



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE  
STATEMENT OF WITNESS

QP 0125  
01/06  
A14

Occurrence #: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement no.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of**

Name of witness: MARCUS, Benjamin Roland Derek

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age:            Occupation: Inspector of Police

**Police officer taking statement**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Reg. no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Region/Command/Division: \_\_\_\_\_ Station: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement:**

Benjamin Roland Derek MARCUS states:-

I am an Inspector of Police and am stationed in the Southern Region headquarters in Toowoomba but currently seconded to a project role in Wacol (Brisbane).

I joined the Queensland Police Service in September 1988 as a Probationary and was inducted in April 1989.

I have 21 years policing experience having served in, or undertaken considerable relieving in, operational roles in city, urban, metropolitan, island, country and remote locations from 1989 to 2001. These locations were, in order of succession, Wynnum, Brisbane Mobile Patrols, Upper Mt Gravatt, Cleveland, Dunwich, Goondiwindi, Talwood, Yelarbon, Clermont, and Stanthorpe. Whilst at Clermont and Stanthorpe (1995-2001), I also performed duty as a paid member of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service as an Auxiliary Firefighter and Lieutenant.

From 2001 to 2008 I performed a number of operational support and corporate services roles including the State Neighbourhood Training Officer, Manager of Equity and Diversity, Policy Officer (Office of the Commissioner), Project Officer (Officer

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of the Deputy Chief Executive), and Business Manager (Westgate Project). I was seconded to the Department of Justice and the Attorney General for six months in 2008/09 as the Strategic Advisor (Police) to help author the Criminal Justice Sector Blueprint.

In April 2008 I was appointed to my substantive position as the Southern Region's Regional Education and Training Coordinator. I was again seconded to the Westgate Project in May 2009. This project centres on the development of a new police academy and forensic science facility at Wacol.


I have undertaken a range of training and assessment in incident and disaster management in both the QPS and the QFRS and used this knowledge in actual events with both organisations. I have also helped author and conduct desktop training scenarios in disaster and incident management. I would describe my level of understanding and experience as operationally effective having not held the role of District Disaster Coordinator or undertaken formal disaster management courses with external providers.

In response to the written requirement of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 9 March 2011, I provide the following information. In any area as detailed in the written requirement where I have not commented, it is because I have had no involvement in that particular aspect. This relates mainly to the preparation or planning undertaken in the Southern Region in advance of, or in relation to, the 2010/2011 flood events.

My only significant involvement in the Southern Region's incident management planning in advance of the 2010/11 flood events centred on 'Exercise Erebus'. This was a comprehensive, multi-agency incident response and management exercise conducted in 2010. It exercised incident command skills and agency interoperability involving a fictitious major incident scenario. I was a co-author and Exercise Controller for the exercises which were held in Toowoomba, Yamanto, Goondiwindi, Dalby, Roma and Charleville. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) was a lead agency in this and it also involved Emergency Services Queensland (fire

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and ambulance), Main Roads, and local government agencies. The exercise was underpinned by the concept these skills are perishable and need to be practiced and that local areas need to ensure their procedures are both localised and standardised to be effective.

My involvement in the management, response and recovery operations in the January 2011 flood event were in two parts. These were an initial search and rescue role and a subsequent community liaison role.

At 6 am on Tuesday 11 January 2011, I was at the Oxley campus of the Queensland Police Service Academy for a meeting and travel to Townsville on an unrelated matter. I was aware of flooding in the Southern Region from news reports and from my own family who were isolated on our rural property at Stanthorpe. I was aware the flood event in the Lockyer Valley was particularly severe and volunteered to assist.

I was initially appointed to form police personnel into groups of twenty and ready them for deployment for a period of five to seven days. I also assisted in converting the Jim O'Sullivan Recreation Club at the Oxley academy into a 'staging area' for helicopter and road deployment to the floods. This included transport arrangements, food, and general logistics. This was done at the direction of the Police Operations Centre in Brisbane. I was appointed to take a team of twenty officers into the Lockyer Valley but helicopters were unable to transport us due to storms and active rescues being undertaken and road transport was not possible due to flooding and damage.

