

Name of Witness	Wendy Margaret NEWMAN
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED] Surat
Occupation	Business Owner / Councillor Maranoa Regional Council
Officer taking statement	Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz
Date taken	18/04/2011

Wendy Margaret NEWMAN states:

1. I am a [REDACTED] year old married female presently residing at [REDACTED] Surat with my husband Brian. In October 2010 I was elected to the Maranoa Regional Council and I still serve in this role. During this event, however, I was not performing my role as councillor but rather as a community member. I am not part of the local district disaster group within my electorate.
2. I have lived within the township of Surat since September 2009 but I have lived in the Surat area since 2001. Whilst living in the Surat region the Balonne River has flooded on only a couple of occasions. The last of which (prior to this event) was in March 2010 when the bridge to Roma went underwater. Due to the geography of the Surat Township it does not flood but rather becomes isolated as all the surrounding low lying areas become inundated. There has been no other significant flooding to my knowledge and the region has just experienced an extended period of drought.
3. In early December I became aware of heavy rainfall in the catchment areas of Dalby and Condamine. I received this information via media reports, Bureau of Meteorology river stations and general community awareness of the situation. Through local experience it is known that heavy rainfall in these areas may result in flooding along the Balonne River throughout the Surat district. Despite this, however, I did not expect the volume of water that we did receive in late December.

Witness Signature. [REDACTED] Signature of officer [REDACTED]

QFCI
 Date: 04/05/11
 Exhibit Number: 264

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4. Between the 28th and 29th of December 2010 the flood that we were expecting arrived at Surat. The large volume of water that travelled from the said catchment areas arrived, causing inundation of the only roads into town. The flood surrounded the township of Surat and we were effectively cut off. The flood waters were extremely strong and the fastest running I have ever seen them.
5. I was contacted by a community member who asked if I could assist in getting some prescription medicine as they had run out. I then made some inquiries with a chemist in Roma and sent a fax with the required details. I requested the SES to transport the medicine to the town. This caused some concern to the local disaster management group (LDMG) in Roma as my request was not part of the official process that had been established to attain these types of supplies. Apparently only the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) could, under the guidelines, transport the medicine once it arrived in Surat. As a result of this, I was asked by the LDMG to chair a teleconference to clarify the arrangements and processes of the various agencies.
6. On the 30th of December 2010 I chaired the first teleconference between the Roma LDMG and the local emergency agencies at Surat. This meeting was held at the Surat office of Maranoa Regional Council and present were members from the State Emergency Service (SES), Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Surat Fire Auxiliary, the QAS, local hospital staff and council roads staff. It was then decided to continue the teleconference process and I chaired these conferences on a daily basis and during the height of the flooding, twice daily. These conferences continued until the 25th January 2011.
7. The main areas covered within the conferences were that of supplies, road conditions, status of residents on outlying properties, co-ordination of resources, management of evacuations and the general concerns and wellbeing of the town residents. As we were cut off, the issue of supplies to the town became paramount. An official recorded process was established with regards to the request of food, medicine and other essential supplies. This was established to ensure that the right amount of material was being requested and then delivered to

people in the community. In most instances supplies were brought via road and then SES boat.

8. The co-ordination of resources was managed through this group as it allowed a central point of information to all services. The meetings were kept open to all emergency services personnel, including those temporarily sent to Surat to assist or relieve Surat staff. This ensured open and quick communication. In one instance our group organised specialised equipment to be sent to the swift water rescue teams based in the town. This was enabled due to the local knowledge of community members being imparted to the emergency services.
9. As I was an integral party of this management group I was approached by members of the community asking questions concerning flood heights. The media was reporting in-correct data concerning 'walls of water' heading to Surat. This made the community very concerned. Maranoa Regional Council had already arranged for a surveyor to conduct surveys of the flooded areas and rivers in order to obtain an estimate on the highest possible peak. It was estimated that a highest peak of 14.9 metres was possible and as a result we made evacuation plans for the community in some parts of the town. Forty eight homes were identified as being at risk and these residents were notified via personal service. Each home owner was given a document outlining what action to take in the advent of the highest peak. This included evacuation routes and evacuation centres. Fortunately the peak did not get to this level and only two houses were evacuated, though they did not become inundated.
10. As previously stated I assisted in this role only as a community member and not as a councillor. The local council staff members in Surat were heavily involved in this group. Due to my prior experience in management and counselling I was able to assist the relevant agencies in their tasks and I performed this role on a daily basis between about 5.30am and 8.00pm.

