



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

STATEMENT OF WITNESS



QP 0125
01/06
A14

Occurrence #: _____

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

Statement of

Name of witness: SCHAFFERIUS, Brett Wade

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

Police officer taking statement

Name: _____

Rank: _____ Reg. no.: _____

Region/Command/Division: _____ Station: _____

Statement:

Brett Wade Schafferius states;

I am a Detective Inspector of Police currently attached to the Toowoomba Police District.

For the period from 18 September 2010 until 21 January 2011, I was appointed to relieve as Acting Superintendent, District Officer, Toowoomba District. For the period from 22 January 2011 until 18 February 2011, I was appointed to relieve as Acting Superintendent, Toowoomba District Disaster Coordinator.

In my substantive position, I am the Deputy District Disaster Coordinator (DDC). For the period of the relieving as outlined above, I was the District Disaster Coordinator. The roles and responsibilities of the District Disaster Coordinator are outlined in the Disaster Management Act 2003.

I was sworn into the Queensland Police Service on 5 July 1985. I have over 25 years sworn police service and have served at Townsville, Wynnum, Chandler Juvenile Aid Bureau, Cleveland Juvenile Aid Bureau, Cairns Drug Squad, Mareeba Criminal Investigation Branch, State Crime Operations Command, Ipswich, Southern Regional Office and Toowoomba District.

On 12 February 2009, I attended and successfully completed Introduction to Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements course in Brisbane.

On 5 November 2009, I again successfully completed Introduction to Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements conducted in Toowoomba by EMQ.

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **SCHAFFERIUS, Brett Wade**

On 5 August 2010, I attended a presentation in Toowoomba on the changes to the Disaster Management Act 2003.

On 2 November 2010, I participated in Exercise Orko, which was a training exercise for the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) and both the Lockyer Valley Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and the Toowoomba LDMG. This exercise was written and executed by Emergency Management Queensland and centred on a flood event in the local areas.

On 25 November 2010, I called and chaired a meeting of the DDMG at Southern Regional Office.

In response to the written requirements of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 9 March 2011, I provide the following information.

The preparation and planning undertaken and/or authorised by the officer in his region in advance of and/or in relation to the 2010/2011 flood events.

In November 2010, Exercise Orko was conducted within the Toowoomba Disaster District. Exercise Orko was a disaster management exercise designed around a hypothetical extreme weather event.


This involved the establishment of a District Disaster Coordination Centre (DDCC) at the Toowoomba Police Station and involved myself as the DDC, the Executive Officer, Sergeant Jamie Deacon, the Deputy Executive Officer, Senior Sergeant Peter McFarlane and an EMQ observer.

Further to this, both the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley LDMG's established coordination centres to take part in the exercise.

During the exercise, the DDCC and LDCC responded to serials as they were presented and tested the communication channels and systems for disaster management.

On 25 November 2010, I chaired a meeting of the Toowoomba DDMG at the Southern Regional Office.

On 22 December 2010, I tasked the Executive Officer, Sgt Deacon to contact both LDMG's to ensure contact lists and member availability for the coming Christmas period were up to date. On the same date, I tasked Sgt Deacon to check and confirm the same details for members of the DDMG.


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In response to the rain and flooding events after Christmas 2010, I made the decision to debrief both LDMG core members on 5 January 2011 to discuss a number of identified issues that were highlighted through the response of both LDMG's.

The events of 10 January 2011 in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley occurred without warning. Accordingly, once the events started to occur, there was an immediate response element by emergency services.

As to the flooding events of Forest Hill and Laidley on 11 January 2011, I first became aware that this was an issue on the morning of that date. It should be noted that this was a separate rain event to that which impacted on Toowoomba and the western parts of the Lockyer Valley.

A formal request for assistance was received at 7.35am on that day, however contact between the DDCC and the LDMG had been ongoing earlier that day.

Numerous arrangements for helicopter evacuations were made that morning, however due to severe rain in the area, those efforts were hampered. I appointed Acting Inspector Tony Neumann to coordinate the evacuation response from the DDCC.

