

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF ARRANGEMENTS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT LAKE GRACE
MONDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2006**

SESSION SEVEN

Members

Mr A.P. O’Gorman (Chairman)

Mr S.R. Hill

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas

Mrs J. Hughes

Hearing commenced at 3.48 pm

BENNETT, MRS HELEN ROSE
Farmer/Shop Assistant, examined:

STREVETT, MR SCOTT PAUL
Farmer, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Before we start, I have some information to read to you. This committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings of the house itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you understand the notes attached to it?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we ask any questions, do you have any opening statements that you would like to make?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Hopefully we can lead you down the road a bit. Obviously, the major event is the recent flood, although I know that you have had other natural disasters in the area in the past few years. Can you give us a little background about the recent disasters that have been proclaimed for this area, particularly the flood, and the impacts it has had on you as individuals or your businesses?

Mr Strevett: Okay. We had eight inches of rain in January over about two days. In that week we had 10 inches of rain, which is more than our annual rainfall. We lost up to 10 kilometres of fence, between 50 and 100 sheep and six dams burst their banks. There was a lot of water erosion and we lost a lot of topsoil. It was an absolute nightmare. It created a lot of work and a lot of expense that we did not need.

Mrs Bennett: I will give a farmer's perspective, and then does the committee want me to talk about the community perspective as well?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mrs Bennett: We had the same amount of rain. We had 10 inches over a day or two. I could not get to town. None of us could get to town for 10 days. I lost income and so did my son, who was home with us as well. He was working on the tarping crew and he could not get to town for about eight days. I think he ended up bogging a motorbike trying to get out. We are very close to town; we are just behind the hospital. Later on drainage channels were dug through our farm, which caused a bit of angst on its own because there were so many different opinions on what was the best way to drain the lake. Some thought it was better to go north into the north end of the lake and others thought it would be better to link a lot of little dry areas of our farm and a couple of

neighbours' farms and then drain the water into the south end of the lake. My husband wanted to make sure that that was going to work before he agreed that it could be done, which was a bit of a problem because townspeople rang us and said that he was going to let the town flood. People got a bit hysterical about that. Also, once the water was drained, it considerably flooded our farm even more, because as it drained out of the lake into the small dry lakes that have never really had water in them, the water spread out into the paddock as well. Those areas could not be cropped this year because they were still too wet. Getting from one end of the farm was impossible for a couple of months until Main Roads put crossings in the channels that they dug through the farm. Main Roads was not too bad with that because it built some crossings. It has a few more to do. Main Roads also chamfered the drains so that the edges are not straight up and down. If sheep fall in them, at least they can get out. Our dog fell into one of the channels when it was flooded, and unless my husband had run down the other end and pulled him out, he would not have got out.

Community wise, I think the damage that the flood did was underestimated. Because not a lot of shops were flooded and people were not taking out wet carpets and wet stock and all that sort of thing, it did not create an impression on other parts of the state and in the media of how bad it was. I know that Murray Stanton, the fellow I work for, had to go and collect his stores, because the courier would bring them only a certain distance; he would not drive through water to get them here. Therefore, Murray had to go and pick them up several times a week. The fellow from Australia Post had to drive out to Lake King, not just for a couple of weeks, but for almost two months. Also, a few weeks after the initial rainfall we had 10 inches of rain, followed by another two inches of rain.

The CHAIRMAN: Two inches is roughly your annual rainfall, is it not?

Mrs Bennett: It is usually 13 inches. In a short space of time we had 10 inches of rain followed by two inches of rain, which was almost as much as we get for the year. However, a lot of that was because the road that comes across the lake into town was flooded. Main Roads did a fair bit of work to that road but had not dug down and found out what was underneath, and so as soon as Main Roads opened up the road to heavy traffic again, it all broke through. We then had another two inches of rain. Main Roads had to just about start the work all over again, and that closed the town off from the entrance on the Dumbleyung side of Lake Grace. It was closed for two and a half months. Most probably one of the effects of the flood was that people got used to travelling through Karlgarin and Hyden to Lake King and down to Esperance, so I think that some of the traffic that used to come through Lake Grace is still going that way now. It was a new way for people to travel. That road is not as good, but a lot of traffic still goes that way, so I suppose the town is missing the passing traffic that used to go through the town.

