

**SEQ Water Grid Manager and Seqwater  
MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: Minister for Natural Resources, Mines  
and Energy and Minister for Trade**

**SUBJECT: January 2011 flood event and Wivenhoe Dam  
operations**

Advisor .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Ok
Dated / /	
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Approved
<input type="checkbox"/> Further information required	<input type="checkbox"/> Noted
Minister.....	
Dated / /	

**REQUESTED BY**

- The Ministers Office requested this brief by 16 January 2011.

**TIMEFRAME**

- Noting of this brief is required prior to the Emergency Cabinet meeting to be held on 17 January 2011.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Minister:

- **note** Seqwater’s Ministerial briefing note setting out background information on Wivenhoe Dam, the January 2011 flood event and Seqwater’s Flood Mitigation Manual.
- **note** the advice on the benefits of pre-emptive releases from Wivenhoe Dam in response to the Minister’s request.
- **note** Mr Brian Cooper’s independent compliance review of the operation of Wivenhoe Dam against the Flood Mitigation Manual for the January 2011 flood event.
- **approve** key media responses on the flood event and Wivenhoe Dam.
- **approve** that Mr Barry Dennien, Chief Executive Officer, SEQ Water Grid Manager, speak to the media in accordance with the key media responses.

**BACKGROUND**

- From 13 December 2010 to 11 January 2011, South East Queensland experienced unprecedented rainfall, which resulted in the January 2011 flood event. Wivenhoe Dam played a significant role in mitigating the downstream flood peak.
- **Attachment A** contains Seqwater’s Ministerial briefing note setting out background information on Wivenhoe Dam, Wivenhoe Dam’s flood mitigation and operations, Seqwater’s Flood Mitigation Manual, the regulatory context of the Flood Mitigation Manual and Seqwater’s proposed procedure for the preparation of its comprehensive Flood Mitigation Manual report to the Chief Executive, Department of Environment and Resource Management, on Wivenhoe Dam operations for the January 2011 flood event.
- After the Wivenhoe Dam release in October 2010, by way of a letter dated 25 October 2010 at **Attachment B**, the Minister requested the SEQ Water Grid Manager to procure urgent advice as to whether South East Queensland’s water security situation would provide “*an opportunity to reduce the volume stored in key dams as a means of reducing the severity, frequency and duration of flooding in downstream areas.*”
- The Minister also sought the SEQ Water Grid Manager’s “*confirmation that these options would not significantly impact upon our current water security, measured as the probability of needing to reintroduce Medium Level Restrictions over the next five to ten years.*”
- As a result, the SEQ Water Grid Manager requested that Seqwater provide a report assessing the options requested by the Minister.

<b>Author</b> Name: Barry Dennien Position: Chief Executive Officer, SEQ Water Grid Manager Tel No: [REDACTED] Date: 16 January 2011	<b>Cleared by</b> Name: Position: Tel No:	<b>Cleared by</b> Name: Position: Tel No:	<b>Recommended:</b> Name: John Bradley Director-General, DERM Tel No: [REDACTED] Date:
	Name: Position: Tel No:	Name: Position: Tel No:	

- **Attachment C** contains the SEQ Water Grid Manager’s letter to the Minister dated 24 December 2010, in response to the pre-emptive Wivenhoe Dam release advice sought, based on Seqwater’s advice. This letter stated that *“Seqwater has advised that releasing water to below Full Supply Level may provide some benefits in terms of reduced community and operational impacts during minor inflow events, such as has occurred over the past month. For medium and major flood events, it considers that pre-emptive releases will provide negligible benefits...Informed by this advice, the SEQ Water Grid Manager has advised Seqwater that, from a water security perspective, it has no in-principle objection to minor releases from Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams to minimise the operational and community impacts of gate releases.”*
- It should be noted that while seeking advice from Seqwater on pre-emptive dam releases, the SEQ Water Grid Manager continued to provide the Department of Environment and Resource Management with progress reports.
- On 11 January 2011, the Minister requested the SEQ Water Grid Manager to procure an urgent independent review of Seqwater’s operation of Somerset and Wivenhoe Dams in accordance with the Flood Mitigation Manual, for the period 13 December 2010 to 11 January 2011.
- Mr Brian Cooper was engaged to conduct the independent review and his report and curriculum vitae are contained in **Attachment D**.
- Mr Brian Cooper concludes that 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.”*

## CURRENT ISSUES

- The purpose of this Ministerial brief is to provide the Minister with background information on the January 2011 flood event and the operation of Wivenhoe Dam, in preparation for an Emergency Cabinet meeting scheduled on 17 January 2011.
- This Ministerial brief provides information that may assist in responding to questions raised, or anticipated to be raised, by the public and media.
- **Attachment E** contains key media responses based on factual information from Seqwater’s Ministerial briefing note.

## RESOURCE/IMPLEMENTATION IMPLICATIONS

- Any recommendations regarding the Flood Mitigation Manual, improvements to the structure or operation of Wivenhoe Dam, resourcing etc. will arise after any relevant flood event debriefs and Seqwater’s Flood Mitigation Manual report to the Chief Executive, Department of Environment and Resource Management.

## PROPOSED ACTION

- In accordance with the Flood Mitigation Manual, Seqwater will submit a comprehensive report to the Chief Executive, Department of Environment and Resource Management, containing details of the procedures used, the reasons for such and other pertinent information for the operation of Wivenhoe Dam during the January 2011 flood event.
- This report is required to be submitted within six weeks of completion of the flood event.

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## OTHER INFORMATION

- *Consultation:* In preparing the Ministerial briefing note at **Attachment A**, Seqwater consulted with Mr Peter Allen and Mr Bob Reilly from the Office of the Water Supply Regulator, Department of Environment and Resource Management. The SEQ Water Grid Manager provided information on the Minister's request for advice on pre-emptive releases from Wivenhoe Dam and the independent compliance review from Mr Brian Cooper.
- *Legislation:* The Flood Mitigation Manual is a requirement of, and approved by the Chief Executive, Department of Environment and Resource Management, under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*.
- *Key Communication Messages:* The information contained in this Ministerial brief may be used to formulate public messaging regarding the flood event and the operation of Wivenhoe Dam. Communicating the benefits of Wivenhoe Dam for flood mitigation may present positive communication opportunities.

## MINISTER'S COMMENTS

## ATTACHMENTS

- **Attachment A: Seqwater Ministerial briefing note**
- **Attachment B: Letter from Minister Robertson to the SEQ Water Grid Manager dated 25 October 2010**
- **Attachment C: Letter from the SEQ Water Grid Manager to Minister Robertson dated 24 December 2010**
- **Attachment D: Flood Mitigation Manual compliance review report by Mr Brian Cooper and curriculum vitae of Mr Brian Cooper**
- **Attachment E: Key media responses**

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