

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Mark STEPHENSON
<i>Date of Birth</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Address and contact details</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Occupation</i>	Station officer, Queensland Fire Rescue Service
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz
<i>Date taken</i>	29/04/2011

ADDENDUM TO STATEMENT**Mark STEPHENSON states:**

1. I am a [REDACTED] year married male presently residing at [REDACTED] I am currently a station officer at Station 45, Ipswich station, 101 Limestone Street, Ipswich. I have been a station officer at this location for eight months and have been a fire officer with the Queensland Fire and Rescue service for the past fifteen years. This station encompasses a district of approximately 400 square kilometres with other auxiliary fire units contained within.
2. I was involved in the flood events during the December 2010 and January 2011 period. As a result of my involvement in the search and rescue of people within the Murphy's creek area on the 10th of January 2011, I provided a statement to Police concerning the coronial investigation into the deaths of residents during the flood. I am able to produce a copy of this statement.

EXHIBIT: Task Force Galaxy statement for Mark Stephenson dated 03/03/2011.

Marked Exhibit No/...

3. I wish to add further information to the flood commission of inquiry concerning the events leading up to the 10th of January 2011 and other pertinent issues during this time.

Witness Signature [REDACTED]
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Signature of officer [REDACTED]

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4. In early October 2010 I was watching news in which the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) briefed the government that there was the likelihood of a significant wet season in the up-coming months. As my role as station officer I am tasked with ensuring the operational response preparedness, particularly of my shift, so I then set about making preparations for an increased call out period.
5. I subsequently made arrangements for officers in the station to receive additional swift water rescue training. All permanent officers receive a level one swift water rescue training but I decided to conduct additional training through our swift water technicians to ensure that all staff were confident at performing level one tasks . I also caused to have other auxiliary stations within our district to receive extra training also. Due to QFRS regulations I cannot train staff to a full swift water rescue standard and can only provide minimal extra training in this area.
6. In addition to increased training I also had our local swift water rescue operators on my shift to review our local area action plans (LAPS) for areas of high risk within our district. These plans provide pre-formatted information by the way of maps and description of local conditions that enable any swift water rescue to be conducted more efficiently and safely. Some of the areas concerned included Harrisville, Rosewood, Lowood, Laidley and Colleges crossing.
7. These preparations occurred over a two month period.
8. During the month of December 2010 we had received significant rainfall and as a result isolated flooding in areas. I recall during this period we had conducted a number of swift water rescues in areas such as Murphy's Creek and the Fasifern and Lockyer Valleys. These rescues related to people stuck in flood waters either in their vehicles or stranded on high ground. None of these incidents were of a serious nature but it indicated to me that the local environment, due to the prevailing weather conditions, was prone to flooding.
9. On Monday the 10th day of January 2011 I commenced duty at 7.00am for my first day of C-shifts for the block period. Also rostered were five other officers, with only

one of these trained to a full level two swift water rescue (SWR) standard. At this time my two other SWR specialist were on leave or on deployment. Due to the increased swift water rescues over the previous month and from my observations from the BOM website, I was concerned that we only had one fully qualified SWR officer working. I then made inquiries to obtain further SWR staff.

10. I first rang Beenleigh station and learnt that they also only had one SWR technician. As a result of this I rang the Duty Manager of Operations (DMO) in order to request more staff. I made contact with the DMO and explained to him that I believed that we might be in for a bad day with regards to flooding and we required more SWR technicians. I requested for an additional six staff. The DMO said they were having a meeting later in the day and would get back to me.
11. I then made preparations at the station and made sure we had all our equipment ready to go in case of any turnouts. At this time I had not received any official warning of any significant weather event; my preparations were made as a result of my own observations as previously mentioned.
12. At about 7.30am I contacted the DMO and again requested more staff as soon as possible. The DMO stated that he appreciated my concern but I would have to wait until the meeting with other senior personnel.
13. I was not happy with this response so I contacted the Regional Rescue Co-ordinator, who was on leave, and asked if he could apply pressure to the appropriate authorities to have more SWR staff sent to the district. He agreed and said he would do what he could.
14. I was constantly on the BOM website which indicated significant wet weather in the Lockyer creek and surrounding areas. I was becoming very concerned as the ground was saturated and it doesn't take much for flash flooding to occur.
15. At 8.30am I contacted the Acting Assistant Commissioner of the South Eastern Region in order to request staff. This was a very un-orthodox method of requesting

staff and not within the chain of command, but I wanted a definitive answer on the issue. I pleaded with the Acting Assistant Commissioner in order to obtain more staff, including swift water rescue staff, due to my concerns of increased flooding and the safety of crews conducting rescue operations. He agreed to provide me one swift water rescue technician.

