

Name of Witness	Maureen Patricia BRENNAN
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED]
Occupation	Business Owner
Officer taking statement	Det Insp Mark Ainsworth
Date taken	30/3/2011

Maureen Patricia BRENNAN states;

1. I am a married woman, [REDACTED] years of age and I reside with my husband at [REDACTED]. We have lived at this address for the past 4 years. The premises at [REDACTED] which is located at the front of our residence and is separated from our residence by a single door. The premises is low set timber and is actually situated in the main street of Forest Hill.
2. I recall the period from Christmas, 2010 up to the 10th January, 2011. During this period we had a lot of rain in the Forest Hill area which did cause some flooding to areas of Forest Hill causing the evacuations of some residences in the low lying areas of the community. These areas would have been around Church and Dyer Streets. I specifically recall 27th December, 2010. On this date we could not get our papers delivered from suppliers as the town was cut off due to flood waters closing roads. On this date we could not complete our morning newspaper run due to the flooding and road closures.

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Signature of officer [REDACTED]

400 George Street Brisbane
GPO Box 1738 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone 1300 309 634
Facsimile +61 7 3405 9750
www.floodcommission.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

3. During this period the creeks rose pretty quickly but then receded pretty quickly. Forest Hill is usually affected by flooding by the Laidley and Sandy Creeks. Both creeks form a junction where they join to the north of Forest Hill causing flooding to generally come into town from that direction.
4. I recall Monday 10th January, 2011. On this day it was like a normal day opening the shop and tending to business duties. I recall that on this day there was continual rain for the duration of the day. On this day I had the BOM site on the computer up for most of the day and I would check it about every 40 minutes to get up to date information regarding rainfall. I saw at various stages this site indicated very heavy rainfall for the area.
5. About 5.15pm on the same date a customer advised my husband and I about the flooding events in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley. I had not heard anything regarding these floods prior to this. As a result we put the television on and quickly became aware of what had occurred in those areas.
6. I continued to check the BOM site and became aware of flooding to the Lockyer Creek. As a result I contacted a local to Forest Hill, Allan KOWALASKI and sought his advice as to where the Lockyer Creek usually flooded.

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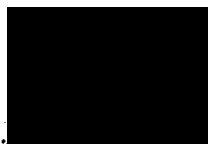
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He advised me it usually rose around the BP Service station/McDonalds restaurant on the Warrego Highway near the Gatton University. As a result I contacted several of my friends and passed the information Allan provided me onto them. After speaking to Allan I personally felt a little safer.

7. I recall later on the evening of 10th January, 2011 around 9.30 – 10pm I received a text message on my mobile phone advising that Forest Hill was to evacuate to the School of Arts. The School of Arts is located on the northern side of the railway line. My husband and I did not evacuate at this time. I am unsure of where the text message came from.

8. About 3am on Tuesday 11th January, 2011 my husband commenced his newspaper deliver run around the Forest Hill area. He had no problems getting around the area to complete this run. Around 4am on the same date my husband went to our sub - newsagency outlet at Regency Park which is located behind Plainlands. I recall him telling me that at about 4.15am he saw the water rise quickly in the car park of this shop, resulting in him departing and attempt to return to Forest Hill. I recall him telling me he ended up in the car park of Woolworths, Plainlands where he was advised by police that he had to go to one of two evacuation points. The first was at the Plainlands Hotel and the second at the Plainlands Coffee Club. I am aware he went to the Plainlands Hotel.

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9. At about 6am on 11th January, 2011 I opened the shop at Forest Hill to be met by Robert MARSH. Robert is the local Rural Fire Service (RFS) officer for Forest Hill. Robert told me that he did not think there would be much flood water in the main street of Forest Hill due to the slight elevation of the street. The Forest Hill RFS has two fire brigade units and I saw they were constantly checking on residents in the area.
10. At about 8am on the same date another local named Gerry came to the shop and had a conversation with me. Gerry was from the School of Arts. Whilst we were talking we could see a quantity of water start to enter Victoria Street. I would describe this water starting off like a ripple at the beach, then it gradually got higher. This water entered Victoria Street from the northern end of town. In a period of about 10 minutes the water rose very quickly.
11. As a result of seeing the water rise I started to get scared. I decided to lock up the shop and evacuate. As I locked the front door I saw a male known to me as Glen SAYER walk along the footpath in the water. At this time the water would have been knee deep. I walked with him to a local real estate office nearby located on higher ground. At this location there would have been about 20 other people. At about 9am on the same day one of the local RFS officers told us all to move to the Forest Hill State School which had been set up as an evacuation centre. As a result I did what I was told and remained at the State School until about 4.30pm.

