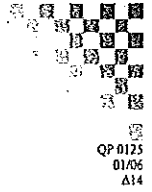




QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



QP 0125
01/06
A14

Occurrence #: _____

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

Statement of

Name of witness: MCDONALD, James John

Date of birth: Age: Occupation: Police Officer

Police officer taking statement

Name: SELF,

Rank: _____ Reg. no.: _____

Region/Command/Division: _____ Station: _____

Statement:

James John McDonald states:-

I have been the Officer in Charge (OIC) at Laidley since February 2006. In 2009 the station was upgraded to a Senior Sergeant Station. I competed on merit for that position and was promoted to Senior Sergeant effective 31 August 2009.

I was born and raised in Toowoomba and joined as a police cadet on 30 January 1985. I was sworn in as a member of the Queensland Police Service on 4 July 1986.

I have 24 and a half years policing experience having served in Brisbane Mobile Patrols, Oxley District, Brisbane City Station, City Crime Squad, Brisbane Central District Office, Gatton, Gatton CIB and Laidley.

In February 2008 I was granted permission from Assistant Commissioner McCallum to participate in secondary employment and contest the 2008 Local Government Election. I am currently a serving Councillor of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council (LVRC) and previously served as Councillor, Deputy Mayor and Mayor of the Gatton Shire Council from 1997 – 2004.

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: MCDONALD, James John

During my career I have participated in Disaster and Incident related training including Police Forward Command Post Training 2007; Incident Command for Supervisors in 2008 and Incident Command Residential (ICR) 2010 as part of the Management Development Program. During the 2010 ICR I received instruction in the 2010 amendments to the Disaster Management Act.


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 Written Information To The Commission Of Inquiry' and are therefore not always in direct chronological order)

In my role as Officer in Charge Laidley Station I am a member of the Lockyer Valley Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG). I attend these meetings and encouraged the group and council to be involved in training exercises including their participation with Operation 'Orko' 1st to 4th November 2010 (Flood).

In my Officer in Charge role I also attend the local Joint Emergency Services Team meetings. This team is known as SCHAFT which in an acronym for the participants SES, Police, Queensland Health, QAS and QFS. The group meets monthly and was originally based in Gatton. However with amalgamation of the Laidley and Gatton Shire Councils, this group expanded to include Laidley.

The meetings involve discussion on local issues including debriefs on any emergency responses during the period, how the incident was managed locally between the stake holders and issues either procedure or policy identified they would be discussed.

Desk-top exercises have been conducted regularly with the most recent being a Lockyer Valley Earthquake scenario that I coordinated and was conducted at Laidley on 15 December 2010. This exercise also included SCHAFT members and invited stakeholders from the aged care facilities in Gatton and Laidley as well as Local Government. Previous to this, an exercise was held at the Gatton SES in August


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **MCDONALD, James John**

2009 involving all emergency service agencies. This situated scenario dealt with Outlaw Motor Cycle Gang members taking over the Gatton hospital.

Minutes of the joint emergency service team SCHAFT meetings and situated exercises have been provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.


On 24 December 2010 I left a hard copy of the Lockyer Valley Local Disaster Management Plan in the correspondence tray in my office as I commenced recreation leave till 4 January 2011. On Boxing Day when I became aware of flooding in my division, I contacted Constable Al Badger at Laidley who accessed the plan.

On 10 January 2011 I was acting as an Inspector at the Toowoomba District Office. In this position I was responsible for over viewing the Toowoomba District country Police Divisions, The District Education and Training Office and Toowoomba Property Office.

At 1100hrs that day I listened to the State wide information sharing session in the company of Acting Superintendent Brett Schafferius, Sergeant Jamie Deacon District Disaster Executive Officer (XO) and Mr Kevin Wruck from the Toowoomba Regional Council and Deputy Executive Officer. This was of interest to the Toowoomba District in view of the flooding at Dalby and Roma and potential need to send resources to those areas.

Shortly after midday I noticed that it was raining heavily.

At about 1335hrs I received information from Sergeant Mick Lewis, Communications Coordinator, Toowoomba District Communications Centre, regarding a person with a disabled child trapped in a house at Crows Nest with rapidly rising flood waters. He requested authorisation to have a helicopter deployed. This was approved but was unable to fly due to lightning in the area.


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **MCDONALD, James John**


As a result of this information the District Officer and District Disaster Coordinator DDC directed me to the Communications Centre to coordinate Operations and provide Situation Reports.

I then went to the Toowoomba Communications Centre and observed that there was a large number of incoming calls. I obtained a briefing from Sergeant Bob Coleman who was the Communications Coordinator (ComCo) regarding what was happening. This briefing included 3 youth in west creek near Margaret Street with the Assistant and crew 211 attending; Awning fallen down at Garden town; Report from lady in house at Crows Nest appears safe; Flood water at house at 10 McCormack Street Spring Bluff Murphy's Ck, QFRS detailed; 3 persons gone to assist QFRS swift water attending; Mt Kynoch Road closed due to land slide – Peter Mohr Roadtec 0438390832 advised re Kynoch; Highfields going to assist; Tabletop Estate has possibly had pipeline washed away; Vehicles being washed away in CBD Chalk drive, Neil St Dent St.

From my local knowledge the events I observed even at this early stage was out of the ordinary for Toowoomba. I reported this information to the DDC for his information and returned to the Communications Centre.

At 1345hrs I began making notes of in my notebook in relation to the events. These notes and my recollections have been recorded on the 'Running Sheet for Toowoomba Operation 2010 and 2011' which details my involvement and actions during the event. This Running Sheet has been provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

In summary, during my time in the Communications room I provided advice to the Communications Operators in relation to operational response to emergent calls for service. I assisted with the resourcing, coordination and deployment of personnel to calls for service. I also made numerous attempts to contact helicopters for deployment to the area and continued to provide Sitreps to the DDC. Due to the nature and volume of calls being received I was concerned for the welfare of the Communications Operators and provided support and encouragement. I later


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arranged for Human Services Officers and Chaplain to attend and offer support to Communications staff.

