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| Name of Witness | Brent HALL |
| Date of Birth | 5 th October 1973 |
| Address and contact details | [REDACTED] |
| Occupation | Helicopter Pilot |
| Officer taking statement | Det/Sgt Anthony VLISMAS |
| Date taken | 5/4/2011 |

Brent HALL states:-

1. I am a married man [REDACTED] years of age and I reside with my family. I obtained a fixed winged pilots license at about the age of 17 years in Queensland with the Air Training Corp. (Cadets).
2. I joined the Australian Army at the age of 20 years. I spent almost 10 years gaining helicopter flying experience in the military, operationally on Black Hawks and then as a Qualified Flying Instructor working from the Oakey base. My military experience was later recognised by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).
3. For the past 8 years I have been flying as part of the Emergency Services Helicopter network. I spent 2 years at the Rockhampton base and the last 6 years with the Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service, working at the Maroochydore and Bundaberg bases. I am currently the Check and Training Captain for our company and based at Maroochydore.
4. Our Maroochydore based organisation operates two single pilot IFR twin engine, winch equipped BK117 helicopters, one out of the Maroochydore Base and one at the Bundaberg Base. The twin engine aircraft are crewed 24/7 with a pilot, a winch capable crewman and a winch capable Paramedic. (Refer to attached photos)
5. A third smaller single engine Bell 206L, also winch equipped, is based at the Maroochydore Base and is used when one of the larger machines is offline for maintenance.

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400 George Street Brisbane
GPO Box 1738 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone 1300 309 634
Facsimile +61 7 3405 9750
www.floodcommission.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

6. We have a contract with the State Government to provide helicopter support to the Emergency Services. There are specific tasking guidelines but generally the Queensland Emergency Medical Services (QEMS) Coordination Centre (QCC) controls all of the helicopter and Fixed wing (RFDS) assets. The coordinator in the QCC that makes the decision to use any of the Rotary or Fixed Wing assets is a Doctor. CareFlight Queensland has a contract to supply the Doctors that are used in the QCC. These Doctors are generally hired on a casual basis and conduct work at other health facilities and hospitals in Brisbane. *(Refer to the attached copies of Deed of Agreement and Queensland Emergency Helicopter Network Tasking Guidelines)*

7. I made a submission to the Queensland Flood Inquiry web site to raise the need for a review of tasking and co-ordination practices and policies of the Emergency Services Helicopter network. As I was flying one of the helicopters during the Flood crisis period, I would like to relate some factual information of our tasking on the day of the Lockyer Valley situation and the following day, in an effort to highlight possible inefficiencies and prompt such a review.

Monday 10th January

8. On the afternoon of Monday 10th January 2011, at 1455 hours, our Maroochydore based twin engine helicopter was tasked by the QCC to extract a father and four children from a camping ground at Amamoor, south of Gympie. Other people were remaining at the camping ground, as there was no threat to rising flood water. The father and children were not injured and no intervention was required by our Paramedic, Brett Rogers. The helicopter was then tasked at 1626 hours to conduct a hospital transfer of two patients from Gympie Hospital to Nambour Hospital. Our Paramedic, Brett Rogers, said that both patients were stable and no intervention was required.

9. At no time on Monday did the QCC request our twin engine aircraft to assist in the Lockyer Valley or at other crisis situations. The QCC did not ask if we could provide our back up helicopter to assist and this aircraft did not get airborne on the Monday. Our back up helicopter, the Bell 206L is also fitted with a winch,

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housed at the Maroochydore Base and was available. A crew could have been found to man that helicopter from staff at the Maroochydore base or from crew that would have been prepared to come in to respond to a crisis.

10. Flight time from Maroochydore to the Lockyer Valley is approx 30-40mins for the twin engine helicopter and approx 40-50mins for the Bell 206L.
11. External to our organisation, a non rescue helicopter based at the Maroochydore Airport, that wasn't equipped with a winch, was tasked by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service at approx 1630hours, to move fire officers around the Lockyer Valley. This example demonstrate that extra helicopter resources were needed by Emergency Services, however the communication between the services may not have been effective in utilising assets and prioritising tasks across the all the Emergency Services.
12. Near last light, after the Gympie to Nambour transfer, one of our two twin engine helicopters was placed unserviceable, with a minor fault. The fault would not have inhibited the ability of the aircraft to conduct rescue operations, had the fault developed during such a mission.