The CHAIRMAN: You mentioned that your employer had to go out and pick up his supplies.

Mrs Bennett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: That is an extra cost. Was that cost then passed on to the customers?

Mrs Bennett: No, it was not.

The CHAIRMAN: Who picked up that extra cost?

Mrs Bennett: He did.

The CHAIRMAN: That must have been a fairly large impost on him.

Mrs Bennett: Yes. He did it every day for the papers and the bread. Once people could at least get to the outskirts of Lake Grace on the roads, someone went and picked them up for him. Three times a week he got basic groceries to start with, and when the road opened, he got them into town again, but when it closed again he had to do that again.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you aware of the assistance measures that are available following a natural disaster; and, if you know about them, did you find it easy to access the information, and were state

government agencies and local government helpful? Do you know what assistance is available following a natural disaster?

Mrs Bennett: We did not really go into it. I would imagine that some fencing and that sort of thing would have been available for people to claim for. Was that not available?

The CHAIRMAN: Fencing is specifically excluded at the moment.

Mrs Bennett: Okay. The only thing that I knew of was that we could claim for loss of income through Centrelink, I think it was, but I had a look at it and it was too hard, so I did not bother.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you tell us why it was too hard? That is a federal government issue, but can you tell us just to get it on the record?

Mrs Bennett: It is most probably just the small amount that we would receive. If it was \$10 000, \$20 000 or \$30 000, I might have claimed it, but the rigmarole that was involved for claiming only a small amount made me think it was not worth it because it would have taken all day to do it, so I did not bother.

The CHAIRMAN: Scott, you seem to know a bit more about it.

Mr Strevett: Yes. I am unaware of everything that is available, but how is a cost placed on a lot of it? Every road and track on everyone's farm would have needed to have been graded, because they were impassable. I do not know how to put a figure on the expenses. Hours and days and weeks of work was required and materials were needed to replace the fences and stuff like that. We just had to pay for it ourselves.

Mrs J. HUGHES: They are indirect costs rather than costs that you could just calculate and say -

Mr Strevett: Yes. Getting back to what Helen was saying, the whole event was underestimated because we cannot claim from anyone for fences, sheep deaths and grading, so there is no proof of the damage that was caused; it is only known by word of mouth. We lost the dams, all the grading, the fences and the sheep, but because we did not actually claim for it - or because we cannot claim for it - there is no process of getting it on paper.

[4.00 pm]

Mrs J. HUGHES: So it is not fitted into the event costs.

Mr Strevett: It is just one of those things that happens that we have to wear.

The CHAIRMAN: Although there are a number of schemes, two major assistance schemes are talked about. One scheme involves \$1 500 for technical and financial advice. Were you aware of that scheme?

Mr Strevett: Yes. I applied for it.

The CHAIRMAN: Were you successful?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The other one is a four per cent interest rate rebate on a loan up to \$150 000 over 10 years. Were you aware of that scheme?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you apply for that?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that much of an issue? Was there a major barrier? Can you take us through that process?

Mr Strevett: I have to remember it; I was hoping you would not ask me that. It is very involved. In exceptional circumstances, such as the last drought, you have to plead your case. I am familiar

with the process. However, I think it is too hard for the average person. The process is too involved and too hard to work through. A lot of people would probably give up.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you apply?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: You received the \$1 500 - that was fine. Was that process relatively easy?

Mr Strevett: Basically we had to have a receipt for the professional advice that we sought regarding the event.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you apply for the four per cent interest rate rebate?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Were you successful?

Mr Strevett: Yes. I had to prove that the amount that I was applying for was extra borrowings from my bank.

The CHAIRMAN: And that that money was going to reinstate what you had lost. I think you said that that money will replace your 50 to 100 sheep. It will also cover the cost of hiring a grader. I assume you hired a grader to redo the roads and dams.

