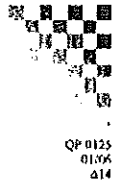




QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: One Date: 12/04/2011

Statement of

Name of witness: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

Police officer taking statement

Name: _____

Rank: SERGEANT Reg. no.: 9492

Region/Command/Division: SOUTHERN Station: MILES

Statement:

Benjamin WILTSHIRE states:

1. I am a Sergeant of Police and I am currently the Officer in Charge of the Miles Police Station.
2. I have held this position since May 2010.
3. The Miles Police division includes the township of Condamine and the surrounding area.
4. In December 2010 I met regularly with a number of people in preparation for flood events in the Miles and surrounding districts. These included the manager of Miles Service Centre, Western Downs Regional Council, Helen THOMAS; Officer in Charge, Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority in Miles, Ray DUNCOMBE; Officer in Charge Queensland Ambulance Service in Miles, Tony STOUT; Miles SES controller Shirley WALSH; and Condamine SES controller Bill POWER.
5. During this month I made regular inquiries with the local Caltex service station to ensure continuous fuel supply for police in Miles if isolated.
6. I reviewed the business continuity plan for the Miles Police station and ensured that policing services would retain as high a level of capability as possible in the event of flood isolation or inundation.
7. From the 24th December 2010 I commenced sending twice daily reports to the District Officer at Roma reporting on rainfall events including any associated or anticipated issues.

[Redacted signature]


(Witness's signature)

(Justice of the Peace (Qual.)/
Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN

8. On the 27th December 2010 Miles was isolated in all directions by floodwater.
9. On the 28th December 2010, 29th December 2010 and 30th December 2010 I attended meetings of the local emergency coordination committee in Miles.
10. During these meetings a variety of arrangements were made including food and medical resupply in Miles, Condamine and surrounding rural areas.
11. On the 29th December 2010 I received information that flood levels of the Condamine river were expected to reach record levels and that it was expected that 6 houses in Condamine would be inundated.
12. Alternate local accommodation was to be made for the evacuation of those houses.
13. At about 11:00am on 30th December 2010 I attended a local emergency coordination committee meeting in Miles.
14. At 11:04am I received a telephone call from Bill Power at Condamine.
15. Bill told me that the water level in Condamine was currently 14.25m and rising. He told me that the water was knee deep in the hotel.
16. I spoke with Bill about expected numbers of inundations at various river heights while understanding that this was only his estimate given that the current height was a record level.
17. Bill estimated that once it reached 14.5m half the town would be inundated and at 15m the entire town will be inundated.
18. Bill then suggested that we would need to look at evacuating the entire town of Condamine. He estimated there would be over 100 people to be evacuated and I asked him to obtain the most accurate figure he could.
19. I then told Bill that I would attempt to get to Condamine to assess the situation and assist with any evacuations if required.
20. I found that a helicopter from MI helicopters at Roma had landed at Miles to refuel and I approached the pilot about transport to Condamine. I spoke with the company manager Peter Clatworthy who approved travel to Condamine without charge.
21. At 12:09pm I left for Condamine by helicopter and arrived shortly before 1:00pm.
22. On arrival at Condamine I met with Condamine SES controller Bill Power and deputy controller Glen Taylor.



(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN

23. I had spoken with Bill many times in the past and I was aware that he has an extensive knowledge and experience in disaster and incident management in the Condamine area.
24. At this time Bill told me that his best estimate of the number of people in the town was 135.
25. I drove around Condamine with Bill and Glen and inspected flood levels around the town.
26. Following that tour I spoke with the Dalby District Disaster coordinator, Acting Inspector Simon CHASE with my observations.
27. Following that inspection I attended the outside of the Condamine Hotel where I addressed a large number of local residents.
28. At that meeting I informed the residents of my role in assessing the situation and the possibility of evacuation.
29. At that time I was not aware of any decision having been made for a mandatory evacuation.
30. During this meeting I advised those present that should any further information become available we would sound the siren at the SES shed for a meeting outside that shed.
31. I asked those who wanted to participate in any voluntary evacuation to approach me after the meeting.
32. After the meeting I took the names of 28 persons who wished to be evacuated immediately should the option become available.
33. Shortly after this I again telephoned Inspector CHASE who then informed me that he was declaring the evacuation of Condamine to be mandatory and that all persons in Condamine would be evacuated by Blackhawk helicopter that afternoon.
34. I was instructed to ensure that all persons in Condamine were prepared to evacuate.
35. I was told that this evacuation would commence at 4:00pm.
36. Police were to remain in the township to provide security.
37. I sought and was given approval for Bill POWER to remain in Condamine to assist police.



