

**STATEMENT OF WITNESS**

Date: 19 /10/2011

Name of Witness: Robert John Medlin

Address of Witness: [REDACTED] East Street Rockhampton

Occupation: Regional Occupational Health And Safety Officer – Central Region

Division: Queensland Ambulance Service  
Department of Community Safety

Telephone: (Work) [REDACTED] (Mobile) [REDACTED]

1. I, Robert John Medlin, former Regional Director, of Central Region Emergency Management Queensland, Department of Community Safety state:
2. I was appointed to the position of Regional Director Central Region EMQ in February 2009. I held that position until the 19 September 2011 when I took up a position with the Queensland Ambulance Service.
3. Prior to being appointed to the position of Regional Director EMQ, Central Region I had served with the Department of Community Safety, Queensland Ambulance for a period in excess of 20 years.
4. Positions held within QAS prior to commencement with EMQ were Area Director for Port Curtis/Callide Area, Area Director Capricorn Area and QAS Regional Communications Manager.
5. I had held a variety of managerial positions with QAS for approximately 10 years prior to my commencement with EMQ.
6. These management positions had seen me responsible for the management of the department's resources and finances in the delivery of service within the central region.
7. On leaving EMQ I have taken up the role of Regional Occupational Health and Safety Advisor with Central Region QAS.

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8. During my tenure with EMQ I was involved in the planning and logistics of many operations that occurred during that time including the preparation, response and recovery phases of the Central Queensland flooding event that occurred December/ January 2010/2011.
9. I attended a variety of training, scenario exercises and operations including Joint Emergency Services Training with allied services and Introduction to Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements.
10. I hold the qualifications of Graduate Certificate in Business Administration and Graduate Diploma in executive Leadership, Workplace health and Safety Officer –Services, Return to Work Rehabilitation Officer and Associate Diploma – Applied Science(Ambulance).
- 1. Their role and position within Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ), including information about their direct supervisor and the person to whom they report in a disaster.**
11. As stated my role prior to leaving EMQ was Regional Director Central Region.
12. Prior to the flooding event I was reporting to Acting Executive Director Warren Bridson. During the event there was a change of senior executive positions and reporting relationships on three occasions that led to me reporting to the following at various times:
- Acting Executive Director – Michael Shapland
  - Acting Executive Director – [REDACTED] – Queensland Fire And Rescue Deputy Commissioner
  - Acting Executive Director – Warren Bridson
13. I am of the understanding that this rotation at the Executive Director level was due to Mr Bridson suffering ill health firstly and then due to him being relocated prior to TC Yasi impacting the Northern Region. There was some confusion as to whom I was to report to initially as there was no advice forwarded from the state of these changes.
- 2. The SES unit with their region/including details (if known) of any paid SES members within their region.**

14. Central Region has 18 SES Units comprising the following:

Rockhampton	Gladstone	Emerald	Biloela	
Mackay	Moranbah	Whitsunday	Bowen	
Barcaldine	Winton	Longreach	Aramac	Jericho
Barcoo	Blackall	Tambo	Ilfacombe	Isiford

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15. I am not aware of general SES members receiving remuneration. I am aware that SES executive members receive funding from the state on an annual basis to the value of :

- Local Controller - \$403.65
- Deputy Local Controller - \$306.75
- Group Leader - \$306.75
- Volunteer Executive Committee Member - \$306.75

16. I am aware that within Central Region there are two Local Controllers who are employed on a permanent basis by Local Government and as such are full time paid employees of their respective council. Those Local Controllers are [REDACTED] – Rockhampton Regional Council and [REDACTED] Mackay Regional Council.

3. The adequacy of current SES volunteer numbers (including any issues with recruitment and retention of members), level of training and equipment and resources available to SES units within their area/region.

17. Rural and remote areas have continued to experience declining memberships over recent years. This can be attributed in some cases directly to the leadership in some specific areas, declining population bases, fly in fly out and drive in drive out workers in mining areas and aging populations. In relation to declining or stagnant member numbers a contributing factor in some areas was the current leadership at the group level. There appears to be reluctance by members in some communities to become involved due to the local politics of a group. In relation to the mining communities, a large segment of their work force are FIFO which results in employees not being available on their days off due to them returning to the place of residence in some cases many kilometers away.

18. I would describe the level of training provided to SES members as appropriate at the time. There is however always the perception by some members that there is a greater need for training that is not being met. In Central region we made a concerted effort to train SES members to the appropriate training level so as to improve their self sufficiency. This was done with the provision of Assessment and Workplace Training to a number of SES members that would enable them to deliver a variety of nationally accredited courses to SES members. Staffing and funding of EMQ did not allow the ability for EMQ trainers to deliver all training to all groups. Training by EMQ trainers was undertaken in a prioritised manner to ensure that those who were at greatest need obtained access to the appropriate training.

19. In prioritising SES Unit needs the Area Directors would meet with Local Controllers and discuss options and availabilities at the level. This was not a practice that I participated in. Training of SES and prioritisation was completed at the Area Director level.