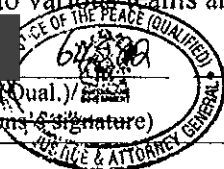
I was able to deploy at around 9am the following day (Wednesday 12 January) and flew to Grantham with my team in two Royal Australian Navy helicopters. We landed on a sealed road I now know to be Railway Street, Grantham around an hour later. I spoke with Inspector Mark Kelly, who was the Police Forward Commander (PFC), and was immediately tasked to a structure-by-structure methodical search for survivors and victims. I undertook a role of Field Commander and was responsible for my officers and forming them into various teams and roles as required.

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This was initially based on searching dwelling, sheds, vehicles and flotsam piles in the town area and widening into paddocks. This was later extended to include rural and less accessible areas. A feature of this was the use of earthmoving equipment, mainly excavators, to pick through large piles of debris. Given one of the missing people was only 23 months old, we were required to search right down to areas small enough to conceal an infant. Since the consistency and viscosity of the mud changed during the days after the main flooding event, we were required to re-search structures and areas which were previously inaccessible or had changed as the mud settled. Items which were searched were then tagged with a visually prominent 'flag' of police crime scene tape. Any area which was deemed as unsafe was surrounded by a length of crime scene tape.

Our teams also located many domestic pets and other displaced animals and I was responsible for having them captured and secured at the University of Queensland Veterinary campus at Gatton. This was done by the local government animal control staff.

I also took charge of the field investigation and recovery of all deceased people so searchers could be freed of that task and continue searching. This involved deploying and assisting the Disaster Victim Identification Squad (DVIS) members in their role including physically recovering victims for handling by the Government Undertakers. This was technically difficult and time consuming and required improvised equipment to overcome mud and debris. I also assisted the DVIS at three other locations in searching for human remains at identified locations. These were at Gatton, Murphy's Creek and on a creek bank on the Grantham side of Helidon.

I also acted as the field liaison for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and utilised them, by agreement, in a number of activities which were beyond the scope of local resources. This included pumping down a massive destabilised 'turkey nest' dam in danger of breaching, pesticide 'fogging' for mosquitoes, and line-searching and clearing large paddocks. This was achieved through the PFC who was in contact

with the commander of ADF personnel.

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I was also requested to report my level of confidence in each property we searched as being fully 'cleared'. By 'cleared' I mean, we were confident there were no deceased people in that particular structure. There were a number of properties where the structural damage, debris, or dangerous animals meant we had to perform the best search we could but report that structure for additional targeted or searching by specialist personnel and / or hazard removal and then search. This resulted in two deceased persons being located only after the second or third search activity. These were in a mound of flotsam in Harris Street and a dwelling in the Gatton-Helidon Road respectively.

I also obtained the use of a four wheel drive quad bike from a land holder to assist recovering a deceased female. I found the vehicle to be better suited than any other for traversing the flood ground and requested the PFC supply a number of these. We received two four-wheel-drive machines and two six-wheel drives and these enabled me to task personnel to inspect, clear, and map all displaced motor vehicles and other identifiable property using GPS.

After approximately five days, I was appointed as the Community Liaison Officer for Grantham. I worked in conjunction with Inspector Mike Crowley who performed a similar role at Helidon and Murphy's Creek. I also visited the Helidon Evacuation Centre most evenings on my return journey to our accommodation in Toowoomba. I continued to perform this role until we were both relieved by Superintendent Maurice Poiner and Inspector Mike Mackay around a week later on 22 January 2011.

The township of Grantham can be described as having two post-flood areas. One area is built on an alluvial plain and was heavily impacted by water, and the other is on a small rise and was largely unaffected. Both areas had housing but the flat area included the town's businesses and the hill area included the primary school and QFRS Rural Fire Station. These were the only government facilities in the town and became the rally points for the community.

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The Grantham Primary School was already established as the Community Recovery Centre when I became involved on about 15 January. I recall speaking with the Acting Principal, Matt Gurr, on many occasions. I found him to be very helpful and pragmatic. I also spoke the Regional Director of the Department of Education, Mr Greg Dickman, and discussed ways to transfer the recovery centre to a location with the least possible impact on the school community which was scheduled to reopen the following week. I also spoke with the Director-General of the Coordinator General's department at the school and he arranged for the provision of marquees and ablution blocks on the sports oval.


