

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Prepared by: Legal Services Unit,
Dept of Community Safety

Date: 9 May 2011

Name of Witness: John Frederick William Gresty AFSM

Address of Witness: [REDACTED]

Occupation: Fire Officer

Position: Director - Regional Operations, South Eastern Region

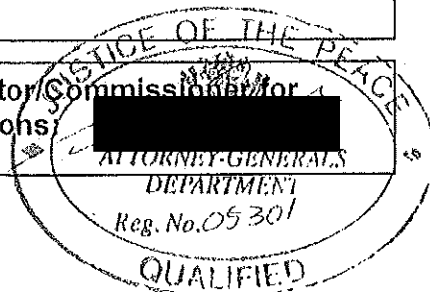
I, John Frederick William Gresty, Director - Regional Operations, South Eastern Region, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service ("QFRS"), Department of Community Safety state:

1. I commenced duty on Friday, 13 January 1978 with Melbourne metropolitan fire brigade and gained a position with the QFRS on 28 September 1992.
2. I have held many management positions within QFRS, including: Manager, Training and Emergency Management; Brisbane Senior Operations Coordinator; Manager, Air Operations Unit; and Manager, Strategic Development, South Eastern Region.
3. I was appointed as Director - Regional Operations, South Eastern Region on 16 November 2009. I hold the rank of Chief Superintendent.
4. I hold a Diploma in Frontline Management, a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, and I am qualified in the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management Systems.
5. My substantive position is Director - Regional Operations ("DRO"), South Eastern Region.
6. From 20 December 2010 to 10 January 2011, I was acting in the role of Assistant Commissioner South Eastern Region, as Assistant Commissioner Peter Beauchamp was on annual leave.

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Declarations [REDACTED]



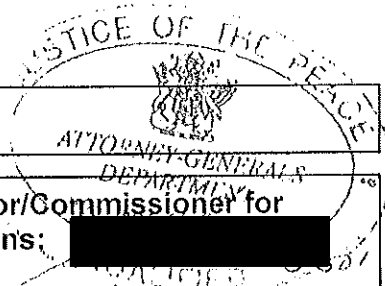
Flood Events – January 2011

7. The South-Eastern Region actively prepared for the predicted wet season and those activities accord with the State of Queensland's submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, part 3, pages 20-21.
8. In addition, the South-Eastern Region undertook several specific activities to prepare for the predicted wet-season and these included:
 - i) The updating of Regional Swift Water Rescue Plans by the Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator;
 - ii) The provision of Swift Water Awareness Training conducted by on-shift swift water rescue technicians for both permanent and auxiliary staff.
9. Operational activity up until 10 January 2011 was normal throughout the region, with the exception of the requirement for us to provide operational staff for deployment to other regions who were suffering wide spread flooding. From my recollection, such deployments to effected areas commenced from mid to late December 2010 and continued through to 10 January 2011. There had been rain across the region, which caused localised flooding and the need for some swift water rescues and water assists. This included a swift water rescue of one of our own rural fire brigade crews at Grantham on the evening of January 9.
10. On the morning of January 10, I arrived at the regional office where the Regional Operations Coordination Centre (ROCC) is situated and I proceeded to evaluate the current situation in consultation with the Duty Manager Operations (DMO), the Acting Chief Superintendent / DRO and the Regional Manager, Rural Operations (RMRO). I directed that all three (3) specialist technical rescue appliances in the region be manned with qualified Level 2 Swift Water Technicians. Additional swift water rescue technicians were to be recalled for duty, and additional emergency response vehicles as nominated in the South Eastern Region swift water rescue operational plan be brought up for duty utilising the pre-positioned Swift Water rescue caches.
11. Subsequent to this discussion, I received a phone call from Assistant Commissioner Tom Dawson from South Western Region. Tom advised me that due to the weather conditions, and the condition of the Warrego highway at the Toowoomba range, that we could not rely on support from Toowoomba as would be the normal operational practice. We determined that South Eastern Region

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would forward deploy a swift water rescue crew to Gatton Fire station for the day. I provided that direction to the Duty Manager Operations for implementation.

12. The Beenleigh located rescue appliance (645K) was moved up to Ipswich and the second Robina appliance (640L) was moved up to Beenleigh. This provided the best overall coverage for the region at that time.