Issues of concern

Media

11. The media was reporting in-correct information concerning the flood peak which caused panic in the community. There did not seem to be any co-ordination or contact with the local LDMG before issuing reports that were not correct. As a result of a number of media reports outlining an impending wall of water we door knocked the community and held an information meeting. In this meeting we discussed the reports conducted by the surveyor and plans in the advent of such an event. As a result, the community were kept informed and it reduced their anxiety on this issue, which never eventuated anyway.

Lack of contact register

12. My main concern, with regard to flooding, in Surat was those residents on outlying properties. The SES and volunteers attempted to establish and maintain regular telephone contact with all residents on stations and farms in these areas throughout the flood. However there was no central contact list or register available, which meant that initiating the process was dependent on local knowledge of which properties may or may not be affected. . This process was hampered by going through a number of people to find out contact numbers for the residents in the outlying areas. Eventually when we did contact these properties sometimes we did not receive an answer, so we were un-sure whether they were away or in trouble. I suggest that in future a central register be kept by the council with up to date information on outlying residents contact details and their whereabouts, so that authorities can contact them in the time of crisis.

Key emergency service personnel on leave

13. I noticed that when the flood cut off Surat that principal members of the emergency services, who were involved in and familiar with the Maranoa

Regional Disaster Management Plan, were on leave and unable to return to the area due to the floods. It appeared that this was a co-incidence and not intended but key members of the disaster management system in both Roma and Surat were not available when they were needed most. I suggest that in future a cross agency leave planner for key members be devised so as to ensure that their local knowledge is not lost due to their absence.

Lack of maintenance of key infrastructure

14. During the flood crisis a community member raised a concern about the runway lights at the local airfield. This airfield is often used by the Royal Flying Doctor's service and was used during the flood crisis as means of delivering essential supplies. The concern was that the lights were not operational due to damage from mowing. The lights were checked and many were not operational. The local police officer and an electrician worked into the late hours of the night to fix them so aircraft to land. I suggest that these systems should be regularly checked and maintained to avoid this situation occurring again.


Denial of local knowledge/resources

15. Another area of concern was the treatment of community members providing assistance during the declared emergency period. In Surat there is a long history of residents with boats and good local knowledge assisting friends in the area by getting supplies to them or checking their stock or buildings if they are absent. This was occurring on a regular basis during the floods. At one stage the Water Police were called in (by the Roma SES) and the locals, as mentioned, were questioned by police concerning their activities. This action created a great deal of anger towards the 'authorities' and potentially the loss of a valuable local resource.
16. I think consideration should be given to accepting that individuals will continue to help each other during problem times and rather than trying to prevent it we should be finding a process that ensures we are all informed about what is going on and bringing this local knowledge under the response umbrella. This could be

solved by having a permanent local police liaison deal with the issue or have a simple sign out and return form for people visiting the properties.

17. In a similar vein, the private use of helicopters for supply or rescue work became difficult during the emergency because all fuel was reserved for emergency services. This became, I believe, counter-productive at time. e.g On one occasion the owners of Morocco station evacuated the manager and his wife (the house went completely underwater) to St George. The station owners were then denied fuel, to return to the property to continue their damage mitigation preparations. I think they managed to get fuel elsewhere, but the evacuation needed to be completed and independent evacuation, when possible, would save resources for where they are really needed. I suggest that these resources come under the one umbrella and be utilised accordingly.
18. Overall the agencies worked well together and an efficient response was achieved to the floods. I think that in future though, better preparation is needed to assist in the response effort and the in-corporation of local knowledge and resources under the disaster management system.