There were two key members of the community, Warren Kimlin and Julie Johnson, who became my main contact points. Mr Kimlin withdrew as the primary contact person after about four days (post my involvement) due to medical complications with his knee and Mrs Johnson took over the role. Both of these community members provided invaluable assistance to their communities and the recovery effort.

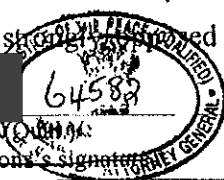
My role was to act as the communication point between the community and the ongoing search and rescue operation. I held twice daily briefings with the community, established roles and routines for community members, coordinated requests for, and offers of, assistance, and was the point of contact for VIPs at the community centre.

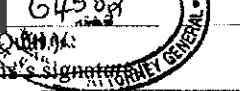
In consort with Inspector Crowley, I adopted a policy of advising and assisting the community by informing them of the possible or probable outcomes of their intended actions but not dictating any particular course. By this I mean I offered advice and opinion, formed alternative courses of action, made recommendations and sourced specialist assistance but did not mandate the outcome. The final decisions were left to those assembled at each community meeting. Typically these meetings had between fifty and a hundred affected residents in attendance in a large marquee.

For example, some members of the community were keen to speak with media representatives whilst others were shy.   was referred to this. We talked through a

  
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wide range of options, using QPS Media and Public Affairs representatives as advisors, and allowed the community to discuss and decide on the course of action. This resulted in a cascading approach to media management including a one-off media opportunity within the township itself for a three-hour period. This was supported by a prepared statement being pre-delivered to all media and read to them by Mrs Johnson on the day. By taking this approach, the incidence of media 'intrusion' was managed, those who wanted or conceded to interviews were able to, and those who did not what media involvement were able to avoid it.

I also delivered the lists of those missing and confirmed deceased, with a brief outline of the circumstances surrounding their individual circumstances, at a community meeting. I understand this was also replicated at Helidon by Inspector Crowley. We also updated these lists as applicable and observed a minute of silence on each occasion the lists were updated.

The twice-daily briefings quickly established a routine whereby a community member would chair the gathering, I would report on outcomes from the last meeting, the community would discuss and vote on any required matters, and I would take tasks to be actioned and reported on at the next meeting. It was clear the community both valued and benefited from being actively involved in the recovery process in this way.

The major issue for most community members was frustration. The flood affected area of Grantham was an exclusion zone as the search and rescue operations were still underway. QPS addressed this in a number of ways including explaining what we were doing, what the coming search stages were, and when we proposed to be able to repatriate the township, and planning with them how this would occur.

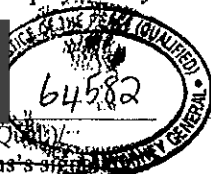
I also offered to photograph affected members properties at their request and show them the digital images in private after the subsequent meeting. This enabled much of the apprehension to be given clarity and allow the owners to visually 'inspect' the damage well ahead of being able to physically do so. We also reported which



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structures had been declared as unsafe for entry by the Urban Search and Rescue personnel and made specific arrangements for these landholders.

QPS also assisted in arranging and escorting primary producers and business owners into their properties for specified purposes which was typically attending to machinery, stock, or essential correspondence. We also undertook a limited number of tasks from community members around obtaining essential items such as medical equipment or items of high value such as relative's ashes.

There was also frustration expressed at some landholders and residents breaching the cordon to access their properties and these were dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There was also considerable fear of looting and possibility of looting along the flotsam lines. These were regularly patrolled but the scale of the event made it impossible to secure all items. I became aware QPS served one Notice to Appear for looting but this was served on a Grantham resident and involved his neighbours property.

During the search and rescue operation, QPS had established a process of securing and recording specified items such as wallets, purses, weapons, and jewellery at the temporary police station and 'pooling' any items of no monetary value but obvious sentimental value at the recovery centre.

Part of my role was to coordinate the collection of names of people reported missing or located by Grantham community members to Detective Acting Inspector Paul HART to ensure the lists maintained by his Victim Identification and Liaison Unit were contemporary.

The marquee also housed a kitchen area and an area for the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) to meet residents, an area for residents to register and receive identifying wrist bands, and areas for social workers and community assistance entities to establish a presence.

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A major aspect of my work was dealing with quite vocal negative opinions regarding the local Lockyer Valley Council and a strong perception by residents they were not getting answers to their questions. This included 'cat calling' at public meetings.