13. Appliances were responded as per nominated operational protocols for incident types as they presented.

14. The ROCC at regional headquarters moved from standby to activated status at approximately 1115 hours, and the State Operations Coordination Centre was notified of the change of status.

15. At 1331 hours the first call for assistance was received from the Murphy's Creek area. This was the commencement of the disaster event in South Eastern Region. The first call was for a water Rescue at Murphy's Creek and Thomas Road at Upper Lockyer Valley. Records indicate that a number of appliances (including rescue appliance) responded and those same appliances continued responding in the general operational area including Murphy's Creek, Helidon, Withcott and Grantham for the remainder of the afternoon into the evening.

16. The Duty Manager Operations requested assistance from Brisbane Duty Manager Operations for additional two (2) swift water technical rescue appliances and these were supplied. One appliance was en-route from Cannon Hill to Toowoomba but was unable to traverse the Toowoomba Range and was utilised in the Helidon area for rescues and the second appliance was sent from Roma Street in Brisbane.

17. The South Eastern Region Fire Communications Manager (based at Southport) determined that additional staff would be required in the communications centre and took steps to recall staff. One additional staff member was available and arrived at the centre by approximately 1515 hours. In addition, the Communications Center Manager, undertook operational duties within the Communications Centre to provide assistance to the staff already rostered on.

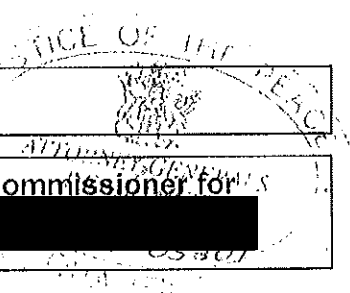
18. Additional swift water capability was brought on line at Ipswich and deployed to the Gatton area. This included two appliances with (with Swift Water Rescue Technician) being deployed in the morning and an additional vehicle with two swift water rescues technicians in the afternoon. This was in addition to the two appliances detailed in paragraph 15 of this statement making a total of five additional crews in the Western Command (Gatton Area).

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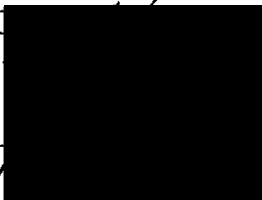

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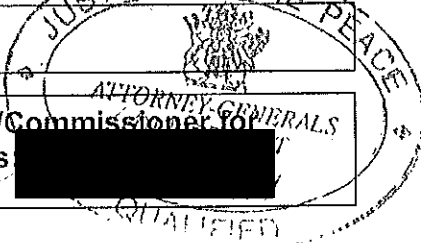
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19. Inspector David Caughley is the local Area Commander based at Gatton. I was advised that he had gone forward to the Helidon area due to the deteriorating situation. I contacted Inspector Caughley by mobile phone and had a brief discussion regarding the situation. He advised that all was okay but was experiencing particularly difficult circumstances, including heavy rain, rising flood waters, difficulties in responding to responding to some jobs due to road closures. It became obvious that he would be engaged for a considerable amount of time and could utilise additional assistance in the field. Two staff based at the Ipswich area office were dispatched through the RMRO for this purpose.
20. During the day I had been communicating with Assistant Commissioner Beauchamp by mobile phone. At approximately 1530 hours, Assistant Commissioner Beauchamp and I agreed that it would be useful for him to return from leave and attend the ROCC, and I would go forward with an Incident Management Team (IMT) and locate at the Gatton Fire station. The Incident Management Team would be lead by Inspector Brian Humphreys, with my primary function to engage with the Lockyer Valley Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), and secondly to provide support to the team who were responding to establish the ICC. David Caughley usually fulfilled that role, but he was engaged as a forward commander.
21. I departed almost immediately, with the IMT loading the Regional Incident Management Team operational equipment cache prior to departing.
22. The Warrego highway was closed at the Gatton turn-off, and traffic was totally stopped. I had significant difficulty in getting through the traffic to the Gatton roundabout. I arrived around 1730 hours and the IMT arrived at around 1800 hours.
23. On arrival at Gatton, I went straight to the Lockyer Valley Regional Council building and took up with Rural Fire Officer Clinton Neumann who had arrived only shortly before me.
24. The LDCC was operating from the council offices at that time (they later moved to the council chambers). I took up with the Seargent in charge of the Gatton Police Station (who was an acting-Sergeant named Bernie and while I am not certain of this surname, I recall that it was Wilkes or something similar) and Gerry Franzmann (the Local Disaster Co-Coordinator), and advised that QFRS would be setting up an ICC at Gatton fire station to manage and coordinate QFRS appliances. I advised that all emergency rescue calls received by the LDCC should be passed to QFRS liaison (Clinton Neumann) for processing and response.

