

STATEMENT OF KENNETH MAXWELL GOULDTHORP

I, KENNETH MAXWELL GOULDTHORP, care of Toowoomba Regional Council [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Toowoomba in the State of Queensland, Chief Executive Officer of Toowoomba Regional Council, can say as follows:

1. I have prepared this statement pursuant to the request made by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry by way of a letter received on 8 April 2011 ("8 April 2011 letter"). In addressing the Commissions questions, I have utilised information available to me in addition to my direct knowledge.
2. The 8 April 2011 letter requested me to provide clarifications in reference to paragraphs in my statement dated 1 April 2011. I have addressed the questions below in the order set out in the 8 April 2011 letter.

Question: "Paragraph 13 – How did the Council publicise their disaster management website and do Council hold the opinion or have statistical data to demonstrate that this publication reached the community?"

3. The Disaster Management website was established in 2009, and has been publicised through a range of media since its inception.
4. Until March 2011, the Disaster Management website was promoted by displaying a permanent icon on the home page of Council's website which provided a direct link to the Disaster Management website. The Council website, www.toowoombaRC.qld.gov.au, is popular and frequently consulted by residents. For the period 1 October 2010 to 31 December 2011, the Council website had 591,127 page views with 82,667 unique visitors to the site. The top four page views were:
 - Home page 89,965;
 - Dam Level History 43,747;
 - Job Vacancies 35,185;
 - Toowoomba's Dams 29,438.

During the same period the Disaster Management website has 2,547 page views with 648 unique visitors to the site. The top four page views were:

- Home page 684
- Be prepared 224
- The news 152

Statement of Kenneth Maxwell Gouldthorp
Filed on behalf of:
Toowoomba Regional Council

King and Company Solicitors
Level 6, Quay Central
95 North Quay
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Ph: 3243 0000

- SES homepage 133

During the period from 1 Dec 2010 to 25 Jan 2011, the Disaster Management website had 13,109 unique visitors with some 48,910 page views.

5. In addition to the promotion of the Disaster Management website on the Council website, the Disaster Management website was publicised in the Council's quarterly newsletter, "Council Connections". This newsletter is distributed to every household in the Toowoomba region and available in Council offices. 60,332 copies of the Autumn 2011 edition were distributed. As an example, the Disaster Management website was publicised in the Summer 2009 and Spring 2010 editions.

In 2010, the Disaster Management website has also been publicised through presentations to community groups, schools and displays at all of the local shows, except the show in Pittsworth. The Disaster Management website has been demonstrated at the Local Disaster Management Group meetings, with the aim of having members of the LDMDG inform their agencies of the website.

Question: "Paragraph 15 – How did Council establish that there was a need for an additional State Emergency Service (SES) Headquarters at Cecil Plains?"

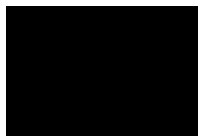
6. The existing SES Cecil Plains headquarters was upgraded by the construction of a new SES Group building. I understand that the need for this building was established as a result of a survey carried out by the District Management Coordinator. It was subsequently supported through Council's budget process and a State government grant. The Cecil Plains SES Group began operating from the new building in January 2011.

Question: "In the view of the Council, are there any other areas within the Toowoomba region that require the establishment of SES offices?"

7. The SES Toowoomba Group building at 172 Stephen Street in Toowoomba is antiquated and has limited vehicle garaging capacity. It was subject to water inundation to the height of 50-100mm in the January floods. Council is currently exploring options to provide improved facilities for Toowoomba SES both in the short and long term.
8. Following the December and January flood events, there has been a significant increase in interest in becoming SES volunteers. The main constraint in taking up these prospective volunteers is the limited capacity to provide basic training. Council is currently investigating alternative options to address this matter with EMQ.
9. Council has recently re-activated the Millmerran SES Group. A Cambooya SES Group will be re-activated in the near future subject to community support.

Question: "Paragraph 24 notes the positives of amalgamation but were there any negative aspects to the amalgamation of eight separate local government areas to form the Toowoomba Regional Council in the context of disaster preparation, response and recovery?"

10. It is possible that members of the public still relate to the pre March 2008 local government areas and some requiring information or assistance may not have related to the 'Toowoomba Region' LDCC as their local point of contact. However, I have no substantive evidence of



this and the LDCC contact records indicate that requests were received from across the region.

11. Council has retained experienced personnel from the former local governments and therefore had access to sound local knowledge on this occasion. Retention of local knowledge is a matter that Council will need to be cognisant of in any future organisation structure and service delivery approach.
12. The 8 April 2011 letter has requested that I respond to the following issues raised by local residents in the Oakey area.

Issue: "That the rain that fell in the Toowoomba District on top of the range on 10 and 11 January 2011 flowed west to Oakey affecting residents by inundating their properties and homes and that residents did not receive warning of the flood waters from the Toowoomba Regional Council, the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) or emergency services on the direction of the Council or LDC".