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20. The level of equipment and resources to SES units, I believe was/is adequate. All units have the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns surrounding equipment and resources with the EMQ Area Director. Area Directors regularly liaised with Local Controllers and SES members and any issues were addressed as they were raised. Local Government to varying degrees also assisted with equipping and resourcing SES groups and units
- 4. The mechanisms for receiving requests for assistance and the process for, and their role in, managing requests for assistance, including the prioritisation and/or management of competing requests for assistance.**
21. The process for receiving requests for assistance was as per the state process. Calls were made to the 132500 telephone number, these calls were received by Smart Services Queensland call centre, requests were then entered into a Kit-referral and the Regional Duty Officer would provide the information to the SES Groups. These Kit referrals were basically request for assistance details that were emailed to the regional contact for actioning. On completion of the Request for assistance the SES Group Leader would phone the Duty Officer back and advise what was done and by how many members.
22. Prior to the flooding event Local Councils within the Central Region had purchased and during the flooding event had commenced using the Guardian System in their respective Coordination Centres. EMQ continued to utilise the RFA system which meant that there were two systems capable of receiving requests for assistance running in parallel with the potential to either duplicate duties or potentially over look through the assumption that a request had been attended to.
23. Prioritisation and management of requests for assistance and or competing requests for assistance was managed as per the DM Act. That being the Local Controller has the responsibility for coordination of the SES. EMQ assisted in providing additional resources and SES personnel from within the EMQ central Region if and when required initially through staging additional support from neighboring areas within the Region and then also through the coordination of SES members from other parts of the state in consultation with the State SES deployments unit.
- 5. Their authority for, and role in, the tasking and deployment of SES members, including local controller tasking/deployment, both when a disaster is declared and at other times.**
24. Prior to the flooding event, I requested each of the Area Directors to liaise with Local Controllers within their respective areas and identify SES members that were able to be deployed in the upcoming season should it be necessary. Area Directors then sent out expression of interest to Local Controllers and collated a list of members ready for deployment if necessary.

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25. Tasking of SES members remained the responsibility of the respective Local Controller.
6. **Whether any SES members within their area/region were deployed to another area/region during the 2010/2011 floods and, if so, the process by which this occurred and their role in it.**
26. There were a number of SES members from within Central Region deployed to other areas within the region initially, then as the event unfolded, members were deployed to Townsville and Cairns to assist with clean up operations following the land fall of TC Yasi.
27. The process of deployment within the region was undertaken through the liaison with local controllers in the respective areas, making members available to respond within the region.
28. The process of deployment external to the region, that is to Townsville and Cairns was done in liaison with and in response to requests from the State SES deployment unit. Again Local Controllers were contacted and requested to identify members that were suitably skilled and fit for duty. On identification of suitable members they either flew or drove to the affected areas, dependant upon their location and the resources required. On deployment an EMQ liaison officer was also deployed with them to manage HR and financial requirements. That is to ensure they were accommodated and catered for. The liaison officer also assisted them with the prioritisation of workloads in some cases.
7. **Whether there are any SES units in their area with more than one Local Controller, and, where this is the case, a description of:**
- a) **the history of this arrangement and how it works in practice (in view of the combined effect of sections 84A and 85 of the Disaster Management Act 2003);**
29. To my knowledge there is no SES Units in the Central Region that has more than one Local Controller. There is however some local governments that have not as yet amalgamated their SES Units into one. This is particularly the case in the western area surrounding Longreach Regional Council. In this area there are a number of units that are yet to be amalgamated into one unit.
30. The current practice is that they operate as independent units and have a stand alone Local Controller at each
- b) **how SES members are tasked and deployed in that unit;**
31. Members are tasked and deployed by the Local Controller

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c) the person ultimately responsible for that SES unit during a disaster;

32. The Local Controller for the respective unit.

d) how communications are coordinated among the various local controllers for SES unit during a disaster and the process of communicating with the local disaster coordinator;

33. Communication is coordinated through the Local Disaster Coordination Centre, Local Disaster Coordinator and where appropriate or required through the EMQ Area Director and or EMQ Liaison Officer

e) whether or not this arrangement is considered effective and/or whether or not it may be subject to review or amendment.

34. I am not aware of any issues to date either prior to, during or after the flooding event.

8. The nature of their contact and coordination with any Local Disaster Coordinator, Local Disaster Coordination Centre, Local Disaster Management Group, and other EMQ officers during the 2010/2011 floods.

35. As the Regional Director, I liaised primarily with the EMQ liaison Officer in each of the Local Disaster Coordination Centers. Alternatively, I would liaise with the Area Director of a particular area and or on occasions I liaised with the Chair of the Local Disaster Management Group to ensure there were no issues from either an EMQ or SES perspective. This liaison was basically to ensure that at the local level we, EMQ, were across all issues in that area, were informed of actions being taken by SES and EMQ and were ensuring that we, EMQ, were communicating with the LDMG effectively. Further it also ensured that I as the Regional Director was kept abreast of current or emerging issues that affected SES and or EMQ.

9. Any instances, during the 2010/2011 floods, where EMQ's requirements or expectations of the SES differed from those of the Local Disaster Management Group or Local Disaster Coordinator, and how these issues were managed.

