

**QFCI**

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Date: 29/4/11

Exhibit Number: 212

**IN THE QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ORDER (No.1) 2011**

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN JOHN WRUCK**

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I, KEVIN JOHN WRUCK, care of Toowoomba Regional Council at 153 Herries Street, Toowoomba in the State of Queensland, Manager Community and Business Planning of Toowoomba Regional Council, can say as follows:

1. This statement is prepared 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").
2. The 8 April 2011 letter required me to "*respond to the allegations that residents were not advised of the imminent flood, what steps were taken to advise residents and if they were not warned why not*". In my response, I will deal with the question raised only in relation to the Oakey area, as I understand that is the intent of the question.
3. In this statement, I will first set out my experience, roles and responsibilities and then specifically respond to the request made in the 8 April 2011 letter.


**My experience, roles and responsibilities**

4. I have been Manager Community and Business Planning since 2008. Before that, I was Manager Corporate Planning and Performance for about 1 year and Manager Engineering Administration for 10 years. I have worked in local government since 1972.
5. In my various positions within Toowoomba Regional Council, I have had a major role in disaster management. Before being nominated as the Local Disaster Coordinator in 2010, I was the Executive Officer of the Local Disaster Management Group ("LDMG") and a representative on the District Disaster Management Group ("DDMG"), Toowoomba Disaster Recovery Committee, and SEQ Disaster Management Advisory Group. I have undertaken formal training with Emergency Management Queensland and Emergency Management Australia in disaster management planning and emergency response, and the development and application of emergency operational procedures. I have participated and been involved in the design of a number of Council operational exercises including Exercise Ember 2010 and Miracle 2009. I have also participated in many joint emergency service training exercises such as Orko in 2010, Mountain Mist in 2008, and DDMG initiated exercises Medusa in 2008 and Hailstorm in 2009. I have been involved in organisational responses to disasters including the 2002 Toowoomba fires where I was the Evacuation Centre Manager and I coordinated Council's call centre in the LDCC.
6. At the time of the flood events affecting the Toowoomba region, I was acting in the position of Local Disaster Coordinator. I had been acting in this position since 8 December 2010

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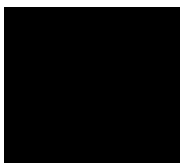


having been appointed to the substantive position by Councillor Noel Strohfeld, Chairperson of the LDMG under section 35 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*. My appointment was endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Toowoomba Regional Council.

7. I understand that my position as Local Disaster Coordinator has not been confirmed by the Chief Executive of Emergency Management Queensland.
8. In the role as the Local Disaster Coordinator, I carry out the following responsibilities:
  - Ensure Council has disaster management plans and systems in place;
  - Ensure such plans and systems are tested on a regular basis;
  - Manage the Disaster Management Coordinator/SES Local Controller;
  - Arrange LDMG and Evacuation and Welfare Committee meetings and minutes;
  - Participate in the LDMG, DDMG, Evacuation and Welfare Committee and Toowoomba Disaster Recovery committee meetings;
  - Bring any relevant disaster management matters to the attention of the LDMG Chairperson, CEO or Mayor;
  - Provide reports to Council on a monthly basis on disaster management initiatives;
  - In conjunction with Corporate Communication, issue articles for circulation to residents about being prepared for disaster events. The most recent article circulated was in the 2010 Summer edition of *Council Connections* entitled "Be storm smart this summer"; and
  - Participate in disaster related workshops and provide presentations about disaster management.
9. During the flood events affecting the Toowoomba region including Millmerran, Pittsworth, Cecil Plains, Toowoomba city, Yarraman and Oakey, I carried out the following functions in relation to disaster management:
  - (a) coordinated disaster operations in the Local Disaster Coordination Centre ("LDCC");
  - (b) reported to the LDMG, DDMG (through the preparation and delivery of Situation Reports) and Council's Internal Disaster Coordination Meeting about disaster response operations;
  - (c) ensured that the LDMG meeting notes were recorded;
  - (d) ensured, as far as practicable, that any strategic decisions of the LDMG or the Toowoomba Regional Council Chief Executive Officer about disaster response operations were implemented; and
  - (e) participated in Toowoomba disaster recovery meetings.

**Response to "... the allegations that residents were not advised of the imminent flood, what steps were taken to advise residents and if they were not warned why not".**

10. Council took steps to advise residents of flooding. Council issued media releases warning of the likelihood of flooding, responded to the inquiries of residents, and assisted in organising evacuations.
11. Council endeavoured to alert Oakey residents to the knowledge that Council had about the possibility of flooding but the Council did not have the ability to predict the extent of flooding that would occur. Council could not provide advice beyond what was known to Council at the time.



12. Council does not have the hydrological data available to predict peak flood levels in Oakey and could not predict the degree that flooding would eventuate. Council relies on physical observation and local knowledge to estimate the level of flooding.
13. Council had, through Council's Oakey Service Centre, been monitoring water levels at the Oakey Creek bridge. Many of the Oakey residents and emergency service agencies were also monitoring water levels.

#### **Advice to residents in Oakey: Dissemination of Advice through the Media**

14. A separate media cell was established to coordinate all media releases, media enquiries and update the Council website and the Disaster Management website. The Corporate Communication personnel were tasked with reviewing information in the LDCC in order to prepare and issue media releases, and to get messages out without delay. On 10 and 11 January 2011, there were about 25 media releases issued.
15. A media release (refer to item 427 of the documents provided to the Commission) issued on 10 January 2011, that is the day before the peak flooding in Oakey, stating as follows:

#### ***"Possible flooding in Oakey***

*Toowoomba Regional Council is advising Oakey residents to take precautions against possible flooding in the town.*

*Flooding may occur due to significant rises in Gowrie and Oakey creeks caused by heavy rain.*

*Residents should regularly check any water on their property to ensure that water levels are not rising."*

16. Council issued further media releases that included information relating to Oakey. Refer to media releases "*TRC water infrastructure update*" and "*Mayor Peter Taylor implores residents to stay away from water, off roads*" that were issued on 11 January 2011 (refer to items 445 and 446 of documents provided to the Commission).

