

<i>Name of Witness</i>	David Mark TOTENHOFER
<i>Date of Birth</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Address and contact details</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Occupation</i>	Community Economic Development Officer
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Det Insp Mark Ainsworth
<i>Date taken</i>	13/4/2011

David Mark TOTENHOFER states;

1. I am a married man, [REDACTED] years of age and I reside with my family at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Highland Plains. This property is a 320 acre property located approximately 20 kilometres north of Oakey. We have rented the dwelling only at this location for the past three years but have lived in the Oakey District for the past 20 years. This residence was not affected by the recent January flooding however we were stranded at the house due to roads being cut off by flooding.
2. At the time of the floods I was employed by the Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) as the Community Economic Development Officer for the Oakey District, however this position is part of a re-structure Council is undergoing. I have been employed with council for the past 10 years, with the first 7 years of that employment being with the Jondaryan Shire Council. This was up to the time when the council's amalgamation took place and since that time I have been employed at the TRC. The position of Community Economic Development Officer involves liaison with the Community and Community groups, assisting with funding to the community, co-ordinating activities such as Australia Day, ANZAC day activities, and supporting community initiatives. Basically the position provides a face for the TRC in the community.

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3. I am currently Treasurer of Oakey Church Unlimited, a member of the Oakey High School P&C, and a Board member at St Monica's School. In the past I have been President of the Oakey High School P&C, and secretary of the Oakey Agricultural, Pastoral and Rodeo (Show) Society . In a previous position within Council, and previous employment, I was involved in event, project and volunteer management and community liaison.

4. I recall Sunday 9th January, 2011. On this date my family had been to Pittsworth and were returning along the Oakey-Pittsworth road between 4.30 and 6pm, and drove through flooded parts on that road. As we progressed further to our home along the Oakey-Cooyar, through flooded portions of the road , we could not get through the flood waters running over the Doctor's Creek crossing. As we could not get through we returned to Oakey and stayed there the night.

5. At about 5.30am on 10th January, 2011 I saw that Oakey Creek near the Bridge Street crossing had risen significantly and was about 5.5 metres on the gauge (higher than normal). It had rained significantly overnight, and on and off during this day. We attempted to go home about 10.30 am, but were unable to get through the Lagoon Creek, about 3 kms north of Oakey. By about 3pm on the same day we were able to make it through to our residence. On the following day we became aware that Oakey was flooded and we were basically isolated in our own home by flooded roads in all directions.

6. I recall the flood events of January, 2011. At this time I was on long service leave from the TRC. I commenced my leave on 24th November, 2010 and was due to return to work on 11th April 2011 (now extended to

9th May). On 12th January, 2011 as a result of being aware of the flood events in Oakey, I contacted my work supervisor, Ian Stevenson, at that time Acting Oakey District Manager, and volunteered to return to work to provide assistance to the Oakey community. As a result at about 9am on 12th January, 2011 I returned to work. I remained there for the next three weeks assisting the community.

7. On returning to work, a colleague Karen King and I commenced doing an assessment around Oakey. This assessment included checking fuel and food supplies in town as well as assessing houses and residents affected by the flood. We recorded the houses we checked on maps provided by the Council then entered the checked residences on a data base. Whilst attending to the house visits on the afternoon of 12th January, 2011 we came across personnel from the Oakey Auxiliary Fire Brigade who were doing the same thing. As a result we divided up the affected areas and pooled information gleaned together. Later on I co-ordinated the clean up of effected houses, liaising with the Auxiliary Fire Brigade who were coordinating Rural Fire Brigades to wash out flooded houses. I also utilised corporate and other volunteers. The TRC conducted footpath clean-ups of debris in the Oakey area.

8. I also arranged with the Oakey branches of St Vincent's De Paul, Lifeline and Aussie Helpers to manage the donated items for the community. As part of this they utilised the Oakey Showgrounds for a couple of weeks to facilitate the storing and distribution of donated items.

9. With respect to keeping the community informed of what was occurring we commenced an information booth at the local shopping centre. This booth was unmanned but it did provide brochures informing the

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community of services available including Queensland Health, Department of Communities, Centrelink, Building Services Authority and Premiers Relief Fund information that was helpful to them in this situation. This information was also posted on a community website www.oakey.qld.au.

10. During my liaison with the effected community I became aware of a couple of concerns that were circulating around the community. One common story was the lack of warning about the flood event. The flood waters rose quickly and people were not expecting it to get so high, or to flood the areas it did. There were various rumours about Cooby Dam, apparently distributed on social media sites (e.g. facebook) and word of mouth.

11. I have forwarded a submission to the Flood Commission of Inquiry outlining a number of issues I have concerns with regarding the flooding in Oakey. This submission is attached to my statement.

12. Basically my concerns can be summarised under the following headings:

- a. There was inadequate warning of potential flooding to Oakey residents.
- b. Accurate, reliable and timely information on the status and impact of Cooby Dam overflows was not available.
- c. The initial emergency response was not co-ordinated.
- d. There has been little analysis after this flood event in Oakey to learn the lessons of the flood.
- e. It would appear that no person or organisation was observing the effects or the bigger picture of creek rises, rainfall and the potential impact of Cooby Dam overflows on Oakey.

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13. The Oakey Creek meanders through Oakey and is normally quite benign. Occasionally it will rise in response to upstream and local rainfall, the worst result being the Lorrimer Street causeway being flooded, forcing drivers to detour through the town to gain access to the western side of town.

14. There is a depth gauge located on the corner of Bridge and Kent Streets between the road and railway bridges. I am not aware if this is monitored and records kept.

15. Cooby Dam is on a tributary of the Oakey Creek. It had been at very low levels for most of 2010 and before. It filled to capacity and began overflowing over the weekend of 8 – 9 January, 2011.

16. Record rainfall in the Oakey district during December and January resulted in the Oakey Creek rising to significant levels a number of times. As far as I am aware there are no official records of the Oakey Creek levels in Oakey. The following are personal observations and anecdotes:

- a. 19 December, 2010 – widespread flooding in the District, roads cut.
- b. 27 December, 2010 – Oakey Creek over 5 metres at the Bridge Street gauge. Widespread flooding and road damage.
- c. 9 January, 2011 – heavy rainfall. Roads cut and creek flooded.
- d. 10 January, 2011 – Oakey Creek at Bridge Street gauge peaked at 5.45m at approximately 5.30am. It peaked at a similar level at 9.30pm the same day. The flash flooding in Toowoomba sends huge volumes of water into Gowrie Creek.
- e. 11 January, 2011 – Oakey Creek floods Oakey.

17. In my opinion once the flooding event occurred in Oakey the Auxiliary Fire brigade performed to a very high level as did the emergency services and the TRC.

I also consider the Department of Communities and other state government departments did an excellent job in supporting the community, and collaborating with other agencies.

The Oakey SES displayed a lack of leadership and in my opinion did not contribute as much as they could have. This could be attributed to the early lack of coordination between the emergency services, and a lack of accurate information. I believe a number of the key SES staff were on leave at the time of this event.




D.M.TOTENHOFER

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 13/4/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 1-6 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 19th day of April 2011

Witness Signature 

Signature of officer 