



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: _____ Date: 25/01/2011

Statement of

Name of witness: SKEHAN, Christopher Philip

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: Business Owner

Police officer taking statement

Name of police officer: LOWE, Andrew James

Rank: Detective Senior Constable Reg. no.: 15925

Region/Command/Division: Southern Station: Toowoomba CPIU

Statement:

Christopher Philip SKEHAN states:

1. I am a 39-year-old man. I reside at _____ My phone numbers are _____ I am the owner of _____ which operates out of _____ Toowoomba. The business is an audio visual installation company.
2. I remember Monday the 10th of January 2011. I remember that this day was a rainy day in general.
3. I remember that at about 2:00pm I was at the office and about to go out for a job at St Josephs School, James Street, Toowoomba. I remember that the rain had suddenly gotten extremely heavy, so just prior to leaving, I checked the radar images on the Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au), and I remember seeing a large patch of yellow/red colour, indicating heavy rains over Toowoomba. I remember commenting to another staff member about this and telling her to close the roller door to ensure no rain came into the shop. I then left for the job.
4. At this time, I was driving a work vehicle, a Blue Mitsubishi Triton Dual Cab Utility, Queensland Registration _____ There are no signs on the side of the vehicle.

(Witness's signature)

(Justice of the Peace (Qual.)/
Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SKEHAN, Christopher Philip**


5. I left the business and went down Ruthven Street, towards town, before turning onto Chalk Drive, then into Margaret Street and right into Kitchener Street. I stayed on Kitchener Street until about 150 meters before James Street.


6. As I was driving along Kitchener Street, water was flowing heavily along the road along Kitchener Street. This water was starting to cover the left hand lane meaning that cars travelling south on Kitchener Street had to move over towards the right lane to avoid the water. At this stage, the water was flowing along the road, the East Creek area had not yet over flown. I don't know how deep it was, however it looked deep enough not to be safe to drive through.


7. As I approached James Street, I came to a stop about 150 meters prior to the intersection. I could see ahead of me to the intersection of James Street and Kitchener Street, there was a large quantity of water rapidly flowing over the intersection towards me. Even from where I was, I could see that it was too deep to drive through, and I could see that it was rising quickly. There were three cars stopped in front of me in the water, stalled, and with their hazard lights on.

8. I stopped about 50 meters behind two cars ahead of me. I could see that one was a four-wheel drive in the left hand lane. The vehicle had a sign on the side, however I don't recall exactly what it was. There was a car stopped in the water in the right hand lane next to the Four-Wheel Drive. These cars were on Kitchener Street, facing south, about 50 meters before the intersection with James Street.

9. I thought that the Four-Wheel Drive would be able to get out of the water itself, so I took my boots and socks off and entered the water and approached the car next to it. I saw that there was an elderly lady in the drivers seat, who appeared to be frozen and panicking. The water was about halfway up the front of her car and was into the front of her car. I told this lady to put the car in neutral and then went to the front and tried to push it back, however it would not move. I again spoke to the lady and at this time noticed that the engine was running. Even though I was at the bonnet I could not hear the engine over the sound of the rain or the water rushing against the car.


(Witness's signature)


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10. I told the lady to put the car in reverse which she did. She then reversed out of the water and as she did she nudged another car behind her. She then did a U-turn and drove off along Kitchener Street, heading north.

11. I then looked back towards the intersection of James and Kitchener Street. I don't remember seeing what happened to the Four-Wheel Drive, however I remember seeing another car right at the intersection of James and Kitchener Street. I was about 100 meters back near my ute.

12. This vehicle was a white sedan. It had come to a stop at the intersection, on Kitchener Street facing south. It was in the right hand lane. I could not see anyone around the car. The water at this time was up nearly level with the bonnet and splashing up.


13. I remember seeing a man who looked to be trying to get to this car. I could see that this man had a rope tied around him and that this rope was tied to the traffic light on the north western corner of the intersection. There was a second man over near this traffic light. I am not sure whether he was tying the rope on or holding it.

14. The man who was in the water was walking from this traffic light towards the car which was in the water. As he got about 5 meters away from the car, I saw him get knocked over and swept down by the current, however the rope held him in place.


15. I then got back in my Ute and moved it away from the rising water and parked it in a driveway nearby. I got out of my ute and ran up to the traffic light and helped pull the man in from the water by the rope.

16. There was water washing around this traffic light as well, however there was a guard rail surrounding it and we were able to hold on to it

17. I looked over at the car and at this time, I saw a woman and a child in the vehicle. The driver's window was down and the woman was on the phone and was yelling, but I could


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not hear her over the noise from the water and the rain. By this time, the water was splashing over the bonnet. It was moving very fast.

18. By this time, the male person with the rope around him had gotten back to the pole. This man later introduced himself to me, as "Warren". I then said to Warren, "Give me the rope. I'll have a go."

19. I tied the rope around myself and walked into the waters towards the car. I could feel the current striking my legs hard and it was moving very quickly. At this time it was coming up above my knees.

20. As I approached the car the back driver's side door opened and I grabbed hold of it. I untied the rope from around myself and tied it around the hinge of the rear driver's side door. I looked back the other way and told the guys back at the traffic light to tie the rope to the post. I don't know if they heard me however I could see them tying the rope off.


21. At this time, the lady was standing on the ledge of the drivers door with the door open. There was a young boy, who looked to be about thirteen (13) or fourteen (14) years old, standing on the ledge of the rear drivers side door.