W.NEWMAN

Justices Act 1886	
I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(5)(c)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:	
(1)	This written statement by me dated 18/04/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 6 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
(2)	I make this statement knowing that, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating in it anything that I know is false.
.....	Signature
Signed at <i>Sydney</i> ..Brisbane.....this..... <i>19th</i>day of.....April.....2011.....	

Witness Signature..  .. Signature of officer .. 

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Surat Support

The Surat Bridge was closed on Tuesday, December 28th, and is expected to be closed - possibly on and off - for a minimum of 2 weeks.

Maranoa Regional Council's coordinating officer for emergency services in Surat is Wayne Wehl, deputising for Mark Worland. His contact number is [REDACTED]

For emergency support contact

SES:	132500
Police:	000
Ambulance:	000
Fire:	000

For general supplies:

Maranoa Regional Council is in contact with the local shops, and the hospital, and will organise delivery of essential supplies if necessary.

For medications:

We have arranged for prescriptions to be faxed to Roma, and the Council will then arrange collection and delivery to Surat. Prescriptions can be left with Wendy Newman at Wendy's Book Bazaar, 69 William St, or at her home, [REDACTED]
(Phone [REDACTED])

*For first delivery please have prescriptions to Wendy by 3:00 p.m.
Thursday 30th December for Friday delivery.*

Written information provided during personal visit by SES & volunteers to all residents who may have needed to evacuate.

If the flood waters continue to rise, you may need to evacuate.

Emergency accommodation will be available at the Supper room, or you may wish to move in with friends or relations.

We suggest you begin preparing for a possible evacuation. Some things that should be included are:

- medications, including any prescriptions
- Toiletries
- Clothing (including underwear and pyjamas)
- Address books – contact numbers
- Important documents –e.g. Insurance papers, registrations, birth & marriage certificates, passports
- If you need to stay in emergency accommodation, please prepare some bedding for yourself such as mattresses, swags, blankets, sheets, pillows, towels.

If necessary dogs, and cats in cages, can be accommodated at the council depot yard. Please send their foods supplies and water bowls.

If you are relocating to friends and/or relatives, please ensure that the SES or Surat Police know where you are.

Contact: SES 0428 265 559 or 46 265 284
or Surat Police 46 265 200
(Leave a message if the phone goes to messagebank.)

*Email to community members***Mt May**

From: "Mt May" [REDACTED]
To: "shop" [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 7 January 2011 5:04 PM
Subject: Surat update
 Hi everyone,

It has been a hectic fortnight, so I thought I would take the opportunity of a bit of 'down-time' to send a general update out, hoping that any recipients will send it on to any other local contacts they have.

Over the Xmas weekend we all were watching the general rain, road and river level information and waiting for the inevitable. Like many others, Brian and I changed our family reunion plans (with our daughter in Boonah) to stay at home, just in case. On the 28th of December the bridge at Surat went underwater and our flood proper had begun.

In Roma the Regional Disaster Management team were already in action, and in contact with the Surat local emergency services - SES, Police, Ambulance, Fire Auxiliary, Hospital & MRC - who had similarly been busily preparing.

On 29th December I, as the local Councillor, was appointed Chair of the Surat Disaster Management Group and on 31st December we had a teleconference with Roma. This was intended to be a single teleconference to clarify areas of responsibility and confirm communication avenues. However it was so immediately useful as a strategy to communicate to and plan in consultation with all the different groups involved that they have been continued on a daily and twice daily basis ever since.

Prior to the 29th there had already been informal checking of people on properties throughout the affected areas, a process made more challenging by the holiday period. Most of us were ringing friends directly, or checking with the people they were in contact with. After the first teleconference this ad hoc information was shared by the Surat participants, and a formal phone-around process was initiated that day, and continues to be repeated ever 2 days. The Shire Offices in Burrowes St is being used for the teleconferences and the phone-arounds.

