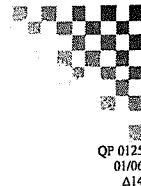




QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: _____ Date: **21/01/2011**

Statement of

Name of witness: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: **Shop Assistant**

Police officer taking statement

Name: **STEVENS, Matt Duncan**

Rank: **Sergeant** Reg. no.: **9119**

Region/Command/Division: **Southern** Station: **Springfield**

Statement:

Rebecca Anne SPARKES states;

1. I live at _____ Grantham with my husband and three children. My husband's name is Nicholas SPARKES _____ and my children are Chloe SPARKES _____, Karissa SPARKES _____ and Sophie SPARKES _____.
2. My contact phone numbers are _____ and Nicholas' phone number is _____. Both of these mobile phones are with _____ and the accounts are in our names. My house is a two storey Queenslander style house. It is built in underneath. It is white in colour and has a tin coloured corrugated roof.
3. I have lived in this house for 9 years and we bought the house in 2001. On either Saturday night or Sunday morning being the 9th of January 2011 I remember that the flood waters were the highest I had ever seen. At this time the water was on the third step of the house. We only have one set of stairs and they are on the eastern side. The water was covering our block as well.

(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

4. I got up the next morning and the water had gone from around the house. There was still water in the back gully which is at the back of my house and backs onto another property. I know the people there as the Gibson's.
5. On Monday the 10th of January 2011 it was raining. It hadn't rained a lot for the amount of rain we had had previously. The water started to back up from the gully again. I recall getting a phone call from my husband Sparky and he told me that there was water over the bowsers at Withcott. I knew he was talking about the petrol bowsers at Withcott petrol station. This phone call was from his mobile phone ([REDACTED]) to my mobile [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
6. I then remembered that I needed to get dog food so I left to go to Gatton and I remember getting a phone call on my mobile [REDACTED] while I was driving to Gatton, just as I was leaving Grantham. I think the time may have been about 2.30pm or 3.00pm. The phone call was from a friend Sue Turner and I think it was from her mobile or her husband's. Her phone number is [REDACTED] but I don't have her husband Doug's phone number. Sue told me that a car had been swept off the bridge at Helidon and I sort of went , "What do you mean? What bridge?" Sue told me it was the one on the main road. Sue told me to get out.
7. I thought this would give me half an hour or so to get out of town. I then turned around and went back home to get the baby bottles. At this time I was in the car with my two children, Karissa and Sophie and my other daughter Chloe was with Sparky.
8. I called in at the shop at Grantham and grabbed toilet paper and spoke to Sandy who works there. This is the shop where I also work. I'm not sure now if the phone call from Sue Turner was before or after I went to the shop. I'm not sure if it was the phone call from Sparky or the call from Sue Turner that made me turn around and not go Gatton.

[REDACTED]
(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

9. When I got to the Grantham shop Sue was on the phone to Sandy they were talking about this car. Sue was screaming at Sandy. I could hear the noise coming through the phone and Sandy was saying to me, "Go home! Get outta here!"
10. I didn't pay for the stuff I had, I just ran out the door with it. Went home and I remember ringing Dad at some stage. Dad is Gilbert KILAH and he lives at [REDACTED] Grantham. I would have called him from my mobile [REDACTED] to either his house phone [REDACTED] or one of his mobile numbers which are [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
11. I asked Dad if they were serious, and should we be putting stuff up higher. I remember Dad got on the internet and checked the bridge heights at Helidon. I remember Dad saying something like, "I think the water is going to get higher. We're in for it this time."
12. I don't know for sure what websites he looked at to check this. Again this phone call may have been I started heading for Gatton. I made hundreds of phone calls that day especially to Dad and Sparky so it is hard to remember the exact order.
13. At some stage Dad was at our place so we went up the road and put the cars up past the flower farm on higher ground. It is past our place in the Helidon direction. Kristy Kunde, who is a friend who lives around the corner on Nicholls Street was moving her cars up there too. She said, "Look at the water." She was pointing to the west and we could see the water on the other side, (western side) of the Gatton-Helidon Road. It didn't look overly high but the water is never there. That is in the paddock. Dad said, "Let's go."
14. We went back down to my place, we tied my boat up to the inside of my shed and Dad then left. He was going to get his boat and car and he was going to park it in the water next to the house. When we were standing

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

there talking at the side of the shed there was no water in the shed and we had a little joke about a life jacket.