Mr Strevett: It was for a grader, bulldozer and fencing materials. It is ongoing. I suppose that is why it takes up to 10 years. A lot of topsoil washed off the paddocks and disappeared.

The CHAIRMAN: How is that fixed?

Mr Strevett: We had to rip paddocks up because they were physically rough to drive over. We had to rip them up to level them out. There were fuel, time and labour costs. I do not know how to put a price on our time and labour.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you have been able to get the loan that you took out from your financial institution if you did not have the four per cent interest rebate?

Mr Strevett: Probably not.

The CHAIRMAN: So, it has been of assistance to you?

Mr Strevett: Definitely.

Mrs Bennett: We got the \$1 500 for professional advice as well. That was easy.

The CHAIRMAN: You were part of the recovery process because they dug the drains through your land.

Mrs Bennett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did that upset your production considerably or had that been stuffed because of the flood?

Mrs Bennett: Most probably at the time it did not. I would say it did with seeding, because we could not get fertiliser in for months because we could not get it to the farm.

Mr Strevett: The local contractor was not allowed to drive on the roads for a start.

Mrs Bennett: We lost arable land when they drained the lake into the smaller lakes. Those lakes swelled - that land was arable - and then they dug another trench into another little lake for when that one filled up. That was how they did it. We could not get from one side of the farm to the other.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that because the drains made it physically impossible? You said that Main Roads came back.

Mrs Bennett: It came back. Instead of the drains being straight up and down, it made them more sloping and it carted the dirt away that had been dug out of the drains because that is dead dirt and nothing will grow on it. When we plant trees, we do not plant trees along the edge of the drain, because if anyone was driving across the farm at night, they would not know that they were there.

The CHAIRMAN: Are the drains now a permanent feature?

Mrs Bennett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Have any arrangements been made with you? Have you sold Main Roads that land?

Mrs Bennett: No. That was the hot topic at the time. I do not know whether it would have come to the party by either buying the land or giving us some sort of compensation for it. However, it was all done pretty quickly because it wanted to drain the Cemetery Lake because that was stopping everyone from getting into town. There was a fair bit of community pressure on my husband about the drains. He kept asking everyone how they would like it if drains were dug all over their farm. The drains are fairly deep. In the end he said do it, even though he thought there was an easier and quicker way of doing it. He thought that if they went across the road and south it would drain directly into the south side of Lake Grace. There was all of that in it. Everyone had a different opinion and everyone was a professional and had a better idea.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Was it a stressful time?

Mrs Bennett: It was for my husband.

The CHAIRMAN: In the long run you have a continuing loss because you saved the town, so to speak.

Mrs Bennett: Well us and a couple of other neighbours as well.

The CHAIRMAN: There should be some way of - I will not say compensating - recognising what you did.

Mrs Bennett: I suppose, but you do not like to bang your own drum too much. I suppose we a bit like the Strevetts. We are only starting to realise the damage that the floods caused to our fencing. As the waters have retracted, we have begun to realise that all that fencing is gone. We want to put sheep in the paddock after we have finished harvesting the paddock. My husband spent two days this weekend fencing so that he can put sheep out when the paddocks are harvested.

Mr Strevett: It is an ongoing loss. There are lakes around part of our farm where it happened that flooded. We have lost the arable land that has been flooded. We cannot crop it this year. There is a good chance it will not come back from salinity. Also we have planted a lot of trees and they are dying every day. You only have to drive down the road and you can see every month there is another tree or two or 10 dying.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that because of salinity?

Mr Strevett: A lot of them die because the smaller one are under water and they suffocate. Even the larger ones are slowly dying off. I do not know whether it is a rising water table, salinity or what.

Mrs Bennett: I think a lot of them drowned. It was just too wet.

Mr Strevett: The ones that were under water all died within days. The bigger ones are slowly dying off over time.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Were you prepared for a disaster? I know that that a is big question. I refer to your insurance policies being in place and those types of things?

Mr Strevett: Our insurance was in place; however, we cannot claim for anything that we lost.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you lose any machinery?

Mr Strevett: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Some people said that their machinery is still under water.