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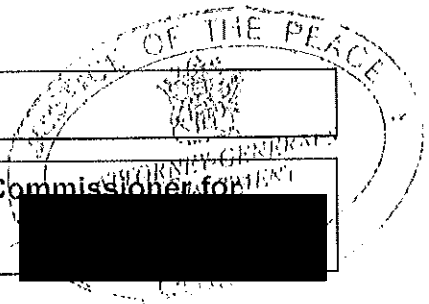


25. I advised Acting-Seargent Wilkes that he needed to address the traffic issue on the highway, and turn the traffic around and send it back to Brisbane, so emergency vehicles could get through.
26. I left the centre to go to QFRS ICC. On entering the street, I notice Inspector Brian Humphreys turning the corner and gestured to him that I needed to speak to him. I advised him to go to the station and set up, and that he was to take up the role of Incident Controller. Further, his primary task was to find the location and activities of all QFRS appliances and crews. I advised Brian that tasking from the LDMG would come though to him via our Liaison Officer Clinton Neumann.
27. I also advised Brian that communications from the Liaison Officer to ICC would be by mobile phone (this was changed to UHF CH 1 as the ICC became more established), station radio system was monitoring FireComm on UHF 78, and to utilise VHF 35 standalone repeater at Mount Perseverance as the command channel to the field, as per the Gatton communications plan.
28. I returned to the LDMG, and spent the next few hours either at the LDMG or at the ICC.
29. In the area of operations relevant to the Gatton ICC, a significant number of calls were received by QFRS for water rescues until approx 1900 hours — at which time the volume dropped off until approximately 0600 hours the next day, Tuesday, 11 January 2011.
30. The 3 main means of receiving tasking were: 000 emergency calls directly to FireComm; radio communications from QFRS field units back to ICC; and direct requests from the LDCC.
31. Our primary method of data recording and capturing was based on a computer generated log, all which was in one central location in the ICC. Anything that occurred within the operation cell (within the ICC, for instance radio communications in and out, were initially captured by hand written document (refer to standard forms in Guide 2). It was then being entered into a computer, into a running electronic incident log. That log captured both the LDCC and direct communication from appliances to the ICC. All FireComm tasking is recorded automatically within the ESCAD system. If a task came to the ICC, irrespective of the source it came from, it would recorded and actioned.
32. Prior to 0300 hours on Tuesday, 11 January some appliances attempted to return to their home stations. I returned to the ICC and was advised that they could not get through the flooded highway, and were waiting at the BP on the highway. I drove to the BP but no QFRS resources were there. I drove east

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along the highway only to be stopped at water over the road, at which time I turned around and headed back to Gatton.

33. I decided to continue along the Gatton by-pass to check Helidon, Withcott and Grantham. This would have been at approx 0300 hours. I expected that I may not have been able to get to Withcott, and was surprised that I was able to drive there with caution.
34. I had been advised earlier that the Toowoomba range was closed, so I continued to make my way up the range to make an assessment of whether we could move resources from, or to, Toowoomba. I was able to get to the top of the range, so I continued to the South West Region ROCC at Anzac Avenue, Toowoomba.
35. I had a discussion with Assistant Commissioner Tom Dawson, generally reviewing the activities of the day before. With the arrival of daylight I then departed to return to Gatton via Withcott, Helidon and Grantham.
36. With some difficulty, due to heavy rain, I negotiated the range and arrived in Withcott. There were very few people around at Withcott, and noting the damage to structures, I continued to Helidon.
37. I had no difficulty getting into Helidon and went straight to the fire station which was open. I took up with the firefighter who was there (I do not recall his name) and he advised that the station was okay and all staff were okay. I asked about Captain Adrian Wedratt, and was advised that he had gone off to get some sleep. I said I would not bother him and left for Grantham.
38. Due to road blockages, caused by water, I was not able to get to Grantham from either direction.
39. I then returned to the Gatton ICC for a briefing. By that stage, it was after 0700 hours on Tuesday morning. Brian Humphreys advised that he had been to the LDMG earlier that morning and was advised by a police sergeant (I do not know who) that the Police did not want any recovery operations to commence in Murphy's Creek and Grantham at this time, due to Police investigations across the whole area.
40. I spent Tuesday morning predominantly at the LDCC, interspersed with visiting the ICC for updates.
41. Inspector Humphreys and his incident management team were replaced by acting Inspector Aaeron Patterson, who as I recall arrived on Tuesday 11 January late morning or early afternoon. He also bought a relief incident management team with him.