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12. Around 11 – 11.30am, I saw a number of helicopters flying over the area. They were evacuating people from Forest Hill. At about 1.30pm I recall a Sergeant from the Water Police attend the Forest Hill State School and told us there was another 300mm surge coming and we had to get out of the school. At this time I was also aware that another local, Ron HOLMES had commenced evacuating residents from their houses using a tinnie boat. He did a fantastic job.

13. As a result of the advice from the Water Police officer people commenced leaving the school and we walked to an area behind one of the Real Estate Agencies in Victoria Street. At this area helicopters commenced evacuating people to Gatton. I am unaware of the exact time this occurred. At about 5.15pm, I recall the same water police officer advising us that we could return to our homes as the danger had passed provided emergency services knew who was going where.

14. Shortly after 5.45pm I returned to the shop to see it surrounded by water and mud. The water at the front of the shop was about 300mm high. *I produce a photograph depicting the height of the water at the front of the shop. I also produce photos of flooding to Forest Hill. Some of these photos are from the newspaper and one of the others are from an RACQ magazine.*

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15. There was about 2 inches of water and mud throughout the shop and my house. I left the shop and stayed with friends in the area that night. My husband remained in Plainlands for the night. Our shop remained closed until the 15th January, 2011 when we had completed most of the cleaning up to the interior.

16. With respect to preparations for the flood event, I consider that a lot more could have been done by the Lockyer Valley Regional Council. I have forwarded a submission to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry where I have listed my concerns concerning preparation and other issues affecting the Forest Hill community. This submission is attached to my statement. I had previously spoken to the Mayor of the Lockyer Valley Council raising concerns with him regarding the clearing of debris from drains around town. On 15th March, 2010 I physically walked around town with him showing him areas of my concern. Drains were full of long grass and weeds and they required cleaning out, spraying and removal of the weeds/grass. Following the walk with the Mayor, members of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council were shown the same problems during an organised tour. Nothing was done to rectify the issue until about 2 weeks ago when some clearing of drains has occurred, however there is still more that requires doing. On 30th March, 2011 I drove around the Forest Hill area with Detective Ainsworth and indicated to him the same areas of concern I had showed the Mayor some 12 months earlier. Ainsworth took photos of these areas.


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17. Other issues I have with the Lockyer Valley regional Council is that during the flood event we never saw a councillor in the Forest Hill area for some 8 days after the flood. They need to spread themselves around the whole council area in times of disasters like this one to ensure the needs of all communities are addressed. The State Member, Ian RICKISS did attend Forest Hill and supported the residents in organising clean ups and co-ordinating volunteers to assist with clean-ups.
18. Another issue is the clearing of culverts under railway lines. Prior to the floods most culverts were blocked with debris, overgrown grass covering them blocking clear drainage for any water. Some of these culverts have been cleared however not all have been. *Produce photos of culverts still blocked as of 30/3/2011.*
19. With respect to response of emergency services in the Forest Hill area, I would say the response from the RFS was excellent as was the service supplied by the ADF and water police. I can say that I saw no response from the Regional Council. I had no issues with communication, power or water during these events. I think a further issue that needs to be enhanced in future disaster events is communication and exchange of information to the effected community. There was no advice from the Council or police regarding road closures. There was very little feedback to people in the Evacuation centre as to what was occurring outside the evacuation centre.

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20. By providing timely feedback to persons at the evacuation centre, some of the angst may be reduced. The level of inaccurate information that was being passed on in the area also contributed to angst amongst the Community. I believe consideration needs to be given to an education/training program for Councillors and their staff in relation to leadership, communication and management of disaster situations. Once this is done then the community may get a better response for future events of this nature.



M.P.BRENNAN

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 30/3/2011... 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.

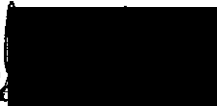


Signature

Signed at Forest Hill this 4th day of April 2011

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