22. I couldn't hear much of what anyone was saying to me because of the rain and the water, however I remember the lady yelling something like, "take Blake first".

23. I then ducked under the rope, so that the rope would support me from the current and I was now standing nearest the drivers door. At this time a young boy who appeared to be nine (9) or ten (10) years old, came to the drivers door where I was standing and I put him on my back, and "piggy-backed" him. I started to shimmy sideways back towards the traffic light. The rope was against my stomach and the water was striking my back.

24. As I was moving back I could feel the water striking me harder than what it had been when I walked out. I cant say whether it had gotten deeper as it was splashing around me a lot.


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25. When I got back to the traffic light, I handed the kid over to Warren. As I did this, Warren lost his footing and myself and another guy had to grab hold of Warren and the kid and push them back towards the guard rail around the traffic light which they grabbed onto.

26. I was puffing at this time as a result of moving through the waters on the way back from the car.

27. I looked back at the car, and saw the other boy and the lady still standing on the door ledges, one at the front and one at the back.


28. I started to shimmy my way back across the rope, again moving sideways with the rope to my stomach and the water striking back.

29. As I was moving back across the rope on this occasion, the current of the water was stronger again. On two occasions as I moved along the rope, my legs got swept out from under me, and I went under water, however managed to get back up as I was still holding onto the rope.


30. When I got back to the white car the second time, the young boy had now climbed onto the roof of the car.

31. As I got to the vehicle, the young boy almost jumped on me. I remember him yelling something like, "TAKE ME." I told him that I could not carry him as I was barely able to walk across yourself.

32. I stopped here for a moment trying to decide what to do. I was not sure whether the water was rising or not.


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33. I remember the Lady telling me that she wanted to have a go getting across the rope herself, however I said to her that she would not make it as I had barely gotten over myself.

34. All of a sudden, I felt the white sedan starting to move in the current. I could feel the rope in my hands getting tighter. The vehicle stopped moving. I remember looking around and seeing other cars.

35. I could feel the car starting to move again. I was standing next to the drivers door, the lady was standing on the ledge of the rear drivers door and the boy was on the roof. I was holding onto the car at this time.

36. The vehicle continued to move and I saw the rope break.

37. All three of us were still holding onto the car as it drifted across the road towards a sign post. As we got close to the sign, I yelled out to grab hold of it. I remember that the boy I both made a lunge for it, he across the roof and me across the bonnet of the car, however before we could grab it, the car knocked it over.

38. I remember the car rocking a bit, and I think it must have hit the gutter. I climbed back over towards the drivers side of the car.

39. The as the car rocked, the boy got knocked off the roof of the car and into the water behind. I don't know how, but the lady was also in the water behind the car and had hold of the boy. They were about three metres away from me down stream and no longer had hold of the car.

40. I remember that the car was still drifting over towards the middle of east creek.

41. I looked up and saw a light pole near where I was. At about this time, I also seemed to get more footing beneath me. I could feel grass under my feet. There was water rushing down

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the creek and water rushing down the road, however this area must have been a little more raised near the gutter. I managed to stand up and stagger towards the light pole and hang onto it.

42. I looked down stream and saw the boy and the lady stand up and stagger towards the next light pole further down stream and grab hold.

43. As I was holding on, I could feel the water continue to rise, and get stronger and stronger. I was standing with my chest to the pole and my back directly to the current, where I was wedged.

44. I looked down stream to the second pole. Unlike me, the lady and the boy were holding onto the sides of the light pole, the lady on the right side and the boy on the left.


45. I then saw the lady lose grip of the pole and get swept downstream. I saw her head towards a tree with hanging branches. She disappeared under the tree and I did not see her again.

46. Almost immediately after, the boy lost his grip of the light pole and got swept down stream as well. I did not see the boy again.


47. I kept hanging onto the pole and the water kept striking my back. I was looking around and seeing things floating past. I could also see people and Police standing around, however the water was moving too fast and was so deep that no one could come do anything, so I held on.

48. As I stood there the water came up and was splashing around my shoulders. I am about 180 centimetres tall.

49. I was holding on to the pole for about 30 or 40 minutes, however I am not real sure of this time. Over the time, the water receded and by the end, it was back down around my ankles.


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50. At this time, a man who was with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, Swift Water Rescue Team came over to where I was. I took hold of the rope which he was attached to and we walked out of the water together.

51. As soon as I got out of the water I walked over to an Ambulance who checked if I was ok. I then went and spoke with a Police Officer, Constable BRUCE, and I told him what had happened.

52. Afterwards, I went back to my Ute which, even though I had moved it from the road, had still got water in it. I started my car and drove off back to work.

53. I later learned, either through the TV or the Newspaper, that the lady and the boy were Donna and Jordan RICE. The media published photos of Donna and Jordan, and I am able to say that they are the lady and boy who I saw get swept away from the car on this day.

54. On the 25th of January 2011, I attended the Toowoomba Police Station and provided this statement to Detective Senior Constable Andrew LOWE of the Toowoomba Child Protection and Investigation Unit about this incident.


Christopher SKEHAN


Justices Act 1886

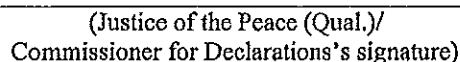
I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(5)(c)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:


- (1) This written statement by me dated 25/01/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 8 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 Toowoomba this 25th day of January 2011.


(Witness's signature)


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