#### **Information Exchange and Cooperation with Emergency Services and Other Agencies re Oakey Flooding**

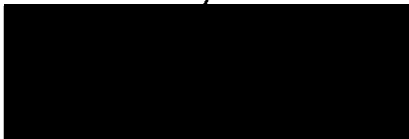
17. As the Local Disaster Coordinator, I took steps to ensure the provision of information collected by Council was available to the various agencies as necessary.
18. For example, at about 7:00am on 9 January 2011, I was called into the Water Services Dams Event Management room. Cooby Dam started overflowing at 7:23pm on 9 January 2011, Perseverance Dam commenced overflowing on Friday 7 January 2011 and Cressbrook Dam was rising quickly. Rain continued to fall in the dam's catchment.
19. As a result of concerns about the continuing rainfall and the rising dam levels, at around 8:30 pm, I called a LDMG meeting for 10:00am on Monday 10 January 2011. In order to ensure that all necessary members could attend the LDMG meeting, a revised meeting notice was sent at 9:53pm on 9 January rescheduling the meeting to 1:00pm on 10 January 2011. It was stated in the meeting notice that:

*“the aim of the meeting is to update members on the current situation throughout the TRC area and to discuss the activation status of the LDMG and LDCC.”*

20. At 9:42pm Situation Report 002 prepared by TRC Disaster Management Coordinator/SES Local Controller and myself stating, amongst other things, the dam levels, was sent to the District Disaster Coordinator Toowoomba with a copy to the LDMG members, SES Deputy Controllers and persons on standby for the LDCC. At 9:43pm the Situation Report was again sent to the District Disaster Coordinator Toowoomba.
21. At the LDMG meeting on 10 January, the Director of Water Services, Mr Kevin Flanagan provided an overview of the situation with the various dams including the height of water. Mr Flanagan subsequently left the meeting. At 1:30pm I received a call from Mr Flanagan stating that water had commenced flowing over the Cressbrook spillway and I subsequently relayed this information to the LDMG members.
22. The outcome of the meeting was that the status of the LDMG was changed from Standby to Activation stage. Just prior to the closure of the meeting a number of calls were received which prompted the LDMG to resolve to activate the LDCC. The LDCC being on Standby since Thursday 6 January 2011 had ensured that its equipment and assets were brought to readiness. This readiness enabled the LDCC to be active by 3:30pm on 10 January 2011.
23. Council's Internal Disaster Coordination meetings were set up by its Chief Executive Officer. A meeting held in the afternoon provided strategic direction and operational support to the LDCC in response to the disaster situation. At these meetings, the levels of the various dams were provided. The Director of District Services, Mr Jason Bradshaw provided information concerning the Districts including Oakey. For example, Mr Bradshaw was providing information on the level of Oakey Creek to the LDCC. Part of Mr Bradshaw's role was to communicate information between the LDCC and the Oakey Service Centre.
24. As a result of extreme rainfall on Tuesday morning the 11 January 2011, I contacted Mr Chris Rubie, the Council's Manager, Construction and Maintenance-Districts around 6:00am to obtain information about the water level in Oakey Creek. Mr Rubie's access to Oakey was blocked by stormwater and accordingly, he contacted the Oakey Police to obtain up to date information. Ian Stevenson, Acting Manager of the Oakey Service Centre had also allocated staff to monitor creek levels. It is my understanding that other agencies were also observing Oakey Creek levels as there is no monitoring system in the Oakey Creek catchment to alert persons of any impending flood situation.
25. A further LDMG meeting was held at 8:00am on Tuesday 11 January 2011 where members were advised of the dam levels and provided updates on the disaster response.
26. Following the LDMG meeting, I received a telephone message that the situation was getting worse and people were being evacuated. QFRS took charge of evacuating persons. QFRS requested the services of Laurie buses (3 buses) to evacuate persons. Jason Bradshaw approached me about the evacuation situation and we agreed that the Oakey Cultural Centre should be set up as an assembly point. Mr Ian Stevenson was subsequently advised to take steps to set up the assembly point. Information was received that the Oakey hospital would be evacuated by helicopter to the Army base. This information was later revised as the hospital management decided not to evacuate patients.

27. Because of difficulties in obtaining food, bedding and staff and the unknown water level peak, the Chief Executive Officer, Council's Director of Engineering Services and myself agreed to evacuate to the Toowoomba Grammar School those persons from Oakey who could not find alternative accommodation. I contacted Laurie Buses manager David Laurie who agreed to transport evacuees to the Toowoomba Grammar School. I subsequently advised Tim Kelly from Toowoomba Grammar School that there were about 60 persons from Oakey to be accommodated at the evacuation centre. I also arranged for Mr Paul Reynolds, Manager Community Development and Facilities, to meet the evacuees at Toowoomba Grammar School. The first bus departed Oakey around midday. In the meantime the residents of CWA House also decided to relocate to Toowoomba Grammar School. A second bus was arranged and departed Oakey at around 3:30pm.
  
28. The Toowoomba Grammar School evacuation centre supported about 100 evacuees from places including Oakey and Toowoomba city on 12 January 2011. The CWA House patients returned to the Uniting Church premises in John Street on 12 January 2011. The other evacuees from Oakey returned to Oakey on 13 January 2011.

Dated: *16th* April 2011.



Kevin John Wruck

#4152815