36. Nil issues experienced. EMQ had a good working partnership with all LDMG's, LDC's and LDMG Chairs in the region prior to the flooding event

10. The Government (State and State/Commonwealth) funding programs accessed by SES units within their area in the financial years 2009-10 and 2010-11, and their role in all aspects of the funding application process and administration of this funding.

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37. SES Units have access to the state annual Non Recurrent Subsidies program. Each year units make application to the fund for consideration. The state SES unit established a working party which included representation of SES, Local Government Association of Qld and EMQ representation from two of the EMQ regions. This working party then reviewed each application and determine priorities on a sliding scale. These recommendations were then forwarded to the Assistant Director-General for consideration and actioning. Applications are then provided feedback by the State group.
- a) I cannot the recall the total amount of funding that was available as those records would be available through EMQ.
  - b) I participated as a member of the working party in March 2011.

**11. Whether or not issues have been raised with them directly by SES members about the level of funding provided by the State Government, including any suggestions by SES members about how the funding arrangement could be improved.**

38. SES members on occasions had raised verbally with me the belief that they should be provided with additional funding, however when asked for what purpose most issues were able to be dismissed. Some members had the mind set of building a large resource base at their particular shed, when in fact the Local Controller for the area or unit may have had differing opinions. Largely the issue was that individual members were concerned with stockpiling equipment and in some cases this would have been a waste of resources. To my knowledge Units and groups were adequately resourced and equipped. EMQ Area Directors and/or Training Officers would conduct an annual shed visit with the Local Controller for the area to review amongst other things resources and equipment.

39. Some members expressed there was a greater opportunity for sponsorship arrangements that may be of benefit to them in gaining additional funds, however none were ever forthcoming with a formal request that I can recall.

**12. The results of any assessment or debrief within their area relating to the performance of the SES units during the 2010/2011 floods.**

40. Due to the large number of deployments and the requirements for information to be provided to the Commission there were no formal debrief sessions conducted by EMQ staff with SES units or groups. Debriefings were conducted at each of the Local and District Disaster Management Groups of which EMQ and SES attended with no major issues being identified for SES.

41. I am aware that each of the EMQ Area Directors spoke with Local Controllers and SES members informally following the event.

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13. Any other observations on the structure, funding and command and control arrangement of the SES generally and/or in relation to the 2010/2011 floods, including possible areas for improvement, and any improvements made, or proposed to be made, in any of these aspects following the 2010/2011 floods.
42. The Central Region EMQ/SES response to the flooding event was in line with the Department's policy and procedures and the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (DM Act). EMQ held advisory membership on all LDMG and DDMGs throughout the region.
43. There were effective partnerships, good working relationships and open lines of communication with all local governments within the region. EMQ through myself and the Area Directors maintained communication links with all LDMGs, LDCs and LDMG Chairs within the region.
44. The SES structure as per the DM Act reported through the Local Controller and as a result there were little if any issues that could not be addressed by the Local Controller. Where necessary EMQ Area Directors, Liaison Officers or I spoke with Local Controllers on a daily basis to ensure a proactive response where ever possible.
45. Local Controllers were positioned at the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and/or the local SES Incident Management Room. This ensured that tasks were prioritised and actioned appropriately.
46. EMQ's role was to assist the SES with deployment of additional members both from within the region and then externally with fly in support from other units that had been deployed by the state deployment unit. Further EMQ provided a liaison officer to ensure the health and well being of SES members was managed. The role of the liaison officer was to ensure adequate catering was available, provision of additional resources could be purchased where necessary and accommodation of members was also attended to.
47. Funding is an issue that requires ongoing education to all SES and EMQ members. Some members and staff were of the belief and voiced that as National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements had been declared, equipment and resources were able to be purchased without restriction. It was made clear to all in Central Region by myself, Area Directors and the Local Controllers that appropriate checks and balances needed to be in place and purchasing was to be undertaken as per appropriate financial management practices.
48. Command and Control needs to be clearly articulated at local, regional and state levels as there was an assumption by some at the state level that EMQ had command and control of the SES. This was not the case and led to conflict in the northern region when there was confusion between SES and EMQ.

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49. Central region left command and control with the SES Local Controller and provided support through the provision of advice, equipment, planning and resources where necessary.
50. There was effective communication at all LDMGs, LDCCs, DDMGs and DDCCs throughout the region.
51. The only issues of a negative nature experienced was when decisions were made at the state level in isolation that impacted on the region at the local and district groups. For example, there was an issue with communication failing between the state, district and local management groups in relation to the shipment of food supplies by the National Retailers Association.
52. Recruitment and retention of volunteers in rural and remote areas will continue to be an issue for all volunteer organisations. The saving grace is that whilst there will always be difficulties in sourcing regular volunteers the country psyche is that when an event occurs people from the community will always volunteer. Our challenge will be how we manage that whilst ensuring the safety, health and well being of volunteers who are not 'qualified'.

Justices Act 1886

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

- (1) This written statement by me dated 19 /10/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 8 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 *Perth* this *19* day of *October* 2011

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*SP (c-dec)*

JP/~~Justice~~/Commissioner for Declarations: