

Please find some information regarding the history of the Rockhampton Bureau of Meteorology Office.

It was established at Rockhampton Airport in 1939, primarily as an Observational role, and to satisfy the requirements of the Aviation industry for the Briefing of pilots and the distribution of weather data. In addition, the Office reality was most likely as a direct response to WW 2. Prior to 1939 rainfall data was collected at the Rocky Post Office.

Over the years, the reputation and image of the Office was being enhanced by the increasing connection with the general Central Queensland populace covering a wide spectrum of reasons to satisfy the thirst for reliable up to date weather information. It was being staffed by Technical Officers, Observers and Radio Technical Officers, the latter being for the maintenance of equipment.

That trend of an increasing Clientele base continued into the 1980's, when, like a bolt out of the blue, the out of touch Bureau Management team in the Central Office in Melbourne decided to close the Weather Service Offices of Canberra, Port Hedland, Alice Springs, Mount Isa, Cairns, Rockhampton and Launceston, as part of an ill thought out financial decision.

That episode was known as the HERSCIE Enquiry, namely the House of Representatives Standing Committee into Expenditure. This enquiry started in 1985 and continued for several years. At the time, I was the Officer In Charge of the Mount Isa Office, and within twelve months was transferred to the Rockhampton Office, again as Officer In Charge. We, the Staff, particularly the OIC's, realised we had a fight on our hands, and immediately went into battle. As a result, I was involved with two fronts, Mount Isa and Rockhampton. We knew our Client base, Bureau Management didn't, so that was one of our big guns. We received enhanced widespread public support from the diverse CQ population from Keith Wright (the sitting ALP Member) to the local janitor. The uproar was truly deafening.

I was grilled face to face by a panel of Politicians asking my reasons why the Offices should not be closed. It was a stressful time with such job uncertainty. The result? We won! And the general populace also won! However, Mount Isa was closed, but Rockhampton and Cairns were given the green light. The Federal Government immediately told the Bureau of Meteorology that the Rocky Office would be financed with Staff upgrades and associated intense advanced training, along with a brand new multi million dollar building at Rockhampton Airport.

With renewed vigour, we, the Staff, enhanced the Office reputation with hard work, covering the hours from 2.30am to midnight seven days a week, which included not only a full Observational function, including Weather radar, but an enhanced Weather Watch, Forecasting and Warning Service for Central Queensland. The profile was high.

Two to three telephone lines operated as we kept that link with the public open. Anyone could phone from anywhere to chat with a forecaster. We were swamped by calls in periods of bad weather which almost drove us to distraction.

I resigned from the BOM in 2001, to concentrate on my Television Weather Presenter career as the eleven years of two jobs - Bureau and TV - was too much for me. Not long after that year, the Forecasting Staff were GRADUALLY reduced. The PM at the time, Kevin Rudd, demanded the Forecasting staff be reinstated to full previous capacity, but that was ignored.

Fast forward to the present day, and I am aghast at the looming closure of the Rocky BOM. Even the weather radar has been decommissioned. The Staff have been reduced, and most of the equipment removed. The Public have been hoodwinked and a vital service is threatened. At a Public Meeting in

Yeppoon a couple of years ago, held to gauge public opinion, I clashed with the BOM QLD Regional Director, who had NOT heard of the HERSCIE Enquiry! Once again, the history of ignorance is repeating itself!

Britanny, this whole saga is unacceptable. The contraction of Services to Capital cities may work in the small southern States, but not in Queensland. This large State is the most decentralised of all, but I fear all that is changing rapidly. We have lost our TV station, our Newspaper, our local Radio is being undermined, and now it seems our weather station may be the next victim to this scourge. The Bureau Office was...and still is to a certain extent....the eyes and ears of a broader network to provide Weather services to an increasing local population.

Sadly, the BOM Office in Brisbane does not even have an open telephone line, which the public can use. That connection is now gone. Unreal! The forecasts out of Brisbane, mostly computer generated, are poor and frequently inaccurate. The forecasts are well shy of the mark, contradictory, grammatically incorrect, and seldom updated, nothing short of a disgrace.

Good luck Britanny. I will follow this email with further comments asap.....regards and cheers.....Peter Byrne....Yeppoon....49394772

PS. Feel free to forward this letter to the Morning Bulletin or CQ Today, or whoever, or do you give me the permission to do likewise?.....cheers....Peter