15. Dad left and I walked from the shed upstairs and by the time I got up to the fourth step the water caught me. I walked up the stairs to the veranda which covers three sides of the house. Walked out the front towards the road, Railway Street and that's when Kristy Kunde was being swept down the road. Then I could hear the noise of I don't know what. It was like water crunching and a roar to it. Like nothing I have ever heard before.
16. I seen Kristy, there is a power pole right out the front of our house. I seen here and there was a white 4WD, Hilux dual cab behind her. There were people on the rooves of cars and I was screaming at her to just grab something.
17. Sparky was on the phone to me saying, "What the hell is going on?" I told him that Kristy was being swept down the road. Our front gate then broke off the rollers. The water changed direction and it pushed Kristy into our yard. She got up our stairs. I think the water sort of slowed. The height seemed to slow for a couple of minutes and Sparky must have been on the phone and he told us to get on the roof.
18. So we grabbed a ladder first and then a shoe rack and a chair. Karissa got up the ladder, I tired to get up it to pass Karissa the baby Sophie and the ladder broke. So I then got the shoe rack and a chair and got Kristy onto the shoe rack but she wasn't tall enough to get to the roof so I got an esky and boosted her up onto the roof. I then dragged myself onto the roof. By then the water was already up through the house.
19. I was on the phone again at some stage to Linda Van Zelst, again using my mobile () and her mobile phone (). I'm not sure if I rang her or she rang me but I remember being on the phone to her whilst

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

I was on the roof of my house. I think she said something like "Get out." I told her it was too late the water was too deep.

20. At some stage as well I had a phone call to Neil Thomas [REDACTED] and he had been talking to Sparky and he was going to load the motorbikes into his boat. So I rang Neil to tell him not to come out as the water was too high.
21. Once Kristy came in and we got on the roof we hung out with big concerns for Dad and Ben Kunde who is Kristy's husband. When we were stacking the furniture I seen Dad's car and boat go past. I saw lots of cars and lots of people washing down in the water. I didn't recognise anyone as they were wet.
22. I saw Ben Kunde's ute which has a 'Acacia Landscaping' sticker on the back tray of the ute. I think it is a Rodeo and it is white.
23. I saw our own Hilux and camper trailer getting washed away too.
24. I seen Bruce Vayro's (unsure of spelling) vehicle which is a little Hilux ute with a fibreglass canopy on it. There were two people on top of it as it was getting washed along. I don't know who there people were. I think they might have been a younger couple. It didn't look like Bruce or his mother who is elderly. It came past the front of our house and hit the fence of Gail Covey who lives two down from us and is the next fenced yard in Railway Street. They screamed when it hit the fence. That was the last I seen of them and I don't know what happened to them.
25. At one stage I saw 'Oz Logics' ute which I know get washed into the yard beside us. It was upside down and I saw the rear tail lights and they were on. I prayed that there was no one in the ute but couldn't see. The cabin was under water. I know this ute belongs to Matt Keep who lives up past the flower farm. After the water went away I later found this ute in my [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
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neighbours' [REDACTED] yard upside down. I took a photo of this ute which is shows it is dated 12/01/2011 and timed 21:29hrs but I know the time is not right as I took the photo during the day.

26. When Kristy came through the gate there was a couple of blokes on a red car which I have since found out they ended up in the trees opposite our house. Frank was opposite our house and John got knocked out of the trees and got back to his place. They are both alive and they are John and Frank King and they are Grantham locals who live next door to Gail so they are three doors down from me and two up from Dad. Since this incident I have talked to them and they told me they were on the roof of their own car when they got washed down.

27. I know I saw probably fifty people in the water but my memory is all a blur.

28. After I was talking to Linda I made a phone call to 000 from my mobile [REDACTED] or it could have been from a second mobile phone that I have. This second phone is with [REDACTED] and is a pre-paid but I can't recall the number at the moment. The account is in my name.

29. I was on the roof of my house at this stage with my two children and Kristy. I think Linda rang them about me being on the roof but from what I remember I think the first call I made to them was about hearing someone screaming from in the trees. We were pretty safe on our roof at this time. There was lots of people that needed saving as we were safe enough and out of the water.

30. We started talking, I yelled to the person in the tree, "I've rung 000. They'll come and save you." I found out later that this person was Frank. The tree that Frank was in is on the railway line fence which is across the street from my house. At this time it was still daylight, the water was calm and the noise and gone as well. It wasn't raining at this time. He said to us, "I'm alright." Something along the lines of , "Don't worry, I'm safe." So I rang

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

back 000 and I was talking to someone in Toowoomba and told them that "he said he's right and there's more people that need saving." The person on 000 asked if we were alright and I said, "We're on the roof with a baby, but we're alright."

31. I remember the Channel 9 chopper was there a while before the emergency crews. It was just above us. They gave us a false sense of security. They flew around a bit but couldn't actually save anyone.

32. Then the water started to go back down. So I got down off the roof and grabbed a bottle for my [REDACTED] Sophie. I got some blankets and a plastic sheet cause the rain was coming back across. I also grabbed my digital camera at this time.

33. When I got back on the roof I took some photos from there. I took a few photos from the roof. I also took two photos with my mobile phone but these are not very clear.

34. One photo which is marked S6000613 shows the water as you look from my house towards Gatton-Helidon Road and this photo is dated 10.01.2011 and timed 06:02. I think I set it and may have forgotten that it has 24hr format so it was probably 6:02pm when this photo was taken.