16. After this phone call I rang Station officer Phil PAFF, who was on days off at the time, and requested him to come in. PAFF is one of the most senior rescue specialists in the state. He agreed and came in not long after.
17. Once PAFF arrived I made inquiries to see if a Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) meeting had taken place. I found out that a LDMG had been formed in Ipswich but there was not QFRS urban officer or SWR specialist present at the meeting. Our administration officer found out the time of the next meeting and either PAFF or I were going to attend, if no other urban fire officer was present.
18. The events that unfolded at Murphy's creek on this day are mentioned in my Operation galaxy statement. I now wish to identify a number of issues that I experienced during my response on this day.
19. In paragraph 25 of my previous statement I instructed Lieutenant SKELLON to block the Warrego Highway to prevent a potential loss of life due to the 'wall of water' heading to this vicinity. My decision to task the lieutenant to block the highway was overruled by senior staff. I believed I had better situational awareness and re-instructed the officer to conduct this activity and I would take full responsibility for the decision.
20. In paragraph 39 of my previous statement I outline a response by 677 E to Dianne Court, Postman's ridge. The crews had to borrow chainsaws from civilians in order to clear debris from the road to gain access to the rescue locations.
21. In paragraphs 45 and 46 of my Operation galaxy statement I was ordered to go to the Gatton Incident Control centre (ICC) based at Gatton Fire station. I understand why

this decision was made due to my experience within that area of operations however I believe that I was in a better position to remain at Murphy's creek to provide a resource to the local community and to pass on information to the ICC. I subsequently obeyed the direction and proceeded to the ICC at Gatton. On leaving Murphy's creek I still had six fire fighters on the ground and twenty two people reported missing.


22. In paragraph 52 of my galaxy statement I outline my role within the ICC. Upon arrival at about 6.00pm I noticed that there were two swift water rescue technicians conducting an administration role. I thought that this was not an appropriate use of resources and I instructed them to go form a swift water rescue team so that I could deploy them. I was appointed operations officer and went about setting clear command intent within this field of operations. My tasks included; to ascertain the location of fire service personnel and to see if there were any missing; co-ordinate assets; develop incident action plans; and task swift water rescue crews in Grantham, Murphy's creek, Helidon, Bright view, Forest Hill and Laidley. Prior to my involvement at the ICC I was unaware of the staffing arrangements or logistical arrangements at this time.
23. In reference to paragraph 55 I received a list of outstanding rescues from the incident controller and was tasked with prioritising our response to the rescues. Some of these tasks included; a 70 year old man floating down the creek in a car approximately five to six hours ago and thirty two people including twelve children on the roof of a house stuck in flood waters. I then prioritised this jobs on a scale between one, being the most urgent and attainable and three, being questionable information or unable to get to the location.
24. As per paragraph 60 in relation to information concerning the loss of a rural fire brigade appliance and missing people, I wish to add further information. I made the decision to instruct Station officer PAFF, who was now located at Grantham, to break into the said appliance. I made this decision as operations officer as the senior staff were attending a teleconference at the time. I understand that this was out of the scope of my role but I had to ascertain the condition of any casualties in the vehicle.

25. In relation to the accountability of the ICC we were playing catch up for some time as the ICC was not set up earlier. It is normal practice if you are aware of a significant event you set up the ICC as soon as possible therefore improving accountability and tasking on the ground. An example of this 'catch up' related to the management of T-Cards during the flood event. T-cards are a means of identifying personnel and vehicles in the area of operations and encompass all agencies. By the time I arrived at ICC I could not identify where all personnel or appliances were located and I had no current information on the situation. I am surprised that due to this lack of awareness that no fire service personnel were lost.
26. Also upon my arrival at the ICC I noticed that there was a large pool of fire fighters that were basically standing around waiting tasking. Upon being appointed Operations officer I then took immediate action and started formulating them into crews to allow ease of tasking.
27. The communications at Spring Bluff and Murphy's creek between fire units was poor during the flood event. Units were unable to transmit or receive radio transmissions
28. and mobile phone reception was poor also. The appliances are equipped with a mobile phone that is linked to an aerial to the vehicle. These phones are aged and only worked intermittently in these areas. One of our officers had a 'smart' phone which received internet services and we were able to receive updates on weather and other conditions.
29. During my experience I noticed that some of our fire trucks that operated in rough terrain were not appropriate for this task, for example, 645M is a command and rescue truck that does not have a four wheel drive capability and is low to the ground. This limited it's accessibility for its rescue function in areas such as Spring Bluff and Murphy's creek.
30. In paragraph 70 of my previous statement I outline that I attended Leichhardt and performed a number rescues and evacuations. I attended Leichhardt not because of

any assignment but due to my analysis of the flood mapping which indicated that flooding was imminent. I arrived at Leichhardt at 10.30am and noticed that the flood waters were rapidly rising and subsequently performed these rescues.

31. In paragraph 71 I mention that I established an evacuation centre. I made this decision based on dynamic risk assessment of the Leichhardt and One Mile area. At this time I was the only emergency service available and there were multitudes of residents that had inundated and had no shelter. I identified the Ipswich golf club as the highest point in the area with the appropriate facilities. I liaised with Golf club management who were very helpful and they agreed to house the approximately 150 people. I remained in the area conducting looting patrol, further rescues and evacuations until I was relieved at 11.00pm.

32. After the flood event where I had worked for twelve days straight with an average of thirteen hours a day I had days off. Since this time I am not aware of any operational de-brief to the broader service.

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 29/04/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 7 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 to be false or misleading.
Signature
Signed at ...Brisbane.....this..29th....day of.....April.....2011.....	

Witness Signature,
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Signature of officer