(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN

38. I arranged for the siren on the SES shed to be sounded and some time after that I again addressed a large number of people to inform them that the evacuation was now mandatory and that they should return to their homes and pack bags for several nights away.
39. I continued to talk to a large number of the residents over the following period of time, many of whom did not want to leave the town.
40. During this time I was initially told that pets that could be carried could be taken on the helicopters, then later informed that no animals would be taken.
41. Many people started arriving at the SES shed prior to 4:00pm and people continued to arrive throughout the afternoon.
42. I was told of delays to the helicopters several times and I recall that the first helicopter arrived at around 5:45pm.
43. Local resident and councillor Andrew SMITH helped with taking names of those boarding the helicopters.
44. Also arriving on the helicopters were Sergeant Derek BRADY and Senior Constable Dan O'HARA. Senior Constable Scott POGAN arrived on a later helicopter.
45. I assigned Dan to continue a list of people who boarded the helicopters.
46. Derek and Scott assisted me in speaking with residents and advising people on the evacuation.
47. The pilots of the helicopters agreed to take small pets that could be carried by the owners and commenced the aerial evacuation.
48. During this time I had been talking with Glen TAYLOR who was the operator of the Condamine SES flood boat. Glen was conducting flood boat evacuations of residents over the river for those who had organised for alternate accommodation on rural properties outside the Condamine township.
49. Glen and I agreed that flood boat evacuations were to cease at dark due to safety issues and those remaining after dark would be evacuated by helicopter.
50. Shortly before dark I was approached by a small group of young men who offered to return by flood boat to provide assistance in caring for the many animals left behind


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN

in the township. I agreed to this request and arranged with Glen to return the following morning with that group.

51. Glen then evacuated that group and himself.
52. I continued to assist residents with the evacuation and shortly after 11:00pm the last group of residents left by helicopter.
53. We then conducted numerous patrols of the township and returned to school accommodation for the night.
54. On the following day, 31st December 2010, we monitored water levels on a regular basis and found that it rose quickly and past expected heights.
55. We commenced feeding and rescuing animals in the township, moving them to higher land and providing those on high ground with food and water.
56. This was organised and conducted with the assistance of the small group of residents who had returned by flood boat.
57. During the day we also conducted a number of inquiries on behalf of Inspector CHASE.
58. During that day we conducted a number of checks and evacuations of surrounding residents on properties near the river. I estimate that a further 40 persons were evacuated by flood boat during that day to alternate accommodation away from flood waters.
59. At the end of the day, Glen again evacuated everyone from the town by flood boat.
60. On the morning of the 1st January 2011 the water had risen further and again with the assistance of the group of Condamine residents we fed and rescued animals in the township. We also rescued property where possible and as a second priority to animals.
61. We conducted several more evacuations by flood boat on that morning of outlying residents near the Condamine river.
62. During that morning, Senior Constable Justin BOWER and Constable Dan O'BRIEN flew into Condamine by helicopter and Sergeant Derek BRADY and Senior Constable Dan O'HARA flew out.



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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN**

63. Later on that day Senior Constable POGAN and I also flew out of Condamine by helicopter and returned to Miles Station.
64. I worked the following days in Miles and continued to meet regularly with the local emergency coordination committee.
65. I then commenced a period of leave from 5th January 2011 until the 16th January 2011.
66. On my return from leave I continued in participating in the coordination of the return of residents to Condamine. The management of the reinstatement of essential services had been mostly arranged by the local emergency management committee by the time of my return.
67. I organised for Miles police to maintain a full time presence in Condamine until the 22nd January 2011.
68. On the 19th January 2011 I attended the Miles airport and then travelled to the Condamine river where I was taken into the town by flood boat.
69. I then assisted in the repatriation of the residents to Condamine. I travelled with Senior Constable BOWER and Bill POWER by helicopter along the river checking on isolated residences. No residents were found in need of assistance.
70. Later that day I returned to Miles.
71. I arranged for a continued increased presence and patrols of Condamine during the recovery phase.
72. During the evacuation of Condamine and subsequent policing of the township there was some difficulty in establishing and maintaining communication. This was largely due to the power loss in the township and subsequent failure of the mobile telephone tower in Condamine. This was overcome through the use of satellite telephones made available on the second day of the evacuation.
73. During the initial phases of the evacuation I was the only officer present to conduct the evacuation until the arrival of army evacuation helicopters. Additionally there was a very limited availability of helicopters and an inability to directly task helicopters. There was exclusive reliance on private and military helicopters and no communication between those at the scene of the disaster and the operators of the


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILTSHIRE, BENJAMIN


helicopters. The incidence of "hitchhiking" a lift with a helicopter to assess the flood was fortunate and due to the generosity of Peter Clatworthy. Without that transport the assessment could not have accurately been made and evacuation would have been delayed and made more difficult and dangerous.

- 74. During the evacuation a second helicopter pilot offered further services to check on outlying residents isolated by floodwater and without communication. This was only possible due to their generosity and subject to extra fuel being available following their tasked flights.
- 75. In my assessment, the only reliable method of travel, resupply or evacuation of remote persons during a flood event would be by a police helicopter.
- 76. Relief staff and resourcing apart from transport was delivered in an efficient manner by the Dalby Disaster Management Group.
- 77. In my opinion the Dalby Disaster Management Group was run well and I would not recommend any changes.



Benjamin WILTSHIRE

Justices Act Acknowledgement

Justices Act 1886	
I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(6C)(c) of the Justices Act 1886 that:	
(1)	This written statement by me dated 12 th April 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 8 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 Miles this 12th day of April 2011.	