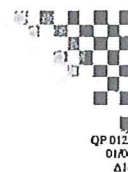




# QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement no.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 04/03/2011**Statement of**Name of witness: VAN SAANE, RonaldDate of birth: [REDACTED] Age: [REDACTED] Occupation: Police Officer**Police officer taking statement**Name: VAN SAANE, RonaldRank: Acting SuperintendentReg. no.: 4629Region/Command/Division: Central Region,  
Rockhampton DistrictStation: Rockhampton  
District Office**Statement:**

Ronald Van Saane states:-

1. I am currently an Acting Superintendent of Police performing duties as the District Officer, Rockhampton District. I have performed that role since 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011. Prior to that date I was Acting Superintendent, Gympie Police District for over 12 months, and accordingly also the Gympie Disaster District Coordinator (DDC). That period included the 7<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 which was when the flood disaster impacted upon the Gympie Disaster District.
2. I was sworn into the Queensland Police Service (QPS) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1981.
3. I have over 30 years policing experience having served at large and small rural and isolated communities as a general duties officer, as a plain clothes and detective investigator at regional and country locations, and as the Officer in Charge of general duties and criminal investigation units. I have also performed duties as a Commissioned Officer at Toowoomba District, as a Regional Crime Coordinator for the Southern Region, as the Operations Inspector, Gympie District, as the Acting District Officer for Gympie District and since January 2011, as the District Officer, Rockhampton District.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

4. My service history includes performing general duties at Cunnamulla from 1981 to 1982, Cloncurry general duties from 1982 to 1983, Officer in Charge of a single officer general duties station at Bedourie from 1983 to 1985, Charleville general duties from 1985 to 1988, Bundaberg general duties from 1988 to 1990, Bundaberg Criminal Investigation Branch duties from 1990 to 1995, Officer in Charge of the Murgon Criminal Investigation Branch from 1995 to 2000, Officer in Charge of the Longreach Police Station from 2000 to 2005, promoted to Inspector, Toowoomba District in 2005 and serving there as a District Operations Inspector including periods of relief as the Southern Region Crime Coordinator until 2006, District Operations Inspector for Gympie District from 2006 to 2010, including extensive periods of relief as the Acting Superintendent, Gympie District, until being promoted to the position of the Rockhampton District Officer in January 2011.
  
5. On 10 July 2010, as a consequence of the retirement of the previous Superintendent of Gympie District, I was appointed as the relieving Acting Superintendent and subsequently also took over the role as District Disaster Coordinator for the Gympie Disaster District. In taking over the role and responsibilities of the DDC I was required to act as head of the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) and accordingly to manage the functions of the DDMG, to ensure that the DDMG performed its functions, and to ensure that all reporting protocols to the State group were adhered to. Furthermore, as legislatively stated in Section 26 A of the Disaster Management Act 2003, my primary responsibility as the Gympie DDC was to coordinate the disaster operations in the Gympie disaster district for the DDMG. In striving to at all times effectively and professionally perform the role of the Gympie DDC as previously outlined, I can provide that over the past 10 years I have received extensive experience and training in both a practical and theoretical capacity.
  
6. I have conducted and played a key role in at least one district disaster management group table top exercise for each year since 2005, I have

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

undertaken formal training related to database and systems management; major event and disaster preparedness, planning, response and recovery techniques related to such incidents as tidal surge, bush fires, tsunamis, cyclone and flood events; and received updates on current relevant legislation changes and amendments at least twice yearly since 2006 at Gympie DDMG meetings. I have also successfully attended a number of external courses related to the DDC field including Emergency Risk Management Phase 1 and Phase 2 at the Emergency Management Institute of Australia in 2003, the Joint Emergency Services Command and Control Course conducted by the Department of Emergency Services in 2004, and the Queensland Police Service Incident Command Course in 2005. In September and October 2010 I also attended QPS workshops on the role of the DDC as it related to the new Disaster Management structure and associated changes in legislation.

7. During late 2010, as the Acting Superintendent of the Gympie District, I continued to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the DDC as required. During the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011 however, significant rainfall across the South Burnett and catchment areas of the Mary River caused flash flooding of a number of small creeks in and around the Kilkivan and Goomeri areas, as well as causing some concern to Gympie Regional Council employees about the possible rises and potential flooding of the Mary River. As a result, during the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Mr Ron Potter, the Local Disaster Coordinator for the Gympie Regional Council Local Government Disaster Group (LDMG), advised all members including myself via text message, that the LDMG was to be activated and the first meeting organised for 9am on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at the Old Bank Building in Channon Street, Gympie. That office would remain the Gympie Regional Council LDMG forward command post for the entire flood event.
8. I subsequently attended that meeting as the representative for the Gympie Police, with the Acting Officer in Charge of the Gympie Police at the time, Acting Senior Sergeant [REDACTED] who would subsequently act as my XO [REDACTED]

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

during the district flood event. At that first meeting I was of the opinion that the Gympie LDMG had the issues and potential threats and risks associated with the flood event under control and were in a position to handle all issues at their level.