The phone-around calls are checking that people

- are safe
- have enough supplies
- know who to ring for help

They are also trying to help people know they haven't been forgotten - it can be easy, in such a busy time, to forget that people not immediately involved don't know that lots of people are working hard to deal with all the preparation required and problems arising during a disaster period.

Whilst the waters were rising Surat was asked to prepare for a flood level of 13.4 metres, with a further response level plan for 14 metres. Early in this process it became apparent that we did not have current information about levels for the town, so a surveyor was flown in to recheck them.

Strategies were put in place to ensure that the town would be kept supplied with all essential goods. Additional emergency services staff were sent to Surat to ensure we could both meet emergency needs and provide much needed respite to the various personnel. This included SES staff from Wallumbilla and beyond, Police, Fire Officers and Swift-Water Rescue team members. Of course all of these personnel are there to work far beyond the town's boundaries.

We've tried to keep the communication flowing to all the community throughout this period. During the flood preparation period all residents who may be directly affected were hand-delivered written information about this which included advice about how to prepare and how to get physical assistance if it was needed. (Fortunately only 2 families needed to relocate, and no houses had any water in them.) We also had an Information Session for all residents at the Shire Hall on January 2nd where a representative from each emergency service area gave an update and questions could be asked.

WHAT HELP CAN WE GET NOW?

The Department of Community Services is sending four members of the Community Recovery Information and Referral Service to Surat on Monday and Tuesday.

They will be here to help you find out about support that may be available to individuals or businesses, and how to access this support.

They are arriving Monday morning and will be working out of the Shire Offices.

Information about times etc will be advertised as we work them out.

I would like to encourage anyone who has questions or concerns to use this opportunity to talk directly with people who have the information you need.

Wendy Newman

8-01-2011

Surat Community Update

Tuesday 11 January 2011

The Community Recovery Information and Referral Service Team are commencing operations today.

They will be based at the Shire Offices.

This afternoon from 1:30pm to 4:45pm.

Daily from 10:00am to 4:45pm until further notice.

They are here to provide information about the support options available to individuals or businesses and how to access this support.

No appointments necessary, please call in when you are able.

You will need to bring any of the following items relevant to your situation:

- A form of ID (Drivers License or 18+ Card)
- Rates Notice
- Health Care Card
- Medicare Card

Surat Community Update
Wednesday 12 January 2011

9:30am

The road to Roma is open for cars, 4 wheel drives and trucks under 5 tonne.

Water is still over the road between Surat and Spring Gully, therefore traffic will be one lane only.

Council Staff will be controlling traffic flow - please follow their directions at all times.

There are no fresh fruit or vegetables in Roma, but other food supplies including frozen bread, tinned goods and frozen goods are in limited supply at all outlets – supermarkets and wholesalers.

Efforts are being made to restock Roma's supplies as soon as possible.

At this stage we are unsure of when the next river rise will reach Surat – possibly by Friday.

Re Phone checks to properties.

1. Surat SES began contacting properties in the Warroo area in an organised phone-around format on 31/12/2010. The phone-around was repeated every 2nd day. In addition some properties were contacted on 5/1/2011 due to the extreme flooding they were experiencing, and these contacts have been included in the spreadsheet record.
2. There was no property list or contact information in place to commence the regular phone contact process. On 31/12/2010 an initial list was compiled, based primarily on the local knowledge of Greg Richardson, assisted by SES members Janis Green and Judy McCormack.
3. Paper records were kept by each caller (at various times these included Judy, Katie Richardson, Ambulance Officer Margaret Dean, Senior Constable Dave Thompson and myself – possibly others I am not aware of).
4. In the short term this system, in conjunction with the regular teleconferences which meant quick sharing of information between the Surat participants, as well as with Roma, has been effective. However it would be better if we don't have to start from scratch next time so I have prepared the spreadsheet as a possible starting point for next time. (Of course to be useful it would need to be periodically updated during non-emergency periods.)
5. Within the spreadsheet I've used a basic notation of leaving the relevant cell blank if we are unable to contact the property, or alternatively **No reply**, **OK** if all is well, **Help** if any form of assistance is required, **Check** if more regular contact was required or **Evacuated**.
6. The notes being kept were in no particular order as regards the river and possible progression of the flood, so I attempted to put them in order using a map. I didn't have good enough maps to do this fully, so have numbered those I have worked out, but left the list in property name order.
7. NB re property names with no further info – when checking maps I discovered a lot of additional property names. Some may not have a residence on, some (eg Frogmoor, Stellavale, Wylarah) we all 'knew' what was happening with, so they weren't included in the phone around. This sort of assumption based local knowledge can be dangerous in the long term, so I've added them to the list for any long term planning.
8. The names on the bottom of the list were jotted down on paper and I haven't got any other info about them.