During this time, I maintained constant contact with Acting Chief Superintendent Morrow and the SDCC.

The actions undertaken and/or authorised by the officer in respect of the 2010/2011 flood events in his region in relation to immediate management, response and recovery operations.

The flooding events of late December 2010 were primarily handled and managed by the LDMG's for both council areas. A number of requests for assistance were handled via the DDCC and were actioned as required. A debrief of both council areas was conducted on 5 January 2011.

At approximately 1330hrs on Monday 10 January 2011 significant rainfall fell into catchment areas feeding East and West Creek, Toowoomba. This rainfall caused rapid swelling of these watercourses within a relatively short period of time which caused flash flooding and torrents of water to flow through these creek systems and several Toowoomba streets. Further to this significant rainfall also occurred throughout the Toowoomba CBD, Toowoomba Range and Lockyer Valley.

As a result of this rainfall Withcott, Murphy's Creek, Postmans Ridge and Grantham at the bottom of the Toowoomba range were inundated with significant water. The

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force of this water was significant with entire houses washed off their foundations and motor vehicles wrapped around trees. It was initially identified that significant loss of life had taken place. Task Force Galaxy commenced on 12 January 2011 formed by members of the Southern Region and the Homicide Investigation Group to investigate the circumstances of these deaths for the State Coroner.

These events were not forecast and have no precedent in recorded history. As the events of 10 January 2011 were unfolding, comprehensive agency responses were undertaken by police, QFRS, EMQ and LDMG's.

In relation to the policing response, comprehensive records have been maintained of individual responses and structures that were established to address the events and are contained in the respective running sheets. In relation to the Toowoomba DDCC a running sheet has been maintained of actions taken, taskings given and liaisons which occurred.

As the events of the afternoon of were unfolding, I appointed specific senior officers within the District to perform roles.


On 10 January 2011, the Senior Management Command Cell was established at Southern Regional Office. Minutes have been kept of meetings conducted.

On the morning of 11 January 2011, I became aware via the Lockyer Valley LDMG that evacuations were required for Forest Hill and Laidley. I appointed Acting Inspector Tony Neumann to be the coordinator for the evacuation efforts on behalf of the DDCC and the Toowoomba District.

I liaised frequently with both members of the Lockyer Valley LDMG and also senior officers within the Region to ensure that all possible resources were obtained to assist in the evacuation of those towns. The evacuations proceeded on 11 January 2011 after being delayed by climatic condition and road slippages which hindered access o those towns.

I also ensured that the Toowoomba LDMG were aware of and were handling the required evacuations from the Oakey and Jondaryan areas and were monitoring the events in the Millmerran and Cecil Plains areas.

On Wednesday 12 January 2011, I oversaw the first coordinated entry into the Grantham township to commence searching efforts in earnest. This was in conjunction with the senior management team for the Region.


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On the evening of 12 January 2011, I became aware of the prospect of water running out in the Lockyer Valley and I immediately commenced coordinating efforts to ensure a water supply. The re-supply continued for several days.

On Thursday 13 January 2011, at the Toowoomba DDMG meeting, the situation facing the District was presented and discussion was had regarding individual agency recovery efforts. On the same day, I allocated two additional police officers to the Lockyer Valley LDMG to assist with organising recovery efforts within that area.

I maintained continual contact with core representatives of the Lockyer Valley LDMG and communities to ensure the information flow was kept.

Full actions taken are contained within the Running Sheet for Toowoomba DDC and DDCC 2010 – 2011.

The actions undertaken and/or authorised by the officer in respect of the 2010/2011 floods in relation to resourcing, coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment.


As the DDC for the area, it is my role to receive requests for assistance from the local areas to provide resources as are required. This was done on numerous occasions and a log of these requests has been maintained. Upon receipt of a request, I made an assessment to ascertain if the resources could be obtained locally within the District. If they could not be then the request was forwarded to the SDCC for attention.