Individual community members continually offered the view that if they asked for something from the QPS or other agencies, they either got what they needed, an alternative, or an explanation but if they asked the 'local council' for it, they got nothing. I attempted to address this myself with the community on a number of occasions but I was also quite frustrated with the LDMG's lack of responses and instead was forced to implement 'work arounds' to meet deadlines. I formed the view the scale of the event devastated the local community and exceeded the capacity of the local government authorities.

I recall the local government animal control worked really well with other authorities. I also recall two members of the Murweh Council from Charleville, who had extensive flood recovery experience, providing considerable expertise and support to the LDMG. However, as at the time of the finish of my deployment, I was still unable to rely upon the LDMG meeting critical community requests within required timeframes. Most notably these were for personal protective equipment for residents and water trucks to reduce contaminated dust.

I also recall monitoring the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) web site for severe storm warnings. There were at least three occasions where severe storms were forecast hours ahead which did impact Grantham. On each occasion, I requested the LDMG formulate a means of advising Grantham residents in the event of a pending severe storm event, both for practical safety reasons and to manage fear in some community members. I recall being told that a text message warning system wasn't possible if the storm was less than a Category Three cyclone and that other options were being considered. Up until the time I left this had not been achieved and the storm warnings were made by police officers, including myself, driving around the township using 'loud hailers'.



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I had limited involvement in reinstating the supply of essential services in Grantham. I escorted an authorised representative from Telstra to the exchange building in the centre of Grantham. I also distributed the contact number for a temporary 'community phone' which was installed at the exchange for use by community members. I also assisted with Optus distributing a large number of free mobile telephones with \$1000 credit on each to flood affected residents. My involvement in these were reactive in that I did not arrange for them, rather I facilitated their actions at their request and in consultation with the PFC.

I recall my working relationships with QPS staff from Southern Region were excellent. All of my requests for intelligence, logistics, and supplies were acted upon immediately and delivered within very short timeframes which was usually the next day.

I recall the working relationship with the ADF was also excellent. The officers and troops were professional, courteous, and highly capable. They provided both technical expertise and equipment and just sheer human resources needed to clear large areas of the search field. The ADF command was co-located with QPS' and this arrangement worked very well. I recall our main contact person was Lieutenant Colonel Kahlil FEGAN.

I also recall working with members of the Australian Federal Police. I personally knew several of them from when they were employed with the Special Emergency Response Team at QPS and had the opportunity to speak with them about a range of issues. The AFP personnel were professional, pragmatic and worked tirelessly. Given their high levels of physical fitness, they were generally tasked to arduous and physically demanding search operations. They completed all taskings promptly.

I recall overseeing the deployment of State Emergency Service (SES) personnel in the search area. These members performed search and rescue operations and located a deceased female. I recall recommending the SES be tasked with less physically demanding tasks commensurate with their general apparent fitness levels.

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I also recall observing both Federal and State departments working in the human and social services arena at the Grantham School and recovery centre. These members appeared to be providing excellent service and this was positively commented on by affected community members.

I recall the main method of communication at Grantham was by mobile telephone. The mobile coverage was also sufficient to permit the use of wireless QPS computers. QPS had two Mobile Policing Facilities established and utilised but the additional communications capabilities of these were not required.

I have notes of most of the meetings conducted in Grantham and requests by individual community members across 28 pages of an A4 bound exercise book. These notes vary between being general and very specific in nature and reflect the sequence of activities I undertook to support the community.

[Redacted]  
Benjamin Roland Derek MARCUS  
Inspector 7095

**Oaths Act Declaration**

<i>Benjamin Roland Derek MARCUS</i>		<b>OATHS ACT 1867 (DECLARATION)</b>	
I, <i>Derek MARCUS</i> , do solemnly and sincerely declare that:			
(1)	This written statement by me dated <i>date</i> and contained in pages numbered 1 to page <i>1</i> number 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 I know to be false.		
and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1867			
[Redacted Signature]			Signature
Taken and declared before me at <i>Grantham</i>			
this <i>6th</i> day of <i>March</i> 20 <i>08</i>			
Witness	[Redacted]	<i>64582</i>	
Justice of the Peace / Commissioner of Declarations Other (Please State) .....			

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