Cr Wendy Newman

7/01/2011

Order	Property	Names	Number	31/12/2010	2/12/2011	4/01/2011	5/01/2011
1	Kanandah						
2	Dunwoodie	Hoadley Greg		OK	Message	Message	
3	Naturi	Boyle, Terry		OK	OK		
4	Murilla	Hayes, Michael & Beccy		OK		No power	
5	Warkon						
6	Pialaway	Schwennessen, Sandra & Roge		OK	OK		
7	Retreat						
8	Narridy						
9	Gambier Park						
10	Combargo						
11	Rockdale						
12	Bookool						
13	H-Lagoon	Suzie & Pete			No reply	Check	
14	Cambridge Downs	Dehnert Toby & Ruth		*	OK	Message	
15	Marionvale	White Scott		OK	OK	Message	
16	Frogmoor						
17	Stellavale						
18	Newington						
19	Newstead						
20	Wylarah						
21	Woodale						
22	Berwick	Johnson, Chris & McInnerney,		OK	Message	Message	
23	Royliston						
24	Broadway Plains	Batkines, Monica		OK	OK	OK	
25	Veribone	Kelly, Lionel & Helen		OK	OK	OK	
26	Riverslea						
27	Teddington	Harth Lloyd & Margie		OK	OK	OK	
28	Basin Downs	Mcintosh, David & Colleen		Message left	OK	OK	
29	Samari Plains	Wilson, Keith & Annabelle		OK	OK	Message	Help
30	Morocco	Denton, Ray & Jo (Mgr)		Message left	OK	OK	Evacuated
31	Riverview	White, Paul & Gai			Help		Check
32	Glennearn						
33	Barrackdale	Hordern, Mark				No reply	

34	Bainakeil	Owner - Gillett Tony	OK	OK			
35	Wycombe		Message left				
36	Warroo	Underwood,, Ned & Tully, Gerard & Jody	OK	OK	Message		
	Austin Downs	Stewart, Alison & Dehnert Alan	Message left	OK	Message		
	Borah	Ware Susan & Graham	OK	OK	OK		
	Broadmarsh	Knights, Cliff	Message left	OK			
	Bymount	Groves Sue & Glen	OK	OK			
	Carrington	Carlsson Mia & Greg	OK	OK	No reply		
	Donga	Schutt, Alan, Scott & Karen	OK	OK	OK		
	Gundi	Timmins Bruce (Caretaker)	OK	OK	OK		
	Ingaby	Bob (worker)	OK	OK	Check		
	LesMoir	Ferris Rob	OK	OK	Message		
	Morocco 2	Brodie, Michael & Anne	OK	OK	OK		
	Rockton	Cox, Dave & Kathy	OK				
	Rostock	Underwood, Jamie	Message left	OK			
	Strathmere	Campbell, Peter	Message left	OK			
	Willow Plains	Brownlie	OK	Message	Message		
	Wyambeh	Hayes Michael					
	Moira Runda	Barbie, Susie	OK				
		Wright, Peter	-	No reply	In Miles		
	Banyula	Karen & Scott	OK				
		Joiner, Frank		OK			
		Woodrow, Andrew					