Further to this however; was the need for a specific police response in relation to searching for victims of the events of 10 January 2011. A unique structure was put in place by the senior management team for the event, which included myself.

This structure involved allocating an additional Chief Superintendent position whose role it was to overview and coordinate disaster response and recovery within the Southern Region. It was this position which overviewed the policing response to the search and recovery efforts; however I was included in the structure as the District Officer for the affected District.

The Toowoomba DDMG met on Thursday 13 January 2011 and then on Friday 14 January 2011 to discuss the situation.

During the flooding events and in the aftermath, telephone and e-mail contact was made with individual group members as required to access resources or obtain


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information. This worked well and allowed for individual members to attend to their core response duties.

As events were unfolding I conducted forward planning as to what was required and then caused assets, whether they be human or physical, to be accessed.

Measures taken and/or authorised by the officer to manage, maintain or reinstate the supply of essential services (water, power and communications) during the 2010/2011 flood events.

In the immediate aftermath of the events, water, power and communications were disrupted primarily in the Lockyer Valley. These issues were raised with both the LDMG and then through the SDCC where relevant action was taken. Power and communications were restored in the following days; however the major issue was the resupply of water.

I established on the afternoon of Wednesday 12 January 2011 that the majority of centres in the Lockyer Valley would run out of potable water within the following days. I immediately made contact with the LDMG who confirmed the issue with water. I relayed the issue to the SDCC and immediately tasked my Executive Officer to commence organisation for the delivery of both bulk and bottled water. Substantial arrangements were made at both the District and State level to respond and accordingly water was provided to the area. This continued for several days until Queensland Urban Utilities had the water infrastructure repaired.

The resources sourced by the officer and or authorised by the officer to be accessed concerning weather forecasts and how that information was disseminated amongst relevant persons before, during and immediately after the 2010/2011 flood events.

In the lead up to 10 January 2011, I participated in the daily SDCC information sharing teleconferences.

As events developed (prior to 10 January 2011), I forwarded e-mails to members of the DDMG as to what resources or developments were occurring.

The primary source of information to me was from BOM and this was during the teleconferences.

Out of session I regularly viewed the BOM website for information.

As previously stated, the events of 10 January 2011 were not predicted.

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Measures taken and/or authorised by the officer to inform the community about the 2010/2011 flood events and the response thereto.

No specific information in relation to the events prior to 10 January 2011 was authorised by me for dissemination. During this time, comprehensive information was disseminated from SDCC via all forms of media.

In relation to the events of the afternoon of 10 January 2011, at 2.45pm I rang Police Media to organise a media release regarding the events in Toowoomba and to issue warnings.

At 4.41pm the draft release was returned to me for approval, which I gave at 4.49pm. Extensive and comprehensive media coverage was provided of the events following 10 January 2011.

On 12 January 2011 two Police Media representatives attended the Southern Region to assist in media relations and to ensure coordinated media access to the affected areas.

On 11 January 2011, the SMS warning system was utilised for the evacuation of Forest Hill and Laidley.


Both Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley LDMG employed extensive media strategies in the aftermath of 10 January 2011.

The nature and timing of all communications between the officer and the District Disaster Coordinator and/or the District Disaster Management Group and the State Disaster Management Group and/or the State Disaster Management Coordination Committee and/or the State Disaster Coordinator relative to the 2010/2011 flood events.

During the flood events, communications between all areas was conducted via telephone, e-mail and facsimile. Comprehensive records have been maintained of all communications however it has not been possible to identify each and every individual telephone call.

Prior to 10 January 2011, the primary method that was utilised to relay information to other members of the DDMG was via e-mail. As individual members needed to be contacted, telephones were utilised.

Similarly telephone communication was the primary method of communication with the SDCC.


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The events of 10 January 2011 caused roads to be cut between Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley so telephone and police radio were utilised rather than face to face meetings.

On 5 January 2011, I conducted face to face debriefs with both LDMG core members.