Mr Strevett: We have had damage to machinery as a result of rescuing people from the flood water.

Mrs J. HUGHES: You have borne that cost.

Mr Strevett: Yes.

Mrs J. HUGHES: What things did your insurance not cover?

Mr Strevett: Everything.

Mrs J. HUGHES: So you were insured but you were not insured.

Mr Strevett: At the time we could not insure our fencing in times of floods. We cannot insure our dams for damage because it is rare. It is probably not an option. As far as I know, we do not have a choice. To have water erosion all through your farm, I would hate to pay the premium on that.

Mrs Bennett: A lot of people had structural damage to their house, although it did not show up at the time, it was walls cracking and those sorts of things. It is bit hard to go back to your insurance company and say it was because of the floods.

[4.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: From our understanding from what we have heard today and previously, there was very little physical property damage, as in man-made property with houses, sheds, things like that, but, because the whole landscape sustained that amount of water, everything softened up and moved slightly, and that is where you are starting to see your cracks coming. Is that what you are saying?

Mrs Bennett: Yes. I took photos to show people. If you just showed them the floods, it just looked like it was a big lake or a river or something, but when you showed them photos of the damage that was done to the cemetery, people were absolutely aghast. They just could not believe.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that just wash-away at the cemetery?

Mrs Bennett: Yes, because sand and mud and things were washed away, there were graves that had subsided, and had a lean on them, and headstones that had fallen over. That had more impact than if you showed people pictures of flooded paddocks. You could only just see the sign that shows our farm name, but if you showed them that they would just say okay. However, if you showed them the damage to the cemetery, they would say, "Oh God; you have to do something about that."

The CHAIRMAN: It is what people relate to, is it not?

Mrs Bennett: Yes, and I think that is why a lot of people did not realise how bad the flooding was. Because we did not have stores lugging wet carpet and stock and all that sort of thing out - we had two or three houses that were flooded - you did not have that visual image, but there was other damage that people did not know about.

The CHAIRMAN: Were there other impacts? We have heard from the council and we have heard from government agencies, but was there other community impact, or business impact around the place?

Mrs Bennett: I know two businesses had just been taken over by new people, so it was very difficult for them to actually judge how their business was affected by the flooding. The little café, Rosie's, down here suffered a severe impact, but because the lady had just bought it a couple of months before, it would have been very difficult for her to know how badly it was affected.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Do you know whether they were aware that they could access WANDRA funding?

Mrs Bennett: I do not know. I did ask a couple of people whether they had applied for funding, and I think a few had, but the café owner would not have, because she could not really tell how it had affected the business.

The CHAIRMAN: They could not attribute it to the disaster.

Mr Strevett: You could say generally that the majority of local businesses would have suffered loss of income because the town was basically isolated from itself. No-one could really come in or out, so a lot of businesses could not operate. People who had to rely on travelling in any direction - that could not happen.

The CHAIRMAN: In terms of businesses in this town, I imagine that lots of them were agricultural businesses?

Mrs Bennett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Have they had a great loss because the farms are not now feeding into them, or have they had a benefit because they are contractors going out re-grading your roads and doing those sorts of things?

Mr Strevett: I would say that the majority would have had a loss of income, apart from the graders and maybe the fencing contractors. A couple of specialised contractors maybe did have a gain, but generally you would say most would lose.

Mrs Bennett: Maybe a few of the stock agencies would have sold a bit more chemical than they would have otherwise. Everyone started spraying again. The summer weeds all came up.

The CHAIRMAN: That was an impact of the flood.

Mr Strevett: That was another added cost - the summer spray.

The CHAIRMAN: What about disruption to the schools, and things like that? I do not know whether you have children, but was there a disruption in that way as well?

Mrs Bennett: The bus runs were difficult for a while, and I know the neighbour next door to us bought a little boat to run his kids across the lake. They could have caught the bus, but he had to take them a long way around to hop on a bus.

Mr Strevett: It was a long round trip by car, or a five-minute boat ride.

