

Statement of Witness

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

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| <i>Name of Witness</i> | Jason Scott RENWICK |
| <i>Date of Birth</i> | [REDACTED] |
| <i>Address and contact details</i> | Woodford Police Station, 84 Archer Street, Woodford |
| <i>Occupation</i> | Police Officer |
| <i>Officer taking statement</i> | Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz |
| <i>Date taken</i> | 13/04/2011 |

Jason Scott RENWICK states:

1. I am a Sergeant of Police and the Officer in Charge of the Woodford Police station located at 84 Archer Street, Woodford. I have been stationed at Woodford for two years. Woodford Station is a two man station comprising of myself and Senior Constable Matthew STARK.
2. I remember Friday the 7th day of January 2011, I was rostered to perform duties between 2.00pm to 10.00pm. During this day we had received significant rainfall. I had been monitoring the Bureau of Meteorology website and the water gauges in the catchment area. As a result of these readings and reports I realised that the chance of localised flooding was significant. I commenced liaising with Moreton Bay Council and commenced the coordination of road closures and subsequently contacted the Management of the Woodford Correctional centre and advised them of this situation. I recommended that the centre go to "Code Aqua" and start evacuating non-essential personnel from the Centre.
3. At about 4.00pm this day I received a call on my mobile phone from a motorist. Information identified that a motorist had become isolated by rising flood water on Neurum Road, Neurum at the Neurum Creek Bridge. I subsequently attended this location and commenced the coordination of rescue operations utilising resources from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Swift Water Rescue Team and the State Emergency Service (SES).

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4. On Saturday the 8th day of January 2011, I was rostered to perform duties between 4.00pm and 12 midnight but due to the weather and chance of flooding I remained on duty all day. At about 10.30am I arranged a meeting at the station with the local QFRS and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) with regards to flood contingencies. We conducted a risk assessment, identifying hazards to significant infrastructure, high risk targets (flood prone areas, aged etc), threats to life and property, and loss of provision of essential services and the impact of any hazard agents.

5. On Sunday 9th day of January 2011, at about 2.30pm I received information from Police Communications via my mobile phone in relation to four kayakers that were missing in flood waters at Stony Creek. I had commandeered a police four wheel drive from Caboolture Police Station and proceeded to this location, conducted a situational appraisal and commenced coordinating the deployment of resources of QPS, QFRS and QAS. A Forward Command Post (FCP) was commenced at the intersection of Stony Creek Road and D'Aguilar Highway, Stony Creek. During this exercise members of the swift water rescue team (QFRS) were inserted by 4wd vehicle however due to the rising flood waters it was necessary for these members to traverse approximately 2 kilometres by foot before they reached the search area. During this time Stony Creek had risen significantly and had now crossed the D'Aguilar Highway and was beginning to cross the D'Aguilar Highway and the Stanley River Bridge. As a result of this information and the likelihood of the Forward Command Post itself becoming isolated, communications were made with the search and rescue party and they were advised that the Forward Command Post would be relocating to the Woodford Police Station approximately seven kilometres from the search location. This in effect meant that the rescuers would themselves require rescuing at first light the following day. The search continued and all four kayakers were located with the fourth and final kayaker being located at approximately 10:00pm. The Swift Water Rescue Team and those rescued took refuge overnight at the Stony Creek Rural Fire Station before being evacuated across the Stanley River via SES flood boat on the morning of Monday the 10th of January 2011.

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6. Also during the evening I received a call from a group of campers that they were isolated by flood waters at Cruice Park on the Kilcoy/Beerwah Road, Woodford. I conducted a risk needs assessment, they informed me that they had food, water and bedding and were not in any immediate danger. I continued to monitor their situation during this day.

7. On Monday the 10th day of January 2011, Woodford was now experiencing serious flooding. The Stanley River Bridge, D'Aguilar Highway was inundated and was more than 2 meters under water, the Peachester Range was closed due to mud slides, Neurum Road was underwater and the Woodford Prison was isolated. Those areas within my policing division prone to localised flooding were all now isolated. These included Cove Road, Old Cove Road Stanmore and Neurum via Neurum Road. Localised flooding was being monitored and road closures were taking place. The D'Aguilar Highway was closed at Stony Creek and again at Stanley River Bridge in effect isolating all areas east, west and north of Woodford. Woodford could still be accessed via the D'Aguilar Highway from Caboolture. Throughout the day I coordinated the closure of a number of roads and detours from these areas with the assistance of Moreton Bay Regional Council workers.

8. On Tuesday the 11th day of January 2011, at about 3.00am I had been monitoring the rain gauges as previously described. These readings indicated that the water had receded on the Stanley River Bridge giving access to Cruice Park. I then took this opportunity to drive out to the stranded campers at this location. I drove across the Stanley River Bridge and headed to the camp ground. Upon arrival I advised them to follow my vehicle out of the area. I then drove out with seven vehicles following my vehicle. I then travelled towards Kilcoy to check on water levels and conduct a situational appreciation of the D'Aguilar Highway. As I approached Mary Smokes I saw that water was still crossing the roadway and continued driving through about one metre of water for approximately one kilometre.

9. At 10.00am I stood up the forward command cell and had the other emergency services at the station. At this stage the rain was extremely heavy and visibility was poor. At this time four officers from the Moreton Bay Regional Tactical Crime

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Squad were deployed to my location. I directed all emergency service staff to bunker down at the station unless there were any emergency calls for assistance and to better coordinate evacuation operations. There were numerous requests for evacuations of persons and livestock. These requests were all assessed; prioritised, coordinated and met through the Forward Command Cell.