9. Due to the fact that there had also been considerable rain in the South Burnett area over the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011, resulting in a number of flash floods in creeks in Nanango and Kingaroy, and the threat of isolation of the communities of Murgon and Cherbourg due to rises in Barambah Creek and Krebs Creek, on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011 I contacted the South Burnett Regional Council Mayor David Carter. At that stage the flash flooding was still only isolated and there was no need for the LDMG to be activated at that time other than maintain a watching brief by the Mayor and his local disaster coordinator. Over the next 48 hours however, there was considerable increases in rainfall across the South Burnett areas of Kingaroy, Murgon, Nanango, Cherbourg and Wondai, which led to me having a further conversation with the Mayor of the South Burnett Regional Council on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011. At that time it was decided to activate the South Burnett Regional Council LDMG in order to meet a number of wide ranging issues related to threats of inundation and flooding of houses and business in Kingaroy and Nanango, isolation of Murgon and Cherbourg, and the closure of most major roads throughout the region including significant damage to the Daguilar Highway at Blackbutt, arising from the heavy rainfall.
10. As a result the first South Burnett LDMG meeting was held at the South Burnett Kingaroy Office at 2pm on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 which I participated in via telelink. At that time the roads were also cut between Kingaroy and Gympie and I could not attend even if I intended to, as a result I appointed Acting Inspector [REDACTED] as the Deputy DDC for the Gympie District Disaster area. Acting Inspector [REDACTED] at that time was isolated in Kingaroy, where he had been on days off prior to the heavy rainfall and floods commencing.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

11. During this period from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011, I also spoke on numerous occasions to Sergeant [REDACTED] the Officer in Charge of Cherbourg Police. During these regular conversations [REDACTED] supplied me with constant and up to date verbal situation reports on the river and potential flood levels, the isolation of the community and the effect that was having on community food, water and essential supplies. [REDACTED] was obtaining this information from almost hourly meetings and briefings with the Cherbourg Mayor, Mr Sam Murray, and the CEO, Mr Warren Collins. Through these meeting and liaison it was established that Cherbourg had been isolated since late on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011, and Murgon since late on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011, however as late as the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2011, both communities still had sufficient stores, water and essential services to refrain from requesting for any resupply, and the threat to their communities via inundation or the loss of essential services such as water and sewerage, were still very low.
12. On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 however I received information from Sergeant [REDACTED] that Cherbourg's food and drink stocks were low and there was going to be a request for assistance for restocks from the Cherbourg Mayor later in the morning. Taking that into consideration, as well as the receipt of a number of other requests for assistance from the Gympie LDMG and the affect of the flood across the entire Gympie disaster district, on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011, I formally activated the Gympie DDMG and took over the role as the DDC. I made this decision based on the fact that all three Regional Councils in the Gympie DDC, Gympie, Cherbourg and the South Burnett, were affected to varying degrees by the flood event and that although independently they were addressing their local issues as they arose to a high standard, the establishment of the DDMG, and particularly my formally taking up the role of the DDC, would assist in coordinating and managing resupply and resource requests through the one point of contact thereby enhance the efficiency and value of the allocated resources across the district.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

13. I subsequently activated the role as the Gympie DDC at 10am on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011, and due to staffing shortages also continued to maintain my role as the Gympie Police District Officer. This was feasible and achievable by keeping the Gympie Operations Inspector, as Deputy DDC, at Kingaroy throughout the event to liaise with and coordinate the South Burnett LDMG requests and actions, and to maintain the close link between the Cherbourg Mayor and CEO through the Officer in Charge Cherbourg, while the Acting Senior Sergeant Gympie, as the Acting DDMG executive officer, liaised daily with the Gympie LDMG. By obtaining situation reports twice daily from those officers, as well as twice daily situation reports from the Mayors of the three local authorities, and my own regular daily liaisons with the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC), I achieved the requirements of the simultaneous roles of Gympie DDC and Gympie District Officer for the 10 day period of the floods in the Gympie disaster district area.

14. At this stage I must also stress however, that other than advising the main stakeholders of the Gympie DDMG that I had formally activated the group and I had taken up the role as DDC, there were no actual formal meetings held during the period of the floods. This was due to a number of issues. Firstly, as a result of the widespread affect of the floods on the largely decentralised Gympie disaster district stretching from Gympie to Blackbutt and Kingaroy, it was impractical and in fact counter productive to call on all stakeholders such as the District representatives from EMQ, Ergon, Energex, Communities, Public Works, Health, Fire and Ambulance to name but a few, to attend the DDMG command post on even a daily basis. As a result I contacted each District group representative individually or collectively if and when required to identify issues and make decisions via phone or personally. Secondly, the majority of DDMG representatives were also key stakeholders for their departments or organisations on either the Gympie or South Burnett LDMG's, and in most instances due to communities being isolated or insufficient staff numbers, it would again have been counterproductive to the entire effort to ask for alternative representatives for the DDMG or place a double reporting and attendance burden on the main representatives who were already providing

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

significant input at each respective LDMG. As a result, through out the flood event as it affected the Gympie disaster district, this process worked effectively. As stated earlier, the fact that the three local authorities were attending to their own issues to a suitable and effective standard, ensured that the only real basis for the activation of the DDMG and DDC roles was to overview the combined response to the needs of the communities, meet the reporting protocols and demands of the SDCC and media in general, and manage and coordinate all disaster district requests for assistance. Thus although the activation of the Gympie DDMG and DDC was perhaps significantly less stringent and structured than for previous incidents, the three primary objectives as stated above were effectively achieved though out the flood events subject of this inquiry.

