Provide optimum protection of urbanised areas from inundation;
- Minimise disruption to rural life in the valleys of the Brisbane and Stanley Rivers;
- Retain the storage at Full Supply Level (FSL) at the conclusion of the Flood Event, and;
- Minimise impacts to riparian flora and fauna during the drain down phase of the Flood Event.

Normal procedures require a return to FSL within 7 days of the flood event peak passing through the dams so that the potential effects of closely spaced Flood Events can be allowed for.

It is apparent from the Technical Situation Reports that emphasis has been given to communicating changes in flood operations strategies with local authorities and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM).

Until the last day or so, Wivenhoe Dam has been below EL74.0 and accordingly, would be operating under Strategy W1 i.e. make releases such that bridges downstream of the dam do not have to be closed prematurely. For a few days at the end of December and for the last day or so before yesterday's big rise, Strategy W2 would be in place (restrain releases from Wivenhoe Dam such that Brisbane River flows are maintained within the upper limit of non-damaging floods at Lowood (3,500 m³/s)). At various times during the Flood Event some of the downstream bridges have been closed. However, it is evident that action has been taken to vary dam releases such that various bridges could be re-opened as soon as possible. This appears to have been done in accordance with the flood operating strategies. The operations then moved onto Strategy W4 when the storage in Wivenhoe Dam reached about EL 73.5 (before the W4 trigger level of EL 74) when yesterday's heavy rain came on and it was assessed that there was a chance that the first (central) fuse plug could be triggered. It was then a matter of juggling the radial gate openings in an attempt to circumvent any fuse plug triggering. A graph of storage levels for Wivenhoe and Somerset Dams (from information taken from the Technical Situation Reports) showing the limits for the various Wivenhoe Dam flood strategies is given in Attachment A. It is apparent from this graph, that the appropriate flood operation strategies were adopted. The Technical Situation Reports indicate that proposed changes in strategy were appropriately communicated with appropriate authorities in accordance with the new Communication Protocol.

Summary:

The Technical Situation Reports comply with the requirements of the new Communication Protocol. However, I feel that there could be more consistency in the information presented. There seem to be gaps in information presented such as storage levels (see spreadsheet and graph in Attachment A). It would be useful to specify the minimum information required to be presented in the Technical Situation Reports (storage levels, inflows, recent/current rainfall, forecast rainfall, releases from dams, estimated flows from downstream tributaries, current flood operating strategy for each dam and proposed change in strategy, gate and regulator operations, state of downstream road crossings etc). Most of the minimum information is already given, but not in a consistent manner. As a means of reviewing processes followed during a flood, it would be useful to present a timeline of the flood event showing graphs of storage levels and other data that can be easily presented in a graphical manner.

I am informed by the Queensland Director Dam Safety (Water Supply) that the various requirements of the Flood Mitigation Manual relating to requirements for flood operations personnel, flood preparedness and flood training have been adhered to. There are a number of other requirements however, that I am not able to say whether they were satisfied as I had insufficient information. These requirements (see Table in Attachment A) should be subject to a separate audit.

It appears to me that the decision to implement Strategy W4 was a prudent one. While it would cause some damage in the Brisbane River downstream, its implementation, considering forecast rainfalls and projected flows in Lockyer Ck. And the Bremer River, would allow reduction of the storage level in

Wivenhoe Dam. This reduction in storage level would hopefully provide a sufficient buffer that would minimise the chance of a fuse plug triggering in the auxiliary spillway. Triggering of the first (central) fuse plug would cause a sudden increase of flow of some 2,000m³/s from Wivenhoe Dam. This increase in flow would cause significantly more flooding in the lower Brisbane River than that caused by early implementation of Strategy W4.

Conclusions:

The strategies as set out in the Flood Mitigation Manual have been followed, allowing for the discretion given to making variations in order to maximise flood mitigation effects. The actions taken and decisions made during the Flood Event appear to have been prudent and appropriate in the context of the available knowledge available to those responsible for flood operations and the way events unfolded.