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42. Late Tuesday morning / early Tuesday afternoon, accommodation was sourced and I stood down for a number of hours to sleep, as I had been on duty since 0730 hours the day before.
43. The South Eastern Region Workplace Health and Safety Officer arrived in Gatton during the course of Tuesday, for the purposes of ensuring compliance with workplace health and safety requirements, including fatigue management.
44. On Wednesday morning, a QFRS Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Liaison Officer, Station Officer Larry Cullen, arrived to make arrangements for the NSW USAR team who were planned to arrive later that evening. I tasked Station Officer Cullen to operate from the LDCC, where he was able to perform a dual role as the LDCC and USAR Liaison Officer.
45. The NSW USAR team arrived at approximately 2400 hours on Wednesday, with the QFRS Chaplain whose role was to provide comfort and support to QFRS staff and volunteers, as well as community members.
46. The Gatton ICC was stood down after about 2 weeks – Monday (10th) afternoon and Tuesday (11th) were primarily response activities, and the remaining time would have been primarily for providing support for recovery activities.

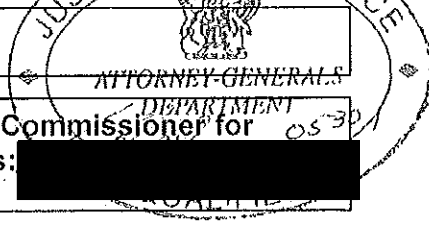
Incident Control Generally

Incident Control Centres

47. An Incident Control Centre (ICC) is a physical location that is utilised by QFRS to manage significant events or multiple events that might be occurring. The incident management structure is scalable. When an incident first occurs, the officer in charge of the first attending appliance becomes the incident controller. As the incident escalates, there may be a necessity to bring in higher levels of command and control to be able to manage the scope of the incident. With the necessity for these levels of command and control, a more substantial base of operations is required. This higher level base of operations is referred to as an ICC.
48. The incident controller may determine, due to size or complexity, that the incident can no longer be effectively managed at the incident location and request that an ICC be established. South Eastern Region has the capability to establish an ICC wherever necessary.
49. At any stage, an ICC can be established on the basis of incoming intelligence regarding a given situation or situations.

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50. In the flood events, the Gatton ICC wasn't requested from the field, it was a decision made at the Regional Operations Coordination Centre (ROCC) by me with the support of the acting Regional Director Operations, Regional Manager, Rural Operations and Duty Manager, Operations.

51. Direction in the establishment of an ICC is provided by QFRS Operational Guide 3 - Controls and Coordination Centre. South Eastern Region has regional incident management team caches of equipment which are transported to the location that we intend to use as an ICC, to supplement whatever equipment is already in situ. Gatton Fire Station was chosen as an ICC because of its geographical location, being central to the area of operations. Gatton township provided the potential for the greatest amount of logistical support in the area.

52. Additionally, the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) was operating from the Lockyer Valley Regional Council building, approximately 150 metres from the Gatton Fire Station. Further enhancing this location was the proximity of the QFRS Gatton Area Office which was located diagonally opposite in the same street. The area office was utilised for teleconferences to the ROCC. Both the Gatton Area Office and Gatton Fire Station have departmental I.T. network infrastructure and multiple phone lines available. I.T. infrastructure is critical to the efficient operation of an ICC.