13. It is my understanding that water flowing from the top of the range in Toowoomba City predominantly enters Gowrie Creek which flows to the south of Oakey rather than entering Oakey Creek upstream of the Oakey township.
14. Oakey residents did receive such warning of flood waters as Council and the Local Disaster Coordinator and Emergency Services could provide. Council had issued media releases advising of the potential of flooding to the extent such potential became known. A number of more generic warnings and advice to stay away from creek systems were also issued. Examples include:
 - Media Release "Possible flooding in Oakey", 10 January 2011 (refer to item 427 of the documents provided to the Commission)
 - Media Release "All access restricted as Cooby Dam overflows", 10 January 2011 (refer to item 436 of the documents provided to the Commission)
 - Media Release "TRC water infrastructure update", 11 January 2011 (refer to item 445 of the documents provided to the Commission)
 - Media Release "Mayor Peter Taylor implores residents to stay away from water, off roads", 11 January 2011 (refer to item 446 of the documents provided to the Commission)
 - Media Release "Messages that we ask to be repeated by media", 11 January 2011 (refer to item 448 of the documents provided to the Commission)
15. Media releases were distributed to an extensive range of media outlets including State and local newspapers, television stations and radio stations.
16. In addition to the above flood advice, I am aware that the LDCC addressed rumours in respect to the Cooby Dam wall cracking/failing during the course of the Oakey event.

Issue: "That the amalgamation of Councils has meant that the Toowoomba Regional Council has ignored residents west of Toowoomba in relation to disaster preparation for the region and flood warnings".

17. This suggestion that Council has ignored any residents is, I believe, a misperception by some individuals. I can understand that residents of regions who had been formerly accustomed to different local council arrangements may perceive a difference. The reduction

of elected representatives from sixty nine (69) to eleven (11) across the region has certainly reduced the amount of direct informal contact between residents and their local elected representatives. However, all local government services have been maintained.

18. Toowoomba Regional Council has kept open all Council Offices previously operated by the eight individual local governments that were dissolved with the establishment of Toowoomba Regional Council. Staff numbers have been maintained or increased and as at 10 January 2011 there was no rationalisation of previously provided services.
19. On 21 March 2011, Council implemented its Customer Service approach aimed at improving the ease with which the public can seek Council assistance. This was the culmination of extensive work over 15 months to improve information systems, access to data, integrate communications and provide specialist training. This will enable enquiries from the public to be addressed at any Service Centre regardless of the location of the property.
20. Toowoomba Regional Council is still in a process of transition following the amalgamation of eight Councils into one. It was the largest amalgamation of Councils in the 2008 Local Government reform.

Issue: "That Council neglected to clear creeks and waterways of debris prior to the 2010/2011 flood event in the Oakey area and the surrounds".

21. Toowoomba Regional Council has limited capacity or authority to enter naturally occurring creek or river systems to clear debris or vegetation. It is my understanding that these systems come under the authority of Department of Environment and Resource Management. Further, they often traverse private property with attendant access issues.
22. I am advised that the Jondaryan Shire River Improvement Trust has undertaken some clearing of non-native willows down stream of the Oakey Township in the past. To my knowledge this Trust continues to exist although I understand that the State Government has been reviewing the number and operation of river trusts and related legislation.
23. I do not have any specialist knowledge of the extent to which debris or vegetation within creek systems may or may not have contributed to flooding in the circumstances of the Oakey flood event and high rainfall leading to it. Considering the scale of the flooding, I am advised by Council engineers that there was not a particularly large amount of debris left within the Oakey Township after flood waters subsided.

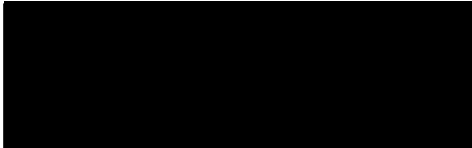
Issue: "That the Toowoomba Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) evacuation centres and disaster plans were not publicised sufficiently by Council and the LDMG meaning residents of Oakey and the surrounds were not aware of the location of evacuation centres and existence of disaster plans as at the flood events of 2010/2011".

24. The TRC Disaster Management Plan is displayed on the Council Disaster Management website, along with the Evacuation and Welfare Plan, the minutes of meetings of the LDMG and the Evacuation and Welfare Committee, Red Cross REDiPlan, and the Emergency REDiPlan. All these documents have been published on the website since June 2010 and some as early as 2009.
25. There are no permanent evacuation centres in the Toowoomba Regional Council area.



26. Council has conducted a survey of facilities around its regional area that may be suitable to activate as an evacuation centre. Thirty two facilities are identified and recorded under the operational (non-public) area of the Disaster Management website as potential evacuation centres. The list is not available to the public because the decision on when and where to activate an evacuation centre is a decision of the LDMG or Local Disaster Coordinator depending on the particular requirements and circumstances. This decision is not constrained to the identified list.
27. The LDCC did not have prior knowledge of the extent of flooding that ultimately eventuated at Oakey and an Evacuation Centre was not activated in Oakey prior to the event.

Dated: 17th April 2011.



Kenneth Maxwell Gouldthorp

#4152310