On 13 January and 14 January 2011, DDMG meetings were held face to face in Toowoomba. A decision was made to conduct further DDMG meetings on a needs basis, as all agencies were immediately into recovery phase, apart from the police who continued with search and recovery efforts for deceased persons.

All requests for assistance were provided in writing.

A total of 13 sitreps were received from the Toowoomba LDMG

A total of 33 sitreps were received from the Lockyer Valley LDMG.

A total of 20 sitreps were forwarded from the Toowoomba DDCC to the SDCC.

Daily telephone information sharing sessions were held with SDCC and further extraordinary teleconferences were conducted in the days following 10 January 2011.

As the DDC, I was regularly contacted by the SDC and other senior members from Brisbane.


The availability and provision of services or logistical support within the disaster management hierarchy before and during the 2010/2011 flood events, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof.

The disaster management framework worked very well in the lead-up and following the events of 10 January 2011. Once both LDCC's were fully aware of the requirements for requests for assistances and the parameters for those, the system worked well.

There was full support from the SDCC when requests for equipment and other resources were forwarded.

The legislative changes to the Disaster Management Act pertaining to the transfer of the Executive Officer role from EMQ to QPS were extremely beneficial in that the officer performing those duties had comprehensive corporate knowledge and an understanding of practices and procedures within the QPS.

The provision of resources was timely.


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Any involvement with Commonwealth agencies, including but not limited to Emergency Management Australia or the Australian Defence Force, in relation to the provision of emergency response measures, personnel, equipment or services, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof during the 2010/2011 flood events.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) provided support in the Lockyer Valley following the events of 10 January 2011. In the first instance, air support was provided to assist with the evacuation of persons from Forest Hill on 11 January 2011.

High clearance vehicles were also made available to assist in townships; however their use was limited due to land slippage on the Warrego Highway.

The ADF provided further assistance following 13 January 2011 with the supply of potable water to the Lockyer Valley via tankers.

The ADF was utilised extensively during the search and recovery efforts in the Lockyer Valley. They supplied air assets, ground personnel, heavy machinery and engineers to assist in this effort.

Following the search and deceased recovery efforts, the ADF continued in assisting in the clean up of the Grantham and other townships within the Lockyer Valley. This assistance was coordinated through the LDMG.


Any involvement with State agencies, apart from the Queensland Police Service in relation to the provision of emergency response measures, personnel, equipment or services, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof during the 2010/2011 flood events.

The initial response efforts to the flooding events of 10 January 2011 was conducted by the Queensland Police Service, the QFRS, EMQ and SES.

Upon transitioning into recovery for the community, the various government and non-government agencies provided the assistance primarily through the LDMG's.

The appropriate level of representation on the LDMG's was assessed at that level.

Through the events, any contact I had with government departments in relation to the supply of resources or requests for information was met with cooperation. There were no issues identified.


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The events have highlighted the need for each individual agency to have comprehensive resupply and evacuation plans in place to respond in times of disaster.

An assessment of the adequacy of equipment and communications systems in the region during the 2010/2011 flood events.

Overall the communication systems within the district were adequate. This however was not the case in Murphy's Creek. There is limited mobile phone coverage in that area and this hampered the coordination efforts in that area.

Fortunately the forward command post at the Murphy's Creek State School allowed police to access a land line for communication.

E-mail and mobile telephones were the primary communication systems during the events.

Equipment was sourced locally and from State as required. For the search and recovery efforts for deceased people, the ADF provided a large quantity of machinery and equipment to assist.

An assessment of the adequacy of the community's response in the region during the 2010/2011 flood events.

The events in the Toowoomba Regional Council area were handled well and in a timely fashion.

The flooding and loss of buildings and life in the Lockyer Valley primarily happened in two geographical areas. Firstly, in the Murphy's Creek area and secondly in Grantham.

The residents of Murphy's Creek area responded in a very timely manner and the community as a whole displayed resilience organising recovery efforts, meetings and a recovery centre.