Mrs Bennett: There were those sort of impacts. Fortunately, when it happened, a lot of people were away on holidays, when the town was quite empty. A lot of people were away. Some did not get back, which might have been good. I suppose the community pretty much pulled everyone together a bit. We are pretty resilient here.

Mr Strevett: We are starting to get used to it all. You just wonder what is next. We have just about seen it all.

Mrs J. HUGHES: There are currently exclusions under WANDRA, such as the reinstatement of fencing or other immediate assistance measures like stock disposals - some of the things you have mentioned - that would have been helpful, I imagine, in your recovery effort. These are obvious omissions under the existing natural disaster arrangements. Do you believe that they should be included in relief efforts?

Mr Strevett: I definitely think it would help, if it could be done.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Would it have made a huge difference to you, getting you back on your feet quicker?

Mr Strevett: Yes.

Mrs Bennett: I definitely think the fencing is a huge cost, and the road grading. Lake Grace is not overly endowed with gravel, either, so you had to get gravel brought, which is quite expensive. I

had to go the long way to town for quite a few months, which took me about 15 or 20 minutes, but it usually only takes me about five minutes, and it was through gates. That was more inconvenient than a cost.

The CHAIRMAN: Come and live in the city and you get that on the freeway every day.

Mrs Bennett: I know; that is why I do not live there. I could not stand it.

The CHAIRMAN: I think we have exhausted our questions.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Did you have any problem with stock feeding in the wet?

Mr Strevett: No, not really, because you just could not feed them. You couldn't get into your paddocks.

Mrs J. HUGHES: So how did your stock eat?

Mr Strevett: They ate what was there.

Mrs J. HUGHES: You just left them to their own devices.

Mr Strevett: Yes, because you physically could not feed them. We have a four-wheel motor bike, and we were getting bogged. You could basically only walk on the paddock. That was about the only way you could get out there. When it is 25 kilometres from one end to the other, you do not walk out and feed the sheep.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Were the sheep just left to try to manage the best they could?

Mr Strevett: Yes; it was summertime, so there was stubble from the harvest, and it was probably a matter of two or three weeks before the green feed from the flood started to come through, so they did not starve. They never had nothing to eat.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Was your loss of stock purely from the flooding itself, during that process?

Mr Strevett: The sheep went for cover and, if it was in the low-lying area, for some reason they just stayed there and the water level just rose up around them, and they were washed away. My brother-in-law physically found sheep standing up to their necks, holding their heads out of the water, and he had to walk in. They would not walk out themselves. He had to carry them out, and then they are three times the weight they normally are. There were hundred of them.

Mrs J. HUGHES: It is a bit of a workout.

Mr Strevett: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you any comment you would like to make to the committee before we close off? Is there anything you would like to get on record one way or the other?

Mr Strevett: The only thing I would say is that I believe the interest rate subsidy is a good thing, but the process is so involved. It needs to be simpler.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there anything specific that you would say really makes it difficult. Is there any one thing that you consider is pointless or stupid.

Mr Strevett: I think the assets test is a problem. I do not think it really matters whether you have a heap of assets or none, because in that sort of situation, if you can make a profit in a business and save some for a rainy day, if there is help available because of a natural disaster, that is what the help is for. We are penalising the people who are successful at business and putting money away, and then making them take it out, if you know what I mean.

[4.19 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: So it is a situation in which people have saved \$50 000, \$60 000 or \$100 000 over however many years, they are hit with a natural disaster, and before they can access the interest rate subsidy, they have to spend their nest egg.

Mr Strevett: It penalises people in business who are going ahead and getting somewhere, because they cannot get help. They are being penalised for being good at business. I agree that everyone else should be helped, but I think it should be fair across the board, to everyone and anyone.

Mrs Bennett: I do not think that the effect the damage had on the community is as evident as it really was. Apart from people who live in and around the town of Lake Grace, people do not realise the actual extent of the damage.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Do you believe there was a decent emergency response?

Mrs Bennett: I think it was the best that could be done at the time, and people were fantastic. However, one good thing to emerge from it is that the shire has examined its emergency management plan again. That was a good thing - and the kids had fun in the water! Lake Grace looks quite a nice place at the moment, with all the water in the lakes. However, I do not think that people quite realised the extent of the damage.