Tuesday 11th January

13. The Maroochydore based twin engine helicopter was serviceable at approx 0800hours. In addition to the Bundaberg based twin engine helicopter, the QCC were also informed that we had an extra crew and were now manning the Bell 206L (the manning of this helicopter was conducted without request from the QCC, but from a perceived need by the organisation).
14. Although the QCC said they had a huge list of tasks the operator said they were still trying to prioritise the tasks and that he couldn't get hold of the Coordinator (Doctor), so he could make a decision.
15. None of the three aircraft were tasked until 1015hours, over two hours after the QCC were informed that all three of our organisation's aircraft were available

and winch equipped. The Maroochydhore twin engine helicopter was tasked and subsequently preceded to the Kilcoy area to pick up a lady in labour. The Paramedic, Brett Rogers, said this was a necessary task from his medical point of view.

16. Below are the comments extracted from an e-mail, from the pilot, Wayne Thompson, of our twin engine helicopter on Tues 11th January 2011;

17. *After finally completing the tasking we received at 1015 to the Kilcoy area, we went to Redcliffe Airport for a refuel at Heliwork. Enroute to Redcliffe at approx 1415 we heard reports on the QPS radio channel that several people in the Caboolture area were trapped by rising flood water, we contacted the QPS ourselves and asked was there anything we could do to help given we were in the area? The QPS said that they needed our help and gave us details of where the people were stranded, we contacted QCC and asked to be released to undertake some flood relief work for the QPS. Initially they said no that they wanted us to go to Proston, South Burnett to retrieve a male patient with chest pain. We said are you sure that's what you want us to do given what was happening in Caboolture, QCC replied that they wanted us to go to Proston. At this time I said I would call them back, once I had hung up, the crew discussed the phone call and situation and decided to call back QCC and again try to get releases given the seriousness of what was happening down the road. The call was made and eventually they released us to go to Caboolture but only after what was a heated discussion. On arrival in the Caboolture area we ended up winching one home owner off her roof and found several other people stranded who did not want us to lift them out. (Refer to attached copy of the e-mail)*

18. At no time during the day were we asked by either QCC, QPS or the Flood Co-Ordination people to assist in what was going on in other areas in Brisbane, Ipswich, Gatton, Toowoomba etc where it certainly appears that we may have been better placed to offer assistance? Given we had a fully serviceable winch equipped BK117 helicopter available from 0800 - last light on the

11/01/11 it was not well utilized asset in my opinion, especially in light of the now very public statements from EMQ about the size of the problem.

19. I was flying the Bell 206L on Tues 11th March and was also tasked at 1015hours. Our task was to a non-urgent chest pain at Imbil. In the middle of the day we were told that there were no more tasks and that we could return to the Maroochydore Base. Later in the day we were tasked to Esk to transfer three patients to Brisbane. We could only take two patients and while at the Esk hospital the Westpac Lifesaver helicopter briefly landed. I asked the Westpac Lifesaver EC135 helicopter via phone if he could transport our third patient. He told me that he had to return to Ipswich as he had more priority tasks and was required to conduct some more winching operations.
20. The QCC appeared to be overwhelmed during the afternoon and the twin engine aircraft was unable make contact on the phone. Without any further guidance from the QCC our Maroochydore twin engine crew finished the Tuesday afternoon at Caboolture in support of the Queensland Police, assisting with reconnaissance of the damage in that area.

In summary I would like to say:-

21. During the flood crisis there were reports on the news and through other Emergency Services that there were not enough helicopter resources to save lives. I also know of a commercial operator who was using his helicopter to hover low and take people off the roof of houses, due to the unavailability of winch equipped helicopters. It has been frustrating and deeply disturbing for our professional crews to hear these comments and know that we may have assisted and saved more lives.
22. Unfortunately the issues associated with tasking the Emergency Helicopter Network during the flood crisis were not unexpected. There is evidence to support that the tasking processes during normal operations, should be reviewed. For example, early January 2011, a man was washed out of the Boyne River near Gladstone toward the end of the day. Our Bundaberg

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helicopter was phoned by the Queensland Police to assist with the search. Enroute to the search area, the QCC called off our helicopter and re-tasked it to conduct a non-urgent medical transfer. The man that had been washed out to sea was found dead the next day, washed up on the beach. His best chance of survival was to be found before last light. The QCC did not seem to comprehend the life saving possibilities of commencing a search immediately, and prior to dark.

23. I believe another indicator of an inefficient system is the lack of auditing. Audits are regularly conducted to review the medical intervention but it appears there is limited auditing or review of the entire operational response. No audit or review has been conducted of the response or use of the Emergency Services Helicopter network during the flood crisis.
24. I hope that this submission will assist any investigation into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Emergency Services Helicopter network.

Suggested Recommendations

1. An independent review of how Emergency Helicopters are tasked during normal operations, to ensure efficient and effective support to all of the Emergency Services.
2. A review of how and when to centralise the tasking of Emergency Services assets, in particular the major assets such as helicopters, during disaster or large crisis situations.


B HALL

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