

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Daniel Thomas McCOOMBS
<i>Date of Birth</i>	██████████
<i>Address and contact details</i>	C/O Marburg Police Station PH; ██████████
<i>Occupation</i>	Police Officer
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz
<i>Date taken</i>	14/04/2011

Daniel Thomas MCCOOMBS states:

1. I am a Constable of Police presently stationed at Marburg Police Station. During the January flood event I was stationed at Lowood station performing general duty patrols. I have been sworn in as a Constable for approximately two and half years.

2. I remember Monday the 10th day of January 2011 I was working an 8.00am to 4.00pm shift conducting general duty patrols. Leading up to this day Lowood had received constant rain and as a result there was localised flooding. During this shift I was required to attend the Brisbane Valley Highway about 300 metres North of the Forest Hill Fernvale Road intersection due to flooding across the road. I performed road closure duties for the remainder of the afternoon. At the conclusion of my shift I went home.

3. At about 7.00pm I received a call at home from (Officer in Charge) Sergeant Jacki MUNN who requested me to return to work due to expected heavy flooding in the Lowood area. At about 10.00pm I arrived to work at Lowood Station.

4. Upon arrival Sgt MUNN told me to remain on standby with the six or seven other police and to go to bed until further information or jobs were received. I slept at the station.

5. On Tuesday the 11th day of January 2011 I woke up and was instructed to go to the Brisbane Valley Highway about 300 metres past the Forest Hill Fernvale Road

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intersection and perform road closure duties. I soon left the station in the marked Hyundai I-load vehicle and proceeded to this location. I was not partnered with any other officer.

6. At 5.00am I arrived at this intersection and noticed that there was water across the Brisbane Valley Highway approximately 1km north of the intersection of Forest Hill Fernvale Road. Due to the height of the water I could ascertain that the bridge further ahead on the Brisbane Valley highway at Wivenhoe Pocket would be well under water and definitely impassable by persons and vehicles. For this reason I then performed road closure duties and prevented people trying to traverse the bridge ahead.
7. At about 9.00am it started to rain quite heavily and the flooding became worse. In about half an hour the flooding had moved south and was now only approximately 100 metres north of the intersection of Brisbane Valley Highway and Forest Hill Fernvale Road. Forest Hill Fernvale Road at Lowood and the Brisbane Valley Highway south of Fernvale had water over it, making it impassable. Due to this flooding Fernvale was effectively cut off as there were no roads into or out of Fernvale passable via vehicle. Fernvale itself was also cut into two due to flood waters at the intersection of Brisbane Valley Highway and Clive Street.
8. At this time the police radio was not reliable. I could receive police communications intermittently but it would not transmit. I then contacted Lowood station and informed my Sergeant of my situation. I was told to remain in the area and get to higher ground.
9. I did this and I moved from my location as the flood waters were rising and travelled to the intersection of Schmidt Road and Brisbane Valley Highway. I then performed further road closure duties and prevented people from entering the flood waters from my side. Despite this people were still entering flood waters on the other side of the

Witness Signature  Signature of officer

flooded areas travelling north. I do recall directing a number of motorists to desist from driving through the flooded waters however due to the distance between them and myself I was unable to stop them.

10. At about 4.00pm the flood waters had receded enough to drive across the bridge near Brisbane Valley Highway and Clive Street intersection. I inspected the bridge and noticed that asphalt from the surface was missing and the foundations had been washed away. I was concerned that the bridge might have been unsafe so I met up with Rural Fire brigade officers and a council engineer and requested them to inspect it. The engineer indicated that the bridge was safe providing that people drive on the eastern side. I directed the rural fire brigade officers to control traffic to ensure that it remained on the eastern side.
11. Whilst I was liaising with the engineer he told me that the Fernvale Future centre was a possible evacuation centre and arrangements were being made to set this up.
12. At this time access into and out of Fernvale was still cut however the water across the Brisbane Valley Highway near Clive Street had totally receded. I received information from my Sergeant to remain in the area and to help out with any jobs as they came in. I then drove around the Fernvale area and inspected the flooding. The flood waters were below the Schmidt road estate but with a possibility that they would rise. Nardoo Street and parts of Poole Road were flooded and houses were already becoming inundated. I had been receiving updates via Lowood station during the day with regards to dam releases and the potential for more flooding.
13. As I was driving around people were approaching me and asking me where to go as they were concerned that they would be flooded. I remember someone said that the Fernvale State School was open and I instructed people to go there as it was on high ground. I had not received any formal advice with regards to any evacuation plans or evacuations centres.