There are a number of requirements where there was insufficient time given the urgency of this review, to source the necessary information for me to demonstrate compliance. However, satisfaction or otherwise of these requirements would have had little impact on the operation of the two dams during this particular Flood Event. It is intended that they be audited when time permits, after the Flood Event.

There are aspects of the Technical Situation Reports that could be improved and these have been discussed above.

Regards,



Brian Cooper

Action Requirements extracted from the Flood Mitigation Manual:

Action	Comment
The Flood Mitigation Manual contains the operational procedures for Wivenhoe Dam and Somerset Dam for the purposes of flood mitigation and must be used for the operation of the dams during flood events.	Appears to have been done
Sufficient numbers of suitably qualified personnel are available to operate the dams if a Flood Event occurs.	Director of Dam Safety is satisfied
The level of flooding as a result of emptying stored floodwaters after the peak has passed is to be less than the flood peak unless accelerated release is necessary to reduce the risk of overtopping.	See Note 1
A regular process of internal audit and management review must be maintained by Seqwater to achieve improvements in the operation of the RTFM.	See Note 1
Seqwater must maintain a log of the performance of the data collection network. The log must include all revised field calibrations and changes to the number, type and locations of gauges. Senior Flood Operations and Flood Operations Engineers are to be notified of all significant changes to the Log.	See Note 1
Seqwater must maintain a log of the performance of the RTFM. Any faults to the computer hardware or software are to be noted and promptly and appropriately attend to.	See Note 1
Seqwater must ensure that all available data and other documentation is appropriately collected and catalogued for future use.	See Note 1
Seqwater must ensure that information relevant to the calibration of its field stations is shared with appropriate agencies.	See Note 1
<p>Seqwater must liaise and consult with these agencies with a view to ensuring all information relative to the flood event is consistent and used in accordance with agreed responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Meteorology (issue of flood warnings for Brisbane River basin); • Department of Environment and Resource Management (review of flood and discretionary powers); • Somerset Regional Council (flood level information for upstream of Somerset Dam and upstream and downstream of Wivenhoe Dam); • Ipswich City Council (flood level information for Ipswich), and; • Brisbane City Council (flood level information for Brisbane City). 	Required also by draft of Communications Protocol. Technical Situation Reports infer compliance
Seqwater must report to the Chief Executive by 30 September each year on the training and state of preparedness of operations personnel.	See Note 1
Seqwater must provide a report to the Chief Executive by 30 September each year on the state of the Flood Monitoring and Forecasting System and Communication Networks.	See Note 1

Action	Comment
After each significant flood event, Seqwater must report to the Chief Executive on the effectiveness of the operational procedures contained in this manual.	It is too early for this action to be implemented. Will be implemented when the Flood Event is finished
Prior to the expiry of the approval period, Seqwater must review the Manual pursuant to provisions of the Act.	It is too early for this action to be implemented
Strategies are changed in response to changing rainfall forecasts and stream flow conditions to maximise the flood mitigation benefits of the dams.	Technical Situation Reports indicate that this is done
When determining dam outflows within all strategies, peak outflow should generally not exceed peak inflow.	Information from Seqwater indicates that the requirement was satisfied
Protocol for use of discretionary powers (i.e. who gets told)	Director of Dam Safety is satisfied – I don't know whether Seqwater CEO or Chairperson approved – See Note 1

Note1: For a number of the above actions, given the short time frame for the review on compliance of actual flood operations with the Flood Mitigation Manual, it was not possible to source some of the information required to confirm that requirements had been fulfilled. These actions will be audited separately, when time permits.

