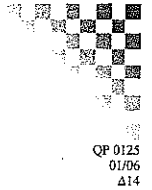




QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: _____ Date: **14/03/2011**

Statement of

Name of witness: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: **Police Officer**

Police officer taking statement

Name: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

Rank: **Senior Sergeant** Reg. no.: **4005902**

Region/Command/Division: **Southern** Station: **Toowoomba District Communications Centre**

Statement:

Julie Ann COOLING states:-

I have been the Officer in Charge (OIC) at Toowoomba District Communications Centre since August 2009. Prior to this I was a Communications Sergeant at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre since 2002.

I was sworn in as a member of the Queensland Police Service on 4 April 1985.

In response to the written requirement of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 9 March 2011, I provide the following information: (Responses have been included to address the dot points raised in the 'Requirement To Provide Statement To The Commission Of Inquiry').

I was on recreation leave from the 4 January 2011 to the 30 January 2011. Whilst on recreation leave, Sergeant Jeffrey Keleher performed the role of Officer in Charge of the Toowoomba District Communications Centre.

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Signature of police officer preparing statement

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

I have been requested to address a series of nine questions by the Commission of Inquiry.

1. *a description of the way in which police communication systems operate generally*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre is staffed by one Officer in Charge, six Sergeants, eleven full time Communication Operators and four part time Communication Operators. The lay out of the Toowoomba District Communication Centre consists of one Communication Sergeant work station and three double workstations in the main area. There is a minor incident room attached to the Centre that has one double workstation for Operators. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre staff perform dual roles of call taker and radio operator. They also have dual radio channels (divisional and district) to operate.

The Centre is generally staffed by one Sergeant and two to three Operators on a day shift and afternoon shift. Two Communication operators and one Sergeant perform duty on the night shift. On Friday and Saturday evenings there are two additional operators between the hours of 6pm and 4am.

At each work station the desk is outfitted with twin view monitors on the QPS computer, a single ZETRON Acom radio/telephone LCD monitor and a single City Safe/000 CLI switchable monitor. The desk also contains a triple panel Zetron Acom communications panel fitted with an instant play back system.

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre is responsible for the coordination and support of police resources in the Toowoomba District. The staff at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre receive telephone calls for client service from members of the public ranging from minor matters to crisis intervention. These calls are received either by 000 Telstra connection or normal land line. The calls may be received by a Communications Operator or a Communications Sergeant at

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

the Centre. Police Link has been established to assist Communication Centres with members of the public who wish to report non-urgent police matters.

As a result of calls received for service an incident management system job is generated. An assessment is made on each call for service and an appropriate response in accordance with community expectations and police service policy is determined. The principles of priority policing response are applied. These incident management system jobs prioritised by staff are relayed to police for attendance by police radio. During the attendance of police all information relating to that incident are recorded against the incident management system job. At the completion of attendance the Communication Sergeant performs a risk management check on each completed job.

2. *a detailed description of the way in which '000' emergency calls are received by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and actioned*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre receives 000 telephone calls from a Telstra 000 Operator. As the telephone call is being connected an ICL display monitor displays information at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre. This information details the 000 telephone call number, the date and time of the telephone call. The information displays the telephone number of the telephone making the call, and the personal details of the owner of that telephone including the name and address. The details on the monitor also display which town/telstra tower is the nearest to where the telephone call originates.

The 000 ICL display monitor displays a maximum of four caller information details at one time. The data that has left the screen is stored on a monitor in the equipment room adjoining the Centre. This information is available for retrieval by staff. The staff at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre answer the 000 telephone call with the words, *Go ahead Telstra*, to which the Telstra Operator provides them with a number. Staff at the Toowoomba Communication Centre request the location of the emergency and proceed with obtaining details from the client.

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

3. *a description of what happens when there are insufficient QPS call operators to receive '000' emergency calls originating from a State or Territory, where the overflow is sent to, and how interstate call operators action QPS personnel to jobs or incidents*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre has five available lines for clients to call 000. When these 000 lines are in use, the call redirects to the Toowoomba District Communication response lines. There are six response lines in total. In the circumstance where the response lines are not answered by staff at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre the 000 call is redirected to Ipswich and Brisbane Communication Centres.

Under normal circumstances the Ipswich or Brisbane Communication staff contact the Toowoomba District Communication Centre by telephone and advise incident details. On the day of the flood event the ZETRON telephone system at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre was overloaded by the volume of incoming telephone calls and these Centres were unable to make telephone contact. They communicated to the Centre through email and facsimile message.

4. *a description of any particular way in which '000' calls are managed in the Toowoomba Region*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre receives all 000 telephone calls for the Toowoomba, Dalby and Warwick policing districts. A 000 telephone call is given priority attendance over all other telephone calls.