10. During this morning residents started to arrive at the station that had been displaced by the floods. By this time houses were being inundated and motorists had been stranded by the flood waters. It was during this time that I received information from the public that an emergency broadcast message had been sent and stated words to the effect: *'people in low lying areas.....evacuate now'*.
11. I then contacted Caboolture District Office and was informed that the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) had been activated and was directed to liaise with acting Senior Sergeant Peter THOMPSON at the LDMG, which I believe was located at the council offices, Caboolture. I requested confirmation concerning the evacuation message, which was not specific and also, information with regards to the evacuees. The LDMG had no knowledge of the evacuation message and could not provide information concerning an evacuation centre.
12. As I had no assistance with regards to an evacuation centre I then decided to formulate our own evacuation centre. I contacted Mr. Michael WALLACE who is a members of the Community Hall committee and directed to him open the Woodford Community Hall and commence the activation of an Evacuation Centre. MR. WALLACE was appointed as my Evacuation Centre Coordinator. Communicating the activation of the Evacuation Centre to displaced members of the public then commenced. To this end social networking mediums including Facebook and Twitter accounts were utilised and subsequent to this, an account for the Evacuation Centre itself was created and used by the local community to direct isolated and displaced persons.
13. At this stage we still had supply of essential services - power, water, sewerage and mobile phone coverage. Arrangements were made with the local Church to have dry

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clothes supplied to affected person/s who had sodden clothes, with local volunteers laundering these clothes at the Laundromat. By 12.00pm the evacuation centre was operational and by the end of night one there were 72 displaced persons, six dogs and a guinea pig at the evacuation centre.

14. Sometime in the late afternoon, I directed the four members of the Moreton Bay Regional Tactical Crime Squad to return to their home station before they were cut off by rising flood waters. I was the only police officer left on duty.

15. As soon as the centre was open, people started moving into the evacuation centre. We then had issues of bedding as people were sleeping at the centre. Throughout the day I had raised the issue with District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) that I needed bedding for the evacuees. At approximately 7.00pm, I contacted the DDMG again with regards to this issue. I was subsequently informed that they could not provide bedding and advised me to send the evacuees to Burpengary. This option was not practical; there was major flooding now between Woodford and Burpengary. Mr. Michael WALLACE was then tasked with obtaining bedding for the evacuees. Ad-hoc arrangements were made for local residents to supply swags and bedding overnight, before a more permanent solution was sourced from the Woodford Correctional Centre. The issue of medication for persons located at the evacuation centre also arose. Arrangements were made as part of the contingency planning, for the local pharmacists to remain on site throughout this disaster. This allowed for emergency medicines to be dispensed 24 hours a day, greatly relieved demands on emergency services and assisted in the provision of medicines to persons isolated by flood waters.

16. Until Sunday the 16th day of January 2011, I co-ordinated the evacuation centre at Woodford. As Woodford was the furthest position west that could be reached via the D'Aguilar Highway, the evacuation centre grew as persons affected initially could again commence travelling west towards Kilcoy, Nanango, Toowoomba and surrounding areas. As a result we had a peak of 90 displaced people at the evacuation centre. I relied heavily on Mr. Michael WALLACE as my evacuation centre co-ordinator and councillor Adrian REDELL. Cr. REDELL assisted me greatly

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command issues and with expenditures for things such as the Telstra landline and other essential resources.

17. Some of the key management systems that I enacted at this centre were: a displaced persons register, communication systems such as the Facebook account and a Telstra landline, medication, food supplies and a medical triage. I also provided was twice daily 'sitreps' to those persons affected and located at the Evacuation Centre.
18. One of the key principles that assisted me as an officer in charge in this situation was the delegation of local community members to perform key tasks.

First Response Issues during Flood Crisis

19. One of the most significant issues that created an unfocused panic response by the community was the issuing of the emergency evacuation alert to the community. I had no pre-warning of the message, the message did not contain a time line nor did it tell persons affected where to go or what to take. I was unaware of any community evacuation plan and I subsequently had to make one immediately.
20. Another issue was the lack of an integrated communications system between emergency services. I was heavily reliant upon the QFRS and QAS to assist in the response to this disaster. We had no effective radio communications other than a simplex channel between the emergency services which forced us to use mobile phones. Mobile phones were not reliable due to the topography of the area and the overloading of network services. I also had to use my own mobile phone as I am not supplied with a work phone.
21. There was also a co-ordination issue with regards to requests for medical evacuations and supply drops via helicopters. I requested and received approval through the DDMG with regard to these jobs but received significant time delays and inconsistent outcomes. For example: the evacuation of a seven year old female from the Neurum Creek Bush Retreat. Information was fed by myself via the DDMG simultaneously with a QAS request. The QAS request was met within five hours, however my

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request to the DDMG was followed up twenty four hours later. The child had already been evacuated to the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Issues relating to Resources

22. It is accepted that resources are a limited quantity and previous planning has identified that resources can be deployed in response to an incident. Consideration should be given to the pre-deployment of resources to more rural areas, these floods have identified that the deployment of resources can itself become problematic. Throughout this incident Woodford Community could have provided a greater response and rendered more assistance if resources had have been pre-deployed or stayed on a permanent basis. For example: the use of a flood boat. Current arrangements require that the boat comes from Bribie Island and the crew from the Redcliffe area.

[Redacted signature area]

Jason S Renwick
Sergeant 7919

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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 13/04/2011 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. |
| | [Redacted signature] .Signature |
| Signed at ...Woodford this ¹³ day of April 2011..... | |

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