Mr Strevett: I totally agree. One of the most frustrating things about the whole event was the number of people we had to rescue, out where we are.

The CHAIRMAN: Were they locals?

Mr Strevett: None of them were locals; that was the funny thing.

Mrs Bennett: Stupid people.

Mr Strevett: People who did not have a clue. It would be like driving a car into the ocean at Scarborough beach and hoping to get to the other side. It was not possible to see across to the other side of the water, and yet people were driving through and getting trapped, stranded or washed away. Our farm was the closest point.

Mrs J. HUGHES: You were the emergency response?

Mr Strevett: Yes; we did not want to put ourselves in the position of going out and rescuing someone, yet people had -

The CHAIRMAN: We cannot legislate against stupidity!

Mrs Bennett: I think the local policeman charged a few of them.

Mrs J. HUGHES: There are obviously only a few guys around here who are in voluntary emergency groups. Given that there was a need for emergency response, was there extra assistance available through the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, to bring more people in? Did you not have any extra volunteers?

Mrs Bennett: They could not get in.

Mr Strevett: The problem was that in our area the water was probably two kilometres wide. I think the main problem was getting to the other side of the water to erect signs. There were signs in Newdegate saying that the road was closed, but people just drove past the signs, got to the water and kept driving across. There were even some from this side, where tape had been installed on the road, who drove around the tape and kept going.

Mrs J. HUGHES: How did you find them? Did you just stumble across them?

Mr Strevett: We were continually checking to see whether the water levels were coming up or going down. I hate to think where some of these people would have ended up if we had not been checking. I am surprised that no-one drowned.

Mrs J. HUGHES: There did not appear to be any response to actually stopping people from coming into town? The roads were not manned?

Mr Strevett: No. I suppose there should have been someone manning the roads, but I do not know how long they would have had to have been there.

Mrs Bennett: There are four entries into town, and it would have been a 24-hour-a-day job.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Was there no police response?

Mrs Bennett: There was unfortunately only one policeman in town, because the other one was on holiday.

Mr Strevett: Even had there been 10 police, there are four entries and three of them were blocked. There would need to be one person on each side.

Mrs J. HUGHES: Has this information been fed into your local government?

Mrs Bennett: I think it has, yes. Did the witnesses from the shire council mention that the hospital was cut off from the airstrip, so that no-one could have been flown out had there been an emergency?

Mrs J. HUGHES: No.

The CHAIRMAN: They did not mention that specifically. They mentioned that a bunch of politicians rocked up, and they had to get them from the airstrip to town by boat.

Mrs Bennett: It was quite funny, because the airstrip was cut off and they go through the lake to get there. Usually the RAC helicopter cannot come to Lake Grace because it has to be refuelled on the way.

The CHAIRMAN: It is the distance involved.

Mrs Bennett: They ended up getting the boat in, but if there had been an emergency, it could have caused a bit of a problem.

Mr Strevett: I am surprised that there was no emergency. It is probably not relevant, or a solution to the sort of stupidity that I was referring to, but it was just very frustrating at the time. It was unbelievable to see.

Mrs J. HUGHES: On top of the work you had to do on your farm, you were also saving people.

Mr Strevett: Yes. I do not mind rescuing people; I suppose anyone would do the same thing. However -

The CHAIRMAN: We will make particular reference in our report to people's stupidity - in the nicest possible way!

Mr Strevett: Yes, it is just something that we have noticed and it is amazing to see it.

The CHAIRMAN: I will read you our closing statement so that you know what will happen from here. Again, thank you for your contribution to the committee's inquiry.

A transcript of the hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of typographical errors or errors of transcription or fact. New material cannot be introduced and the sense that the evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, you should submit a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration. If the transcript is not returned within 10 days of receipt, we will deem it to be correct - so you get 10 days to look it over, make any corrections and send it back to us. That should be out within a week. Thank you very much.

Hearing concluded at 4.26 pm