Each week the Alcatel Phone Statistics computer is audited for a weekly report. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre receives an average of three hundred and fifty (350) 000 calls per week. The Centre has a weekly efficiency generally of 99-100%. This means that on average one to two 000 calls are abandoned and redirected to the response lines at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre or another Communications Centre. The highest abandoned rate the Centre has

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

encountered in the past year was five abandoned 000 calls. This occurred when the Centre experienced a serious traffic crash on the Warrego Highway, Laidley.

At times multiple 000 calls are received at the Centre concerning a major event. These major events are usually traffic crashes or serious disturbances. The most 000 calls received about one particular incident can range from twenty to thirty. At the each month a risk management audit is conducted in relation 000 calls. Ten 000 calls are randomly selected and assessed. Any staff guidance or training that is required is carried out at the time.

5. *a description of training QPS call operators receive before they are able to hold positions in the communication room/s and receive emergency 000 calls*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre does not have specific call operators. All staff operate in the dual role of call taker and radio operator. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre has a training package for Communication Operators based on the Brisbane Police Communication Centre training package. Communication Operators are given off line training on telephone procedures including 000 call taking as part of a fifteen week training program. The new employee undertakes training and assessment off line to become competent prior to taking a live 000 call. The new Operator is placed with an experienced mentor for this initial fifteen weeks. This mentor listens with the new employee as they answer 000 calls and assists until the new employee is deemed competent. During the fifteen weeks training the new employee is continually assessed and assisted with call taking.

At times the Toowoomba District Communication Centre has relief Sergeants. To qualify for relief the applicant must have competently participated in a three day Communications Sergeant Course. A component of this course is targeted at answering the telephone, which includes the 000 line. During the monthly risk management audit of 000 calls if a staff member has been identified as requiring assistance when dealing with 000 calls, assistance is provided to that staff member

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

until they are deemed competent. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre has standing operating procedures and standing orders. These are constantly updated and brought to the attention of staff.

6. *a description of the way in which the Toowoomba communication room/s and call operators responded and actioned '000' calls on the 10 January 2011.*

I was not present on the 10 January 2011.

My staff have relayed to me that they could not respond to the volume and intensity of 000 calls on that day. They have stated that the telephone system overloaded and the 000 screens were scrolling too fast to obtain and verify caller details. They stated that they would attempt to check details and the CLI monitors would redirect as another 000 call was being received. They stated that they attempted to action 000 telephone calls but were hindered by the continuation of 000 telephone calls. The Toowoomba District Communication Centre statistics state that the total 000 related calls to the Toowoomba District Communication Centre was 1 446. The total number of 000 related calls abandoned on this day were 845. The total number of 000 related calls serviced were 601. The average number of weekly 000 calls staff experience at the Centre is approximately 350.

7. *whether there were any operational difficulties encountered by the communication room/s and call operators due to the volume of '000' emergency calls received on the 10 January 2011*

I was not present on the 10 January 2011.

My staff have informed me that 000 emergency calls were being received all over the ZETRON telephone system including the normal land line numbers. My experience is that this has never happened before. The system has never had to deal

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **COOLING, Julie Ann**

with such a volume of calls. This day was an extraordinary event. However there has never been an unplanned event of this size during my service in Toowoomba.

The staff stated that due to the time it was taking to answer the 000 calls, calls had dropped out and Telstra had to provide the details of these callers. It became impossible to call persons back as the communications network was clogged particularly to Vodafone and Optus mobiles.

The staff stated that they felt frustrated as they were unable to deploy resources to assist people due to rising and moving waters.

8. *any additional resources required by the communication room/s and/or call operators that might assist in disaster situations that occurred on 10 January 2011*

The Toowoomba flood event on the 10th of January 2011 occurred without warning at approximately 1.30pm. This time was the change over time of staffing at the Centre. The staffing situation at the time was one Communications Sergeant and three Communication Operators. The rostered afternoon staff that commenced were one Sergeant and two Communication Operator. A rostered Communication Operator was flooded in and could not attend work. All morning staff remained at the Centre for additional hours to assist. The acting Officer in Charge requested an additional Operator to be bought from the Toowoomba Station.

The Communications Sergeant and Communications Operator that were rostered to perform night shift that night attended the Centre to assist other staff during the afternoon. Staff that were on recreation leave also attended the Centre to assist. All available work stations were occupied. Planned events are able to be resourced by the Toowoomba District Communication Centre. In an emergency such as the magnitude of this event, additional operators are necessary and are normally recalled or sourced from other areas. On the day I am aware that Acting Inspector McDonald was in the Communications Centre to assist with the operations.

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9. *any operational changes or recommendations to improve communication room/s and/or the conduct of call operators in disaster situations*

The Toowoomba District Communication Centre will benefit from the introduction of the multi-district incident management system that is to commence trialing at the Toowoomba District Communication Centre in the near future. This will enable real time communication between districts and avoid the need to fax, email or call other neighbouring districts.

I recommend that a standard training package be developed and provided to all Communication staff on managing and coping during disasters/major events.

Justices Act Acknowledgement

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| 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 8 April 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 6 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 8th day of April 2011... | |

.....
Witness's signature

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

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(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)