Action	Comment
<i>Flood Strategies for Wivenhoe Dam:</i>	
<p>The intent of Strategy W1 is to not to submerge the bridges downstream of the dam prematurely (see Appendix I). The limiting condition for Strategy W1 is the submergence of Mt Crosby Weir Bridge that occurs at approximately 1,900 m³/s .</p> <p>For situations where flood rains are occurring on the catchment upstream of Wivenhoe Dam and only minor rainfall is occurring downstream of the dam, releases are to be regulated to limit, as much as appropriate in the circumstances, downstream flooding.</p>	<p>Technical Situation Reports indicate that every attempt was made to keep the specified road crossings open</p>
<p>The intent of Strategy W2 is limit the flow in the Brisbane River to less than the naturally occurring peaks at Lowood and Moggill, while remaining within the upper limit of non-damaging floods at Lowood (3,500 m³/s). In these instances, the combined peak river flows should not exceed those shown in the following table:</p>	<p>Technical Situation Reports indicate that Wivenhoe Dam releases were made considering concurrent flows in the Bremer River & Lockyer Ck. To delay damaging floods as long as possible</p>
<p>The intent of Strategy W3 is to limit the flow in the Brisbane River at Moggill to less than 4000 m³/s, noting that 4000 m³/s at Moggill is the upper limit of non-damaging floods downstream. The combined peak river flow targets for Strategy W3 are shown in the following table. In relation to these targets, it should be noted that depending on natural flows from the Lockyer and Bremer catchments, it may not be possible to limit the flow at Moggill to below 4000 m³/s. In these instances, the flow at Moggill is to be kept as low as possible.</p>	
<p>The intent of Strategy W4 is to ensure the safety of the dam while limiting downstream impacts as much as possible.</p> <p>This strategy normally comes into effect when the water level in Wivenhoe Dam reaches EL74.0 m AHD. However the Senior Flood Operations Engineer may seek to invoke the discretionary powers of Section 2.8 if earlier commencement is able to prevent triggering of a fuse plug.</p> <p>There are no restrictions on gate opening increments or gate operating frequency once the storage level exceeds EL74.0 AHD, as the safety of the dam is of primary concern at these storage levels.</p>	<p>Technical Situation Reports indicate that Wivenhoe Dam releases were such as to delay adopting this strategy as long as possible</p>
<p>Where possible, total releases during closure should not produce greater flood levels downstream than occurred during the flood event.</p>	<p>Technical Situation Reports indicate that this requirement was satisfied</p>
<p>The aim should always be to empty stored floodwaters stored above EL 67.0m within seven days after the flood peak has passed through the dams.</p>	<p>Technical Situation Reports indicate that</p>

Action	Comment
	emphasis was given to satisfying this requirement
Flow in the spillway to be as symmetrical as possible with the centre gates opened first.	Technical Situation Reports indicate that this was done
The bottom edge of the radial gates must always be at least 500mm below the release flow surface.	See Note 1 above

Action	Comment
<i>Flood Strategies for Somerset Dam:</i>	
The intent of Strategy S1 (Somerset Dam Level expected to exceed EL 99.0 and Wivenhoe Dam not expected to reach EL 67.0 (FSL) during the course of the Flood Event) is to return the dam to full supply level while minimising the impact on rural life upstream of the dam. Consideration is also given to minimising the downstream environmental impacts from the release.	Technical Situation Reports indicate that this was done
The intent of Strategy S2 (Somerset Dam Level expected to exceed EL 99.0 and Wivenhoe Dam level expected to exceed EL 67.0 (FSL) but not exceed EL 75.5 (fuse plug initiation) during the course of the Flood Event). This to maximise the benefits of the flood storage capabilities of the dam while protecting the structural safety of both dams. The Flood Mitigation Manual contains a graph that shows the intended interaction of the Wivenhoe Dam and Somerset Dam storage levels.	Technical Situation Reports indicate that this was done – little information on the operation of the radial gates at Somerset Dam. How the graph was followed not really demonstrated
The intent of Strategy S3 (Somerset Dam Level expected to exceed EL 99.0 and Wivenhoe Dam level expected to exceed EL 75.5 (fuse plug initiation) during the course of the Flood Event) is to maximise the benefits of the flood storage capabilities of the dam while protecting the structural safety of both dams.	Not relevant at this stage
The safety of Somerset Dam is the primary consideration and cannot be compromised and its peak level cannot exceed EL 109.7.	Maximum level only EL103.3

Wivenhoe & Somerset Dams – Storage Level Behaviour (as presented in Technical Situation Reports)