Grantham was different in that the town area remained sealed and under police control until Tuesday 18 January 2011, at which time residents were allowed to return to their houses. This was essential to allow for the search and recovery of deceased people. Enormous quantities of assistance was provided to Grantham by government agencies to assist the town to recover and the community was much more reliant on this assistance than the Murphy's Creek community.


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The circumstances of any human fatality within the region, including the measures taken to prevent and/or respond to any such fatality, during the 2010/2011 flood events.

The following are the list of fatalities directly related to the flooding events within the Toowoomba District.

Located bodies and identified (19)

- Toowoomba – 2 (1 female adult – 1 male child)
- Murphys Creek – 2 (1 male adult – 1 female child)
- Spring Bluff – 2 (1 male adult – 1 female adult)
- Postmans Ridge – 2 (1 male adult – 1 female adult)
- Grantham – 10 (2 adult males; 5 adult females; 1 Male child; 1 female child; and 1 infant female child)
- Brymaroo – 1 (One male adult)

Remain Missing presumed dead (3)

- Warrego Highway, Helidon – 1 (1 male adult)
- Grantham (1 female adult - 1 male adult)

On 12 January 2011, Taskforce Galaxy was formed consisting of personnel from the Southern Police Region and the Homicide Investigation Group to comprehensively investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths. Comprehensive information is maintained by that Taskforce and the specifics are not known to me.

The fatality at Brymaroo was discovered after water in a creek subsided sufficiently to see the vehicle in the creek.

As the events of 10 January 2011 were unfolding, emergency services workers and general members of the community responded to calls for service from the effected communities. Numerous rescues were facilitated and the exact number is unknown.

The measures taken within the region to protect private and public property and/or preserve vital infrastructure in connection with the 2010/2011 flood events.

As previously outlined, the events of 10 January 2011 occurred without warning which was problematical for agencies to protect property during the event.

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Following the events of 10 January 2001, police maintained a 24 hours policing presence in the township of Grantham until February 2011 to support the community. The LDMG's provided SES support to affected residents when called upon.

Any special consideration that should be given within the region by reason of particular regional or geographic differences.


Nil.

Any feature of the disaster preparation and planning stages or the disaster response and recovery operations which, in the opinion of the officer, presented particular difficulty or may require practical or legislative change to improve future disaster management in the region.

The following is my opinion in relation to areas where it may be possible to improve the overall planning and response to any similar incidents.

1. Flood mapping needs to occur within both Regional Council areas to show exactly what infrastructure is impacted when water/river heights reach certain levels. For example, if Oakey Creek were to reach 3 meters in height; which streets, which side of streets, how many houses etc would be inundated. This then allows for comprehensive forward planning and evacuation strategies to be implemented in a timely fashion.
2. In my opinion, the LDMG of the Lockyer Valley was overcome with the enormity of the tragedy which occurred in the Lockyer Valley and I believe it did not realise the enormous recovery taskings ahead of them until many days/weeks later, despite being advised for the need for recovery strategies soon after the event. This is in no way a slight on any person whosoever. The elected members of council and council employees are not experts (nor could they be) in disaster management and recovery operations. Elected members come from a variety of backgrounds and many of them have never been exposed to disaster response and recovery.

The dedication and commitment of the elected members to their community is never in doubt, however there is a need for appropriately trained and experienced individuals to work with local councils to set up structures and plans for recovery. A possible solution would be to have a 'fly in' team available to immediately deploy to an area to get recovery operations (in conjunction with the local council) underway. This would also allow local


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elected officials and employees to continue to provide vital service to their constituents knowing that professional assistance is provided to assist in the recovery efforts.

This team should be in a position to provide assistance in establishing recovery committees and provide practical advice and assistance in what is required and which agency is the most appropriate to respond to individual issues.

The information contained in this statement is provided on the basis of the knowledge, information and material currently available to me and my interpretation of the information sought by the requirement at this point in time.



B W SCHAFFERIUS
Detective Inspector
Toowoomba District

Justices Act Acknowledgement

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 14/3/11 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 13 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 15th day of March 2011.

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