During the events of the afternoon I spoke to Acting Senior Sergeant Bernie Wilce of the Gatton Police to communicate with him to exchange information about what was happening in the Lockyer Valley in terms of the policing response, road closures and to obtain status reports. I made phone calls to Acting Senior Sergeant Wilce on at least four occasions between 1600hrs and 1930hrs.


Over the following days I was appointed as the Acting DDC in the absence of the DDC. In this position I assisted manage, maintain and reinstate the supply of essential services. These efforts are all recorded on the 'Running Sheet for Toowoomba Operation 2010 and 2011'.

During the events I also spoke with numerous agencies including Australian Defence Force and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Urban Search And Rescue (USAR). These efforts were seeking understanding of the capabilities of these units and how they could be applied to the search effort. I also assisted in scoping the search area and providing local knowledge around those efforts. These efforts are all recorded on the 'Running Sheet for Toowoomba Operation 2010 and 2011'.

At about 1430hrs on 11th January 2011 when I discovered there was flooding in Forest Hill and Laidley I contacted Acting Senior Sergeant Dave Grave and told him where to locate the LVRC Local Disaster Management Plan. I had a discussion with Acting Senior Sergeant Grave on a number of occasions to maintain Situational Awareness and exchange information.

During the QPS response to the event I was unable to attend and participate at the Lockyer Valley LDMG Coordination Centre.

I recall speaking with Mr Ian Flint the LVRC CEO and Mr Gerry Franzmann Director Engineering Services and initial LDMG Coordinator on a number of


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **MCDONALD, James John**

occasions following the event and discussed suggestions regarding the response and recovery efforts including obtaining communications, administration and co-ordination support services. I also offered my support for the acquisition of additional resources they required.

I recall speaking with Acting Senior Sergeant Bernie Wilce and Sergeant Scott Stahlhut who were the QPS members of the LDMG in the absence of Senior Sergeant Tom Missingham (usually OIC Gatton) and I.

On 26 January 2011 I returned to my usual role as OIC Laidley. Since this time I have been involved in de-brief meetings at Forest Hill and Laidley and participating in recovery meetings with the LDMG. Minutes of the meetings have been provided to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.


In my role as Councillor LVRC I have been appointed as the Chairman of the Infrastructure Recovery Committee and attended Recovery Committee meetings and Council meetings and Plenary Sessions to develop the Lockyer Valley Community Recovery Plan. Minutes of these meetings are available to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

I have attended at Community meetings at Grantham, Helidon, Murphy's Creek and Mount Sylvia to provide support to the community and understand their needs.

The following is my own observation and recommendation;

My assessment of the adequacy of the community's response as requested by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry is as follows;

I believe that the preparedness efforts in the LVRC in the time preceding these events demonstrate the commitment of the lead agencies in the community to disaster planning efforts and the preparedness was strong. I believe this for the following reasons: The holding of the required LDMG meetings and development of


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the LV LDMP since 2008; the proactive coordination of emergency services through the monthly local SCHAFT meetings; the participation in desk-top training exercises and the participation in Operation 'Orko' on 1 – 4 November 2010.

I recall the events of the Boxing Day floods and the praise given to the LVRC LDMG by the DDC and XO for their handling of response and recovery from this event.

During the events of 10 and 11 January 2011 it quickly became evident that this was beyond the capabilities of the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley LDMG to provide the necessary resources for the effective response and recovery effort.


I believe the District Disaster Coordination Centre and Southern Region police response provided excellent leadership, direction and support to the local efforts.

I consider that the overall response and recovery efforts to the tragic events have been very positive.

In terms of opportunities I recommend the following:

Communications System

During my time in the communications room I observed a number of calls that were received that came from triple 0 calls that had been diverted as overflow calls to other Communications Centres. I observed the frustration by operators who were taking calls from these communications centres and having to manually record the calls on the Toowoomba IMS system. I understand that there is a significant cost involved but would recommend that a commonality of communications systems between communications centres. I believe that this common system would alleviate duplication and save critical time.


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **MCDONALD, James John**
Mobile Phone Coverage

I recommend that funding be sought or assistance gained to see the affected areas provided reliable mobile phone coverage. The deficiencies of the mobile phone coverage within the Lockyer Valley have been highlighted by this event. The opportunity to increase safety and implement warning systems using this technology requires strong consideration. In my role as Chairman of the Infrastructure Committee I am aware of efforts being made to map the deficient areas.

Preparedness of Local Governments

I recommend that an independent skills and preparedness audit focused on disaster management be conducted of all local governments across Queensland. I'd suggest priority be given to those local government areas that do not have dedicated Disaster Management Staff or Sections. I believe this audit will identify training and resourcing opportunities for the local government areas and inform the ability to build capacity for disaster management within the sector. This suggestion is not negative criticism of any individuals involved in this event. It is an observation that despite the best intentions of local governments there is a different set of skills required for Disaster Management Coordination.

I also recognise an astute suggestion by the DDC (A/Supt Brett Schafferius) that a fly-in team of specialised Disaster Management personnel be established to support LDMG in extreme events similar to this event.

LDMG composition

I recommend that every LDMG should have representatives from the local business community or Chamber of Commerce. This suggestion follows criticism and lack of awareness of disaster management processes by some the business community members in Laidley and Forest Hill. This inclusion of this sector on the LDMG has the potential to increase decision making and resourcing capacity of the LDMG.

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J J McDonald
A/Inspector 6271

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