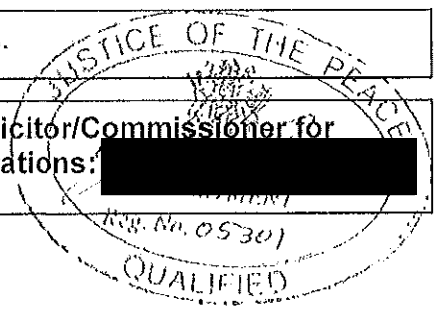
53. For an ICC to be established and fully operational, we would estimate approximately 4 hours from time of arrival of the incident management team at the ICC location.

Incident Controller

54. The incident controller is responsible for managing the entire incident. At smaller incidents, the incident controller may assume all functions of the incident management system. At larger incidents, delegation of functions occurs and the incident controller will manage the incident management team. Functions under the incident management team are: planning - responsible for collecting, evaluating and distributing information on the current and forecast incident situations to ensure effective span of control; operations - responsible for implementing tactical activities for the resolution of a specific incident or event; and logistics - responsible for managing resources allocated and necessary activities to provide logistics support during an incident (refer to QFRS Operations Doctrine Incident Management System Incident Controller IMS 4.1).

55. Incident controllers are appointed to ICCs based on relevant experience equipping them to be able to command and control a significant incident.

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Function of Incident Control Centre

- 56. An ICC is a facility from which to manage a complex or extended incident. It should be capable of providing information technology, technical and communications support.
- 57. Within the structure there may be a deputy incident controller. There is always only one incident controller who is ultimately responsible. The operations officer, in the absence of the incident controller, or the deputy incident controller (if there is one) has the authority to make operational or tactical decisions and implement them.
- 58. Information regarding ICC staffing can be found in Guide 3 controls and coordination.

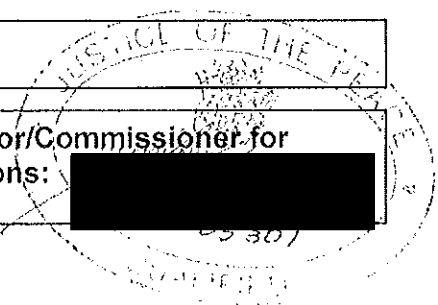
Activities of Incident Control Centre

- 59. In a disaster management situation, the QFRS is not the lead agency and the IMT has the responsibility for the management, coordination and control of only fire service assets. The central coordination function sits with the LDCC.
- 60. An ICC is stood down through a request from the incident controller, through the Director, Regional Operations, to the Assistant Commissioner. The ICC is stood down when the incident is completed or when the complexity or size of the incident no longer needs that level of command and control.

Responding across Regions

- 61. Two of the major regions in Southern Queensland are South Western Region and South Eastern Region, which share a regional administrative boundary. Irrespective of which appliances or resources are responding to an incident, there is a single controlling fire communications (FireComm) centre. The controlling fire communications centre is determined by the geographical location of the incident in relation to the regional boundary. For example if a south western appliance is responding to a south eastern geographic location, the south western responding appliance initially will make radio contact with south western fire communications centre at Toowoomba, and then change frequency establishing communications with south eastern region fire communications centre at Southport. The south western responding appliance remains on the south eastern region frequency until such time as they are released from the incident, at which time they re-establish communications with the south western region fire communications centre to advise that they are returning.

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Reflection on the events

- 62. There were no significant injuries to any of the QFRS staff, even in the recovery phase where large numbers of fire fighters were involved in potentially hazardous situations. The systems, processes and doctrine of the QFRS provided a sound methodology for dealing with large scale emergencies.

- 63. There were a large number of personnel and appliance activations, over the period of response and recovery, for this disaster. The management and co-ordination of that scale of incident does not just happen. It is a testament to how the incident management system actually works, and was applied, during that period of time.

- 64. I make this statement of my own free will, believing its contents to be true and correct.

Justices Act 1886

I acknowledge by virtue of Section 110A(6C)(c)(i)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:

- (1) This written statement by me dated 9 MAY 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 10 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and

- (2) I make it knowing that, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating anything that I know is false.

..... Signature

Signed at Beenleigh this 9th day of MAY 2011

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