Witness Signature  Signature of officer

14. Some time in the early evening I received a job via Lowood Police Station in relation to an elderly lady stuck on her roof of her house due to encroaching flood waters. I was informed that she did not have any medical issues or injuries but required evacuation. I then travelled to Nardoo Street where she was located but I could not get to the female due to flood waters. I was about one hundred metres away from her address. I saw the lady in question sitting on the roof with a male. The male person was walking around the roof and there did not appear to be any immediate safety issues at this time. I conducted a risk assessment and formed the opinion that any rescue attempt of these persons would require rescuers to travel through fast moving flood waters putting lives and machinery at risk. As it appeared there was no immediate safety concerns to the female and male person on the roof, I made the decision that a rescue attempt would be too dangerous considering the circumstances and then contacted Lowood station via phone and advised them that the female and male would have to remain at their location until we could access her property safely.
15. Sometime after the water had receded I was able to access Nardoo Street. I then entered Nardoo Street (which was still flooded) on foot with a Rural Fire brigade officer. I walked through water that was about knee to waist height and started knocking on doors. I then evacuated the residents, including the female and male from the previous job, and escorted them to the Fernvale Hotel. I then arranged with the publican of the Fernvale Hotel to house the residents and feed them.
16. Sometime just after dark I received information via a resident that the local quarry had overflowed with water and a surge of water had flowed down a drainage ditch and was flooding homes. I then jumped in the Rural Fire brigade truck and headed to the Schmidt Road estate to assess the level of water. Upon arrival I observed that the houses on the western side of Titmarsh Court were inundated in about 1.5 metres of water. As we were driving through, the rural fire brigade officer sounded the siren, to warn the residents. As the residents came out of their homes due to the siren I

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Signature of officer

instructed these people to go to the school or stay with neighbours as no formal evacuation centre was running at this stage.

17. We were unable to get through to the estate on the Poole road side of Schmidt Road as the flood waters were too deep.
18. Also during the night I assisted the Rural Fire brigade in relation to a job where a lady thought she was having labour contractions. I attended an estate in Fernvale and we took up with this lady. I initially arranged for the SES to come across the flooded waters in a boat in case she had to be taken to hospital. An off duty Queensland Ambulance officer who lived in the area was contacted and arrived and determined she was not in labour. I later informed the SES that they were not required and the lady remained in place.
19. For the remainder of the night I then conducted anti-looting patrols and checked in at the school where people had been evacuated to. I got to bed at the Rural Fire brigade shed at about 11.00pm. Prior to going to sleep I received information from Lowood station that Wivenhoe dam was going to release more water. We estimated that around 2.00am on the 12/01/2001 the river may reach its peak and we were going to be on standby at this time.
20. I started duty at 2.00am on the 12th day of January 2011 and then conducted patrols in the Rural Fire brigade truck of the Fernvale area, checking on flood heights and evacuation centres.
21. Sometime after first light I went to the Future centre and liaised with the council officers with regards to the formal evacuation centre. We had a meeting and evaluated various supplies and services we required for the evacuation centre. At this time power had been cut. We made arrangements for food from the butcher and baker to be provided to persons at the evacuation centre and persons coming into town from

Witness Signature.  Signature of officer

the housing estates looking for food. Pub staff from the Fernvale Hotel agreed to cook the food and distribute it. I later arranged for a generator to provide power to the building.

22. I remained in Fernvale until lunch time on this day until flood waters receded enough that Fernvale was no longer cut off. I then proceeded to Lowood station. I remained on duty for about two days, sleeping at the station. During these two days we followed up on missing person reports, normal policing jobs and assisting the community in the provision of supplies.

Issues

23. The most pertinent issue I discovered during this crisis was the need for a pre-planned evacuation system for residents and evacuation centre for them to attend. This plan needs to be well communicated to the residents and emergency services. This did not occur in this instance which meant that these centres needed to be organised with no previous planning by emergency services staff on the ground who also were dealing with urgent calls for service and medical emergencies. In my opinion this placed a strain on already stressed emergency response resources which could easily have been avoided ahead of time by having an evacuation centre plan pre arranged for emergency situations.
24. Communications were also poor during the floods which hampered our ability to respond as quickly as possible. I was essentially relying on a mobile phone for communication between myself and my superior officers because the radios were ineffective. I would receive jobs from Lowood Police Station and was sometimes informed they had been trying to reach me for some time but were unable to do so because the network was so busy. Fortunately the case did not occur where I was required urgently for a life threatening matter but was not able to be contacted to attend the job due to communication issues.

25. To a lesser extent we also had problems concerning the delivery of medications to people in flooded areas after the initial event had occurred. As we were unable to access these people via car or boat, a helicopter was the only means possible and obviously there are not an abundance of helicopters available for this purpose. To assist in this matter one of my colleagues, Senior Constable Darren RUMBELOW, resorted to seconding a Channel 10 helicopter to transport medications to these people.
26. During my service over this period I was impressed with operations conducted by the Fernvale Rural Fire brigade in the assistance they provided to me and the people of Fernvale. In particular, the way that they organised all the logistics concerning the evacuation centre once it had been set up at Fernvale was very impressive and was done to such a high level that Lowood Police only had to monitor that centre to ensure it was running correctly unlike other evacuation centres where we were required to arrange, through the disaster management group, such services as food and water supplies.
27. I also want to acknowledge the assistance provided by local Fernvale Businesses in providing a number of essential services free of charge including providing food and accommodation.
28. I lastly want to acknowledge the assistance of Channel 10 who assisted with helicopter rides to drop off medical supplies to persons trapped by flood waters free of charge.

Witness Signature

Page Number 7 of 8

Signature of officer

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 14/04/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 5 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 ...Brisbane.....this.....day of.....April.....2011.....

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