35. The second photo which is marked S6000614 shows out side shed looking west and this one is marked 10.01.2011 06:02hrs also.

36. The third photo is marked S6000615 again shows the water as you look from my house towards Gatton-Helidon Road and this photo is also dated 10.01.2011 and timed 06:02.


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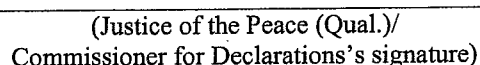
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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

37. The fourth photo is marked S6000616 shows the water as you look from my house towards the pub in Grantham and this photo is dated 10.01.2011 and also timed 06:02.
38. The fifth photo is marked S6000617 shows the water as you look from my house towards Kennley Arndt's house. His house is on the Gatton-Helidon Road and you can see there are people on the roof in this photo and it is dated 10.01.2011 and also timed 06:02.
39. The sixth photo is marked S6000618 shows the water as you look at the Gatton-Helidon Road. You can't see them in this photo but one of the houses in this photo had people on the roof at sometime. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and also timed 06:03.
40. The seventh photo is marked S6000619 is the same sort of shot as number S6000618 but is just a wider shot. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:26.
41. The eighth photo is marked S6000620 is the same sort of shot as number S6000619. From our house this is Kristy and Ben's house on Nicholls Street and it shows their squashed shed under water. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:26.
42. The ninth photo is marked S6000621 shows us looking towards the railway lines. The trees in this photo are the area from where I could hear someone screaming and I think this is where Frank King was. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:27.
43. The tenth photo is marked S6000623 shows us looking back towards Ben and Kristy's house at Nicholls Street again. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:27.


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

44. The eleventh photo is marked S6000624 shows us looking towards the pub direction again. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:27.
45. The twelfth photo is marked S6000625 shows us looking towards the Gatton-Helidon Road again. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:27.
46. The thirteenth photo is marked S6000626 and shows Karissa being strapped in by the rescue fella. This photo was taken by Kristy. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:53.
47. The fourteenth photo is marked S6000627 and shows Karissa being lifted into the chopper. This photo was taken by Kristy. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:53.
48. The fifteenth photo is marked S6000628 and was taken from inside the chopper. This photo was taken by Kristy. This photo is marked 10.01.2011 and timed 06:57.
49. I also took heaps of photos after Monday of the waters, my house, cars and everything.
50. We set up a little camp under the solar power for the hot water. Then the rescue choppers were in and flew over the top of us. Kristy was waving to them and they gave us a wave so we knew that they had seen us. I think the choppers were red and I think there were three of them. We just stayed here for a while but no idea how long. It was raining at this time but the water was still dropping. I rang Sparky again to his mobile from mine while we were on the roof and I told him we were on the roof and safe and that I had seen the rescue choppers.



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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

51. I could see the rescue chopper to the west of us picking people up. I could see lots of people on roof tops. We came to the conclusion that Kristy's husband Ben and Dad were both dead but later found out they were both OK.

52. At one stage I saw Ken Otto's truck which is blue go down the gully in the water. It wasn't a gully then just miles of water. I later found out by talking to Ken that no one was in the truck at this time.

53. I saw a big shipping container go down. It was a maroon colour. I didn't see any people go in the water after I got on the roof. I thought I could hear someone in a tree to the south of us but I don't know for sure as it could have been from people on the roof.

54. I remember when the chopper was above us they lowered a fellow down. I was told to pass the baby to Kristy while they strapped me up and then Kristy passed her back to me. He said to me, "You're holding onto her for her life." I presume they don't have ways to strap her in. I snapped out of the emotional part and really focused on the fact that I had to hold her.

55. I think by the time I got into the chopper I was a little out of it. They asked me if I was OK and I gave them a nod and then he went back down and got Karissa. He brought her up, strapped her seatbelt on and then he went down and got Kristy and then they left my house and went and got a lady from up the road. I don't know where they got her from but she lives up the road. I don't know this lady's name but she is married to Jeff and I think they are from [REDACTED] Railway Street.

56. They dropped their thing back down and they picked up a scuba diver fella. He had goggles and a snorkel on and he was with Ben Kunde. I found out later that Ben Kunde had been rescued from a tree at Nicholls Street. Ben told me that himself. They dropped us all at Lawlers Road which is on the

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SPARKES, Rebecca Anne**

other side of the railway lines. They then picked us up in 4WD vehicles and took us to the evac centre, RSL at Helidon.

57. There were no official warnings about the flooding that I am aware of. I didn't see or hear any media broadcasts about potential flooding in Grantham and the only warnings I got was from friends and family as I have already described.

58. When the flood water reached it's highest point at my house it was about 6inches above the floor upstairs.

Justices Act Acknowledgement

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 21.01.2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 11 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 Gatton this 21st day of January 2011

(Witness's signature)

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Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)