15. In response to the written requirement of the Qld Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 28 February 2011, I provide the following information:

**The preparation and planning undertaken by the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Disaster Management Group in advance of and/or in relation to the 2010/2011 floods:**

16. I was the Gympie DDC during the 2010/2011 flood events that affected the Gympie disaster district and in that role I also chaired a meeting of the Gympie DDMG on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010 held at the Gympie Police Station conference room. During that meeting a number of items related to disaster preparedness, community recovery protocols and updating all contact lists and details were tabled and attended to. No specific preparations and plans were undertaken during that meeting related directly to flooding, however issues of a general context associated with planning, preparedness, reporting and recovery for all disasters as they applied to the new legislation and associated new role of the DDC were thoroughly discussed and adopted. The new District Disaster plan, including those changes and amendments, was commenced and updated, with further amendment and changes to be completed in February 2011.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

**The actions undertaken by the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Disaster Management group in respect of the 2010/2011 floods in relation to immediate management, response and recovery operations:**

17. As the Gympie DDC I activated the Gympie DDMG on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in response to the widespread effect of the flood event on the entire Gympie disaster district across the three local authorities of Gympie, South Burnett and Cherbourg contained within that disaster district. The role played by the DDMG and accordingly by me as the DDC for the Gympie disaster district however was purely as overview and support due to the fact that the LDMG's at Gympie and the South Burnett were well placed and prepared to address all management, response and recovery operations as they effected both their respective local authority areas. Although the Cherbourg LDMG did not formally activate during the flood event, through the combined efforts of the local council employees, police and volunteers under the leadership of the Cherbourg Mayor, Acting CEO and Officer in Charge of Cherbourg Police, the immediate management, response and recovery operations within that community were also well planned and executed. As the Gympie DDC, I liaised with the Cherbourg Mayor, South Burnett Regional Mayor and Gympie LDMG Chairman at least twice daily and provided such assistance to the immediate management response and recovery operations as required. This was achieved by me contacting the key DDMG stakeholders via phone if and when issues of this nature were raised and required attention. Overall however, throughout the entire 7 days of the disaster declaration as it effected the Gympie disaster district, the only role I was required to play as the DDC, with regards to these aspects of the disaster management, was to gather district statistics and formulate and provide regular situation reports to the SDCC and relay any information received from the SDCC back to each respective LDMG where relevant and required.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

**The actions undertaken by the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Disaster Management Group in respect of the 2010/2011 floods in relation to resourcing, coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment:**

18. The key role that I played as the Gympie DDC during the 2010/2011 floods was in the area of receiving, prioritising, forwarding and allocating requests for supply of resources, personnel and equipment across the Gympie disaster district. As the flood event continued from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011 until the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 when the DDMG was formally activated, a number of requests for supply that could not be met at the LDMG level were forwarded to me as the DDC by way of phone, fax or email. In each instance as DDC I overviewed and prioritised those requests for assistance after consultation with the DDMG Executive Officer and at least the DDMG EMQ representative, the requesting LDMG disaster management coordinator, and the DDMG agency representatives most associated with each request i.e. Health, Transport etc.
19. Those requests originating from the South Burnett and Cherbourg were also initially checked and prioritised through consultation with the Deputy DDC. That process of receipt, prioritising and authorising was achieved in all cases within 20 to 30 minutes and the requests for assistance were then immediately forwarded to the SDCC logistics cell for logging and procurement if unable to be met within the district. During the flood event as the Gympie DDC, on behalf of the Gympie DDMG and either the Gympie or South Burnett LDMG/s or Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council, I received, prioritised, forwarded, allocated and finalised, a total of 8 requests for assistance. Those requests were received on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, the 13<sup>th</sup> January and the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011. On the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 requests were received, authorised, filled and finalised from the Gympie LDMG for resupply of medication for the Gympie Grevillia Gardens and Winston House Nursing Home; a request for two medical evacuations from the Matilda Roadhouse, Kybong; and an evacuation of four children and their father from the Bella Creek Camping area via Ama [REDACTED]

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

20. On the 14<sup>th</sup> January I received requests for supply from the Gympie LDMG which I subsequently authorised, forwarded and completed by and on behalf of the Gympie DDC and DDMG for a food drop to stranded campers at Bella Creek via Amamoor; and a medical evacuation from Tandur.
21. The Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council by way of the Mayor, also submitted a number of requests for assistance to me as the DDC, which included on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 a request for resupply of food and essentials for the entire community which resulted in an order for almost 1500 kilograms of goods which was delivered in three helicopter trips from Brisbane to Cherbourg between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council by way of the Mayor also submitted a request for assistance on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 for two large generators to maintain the operation of the community's water and sewerage treatment plants. Again I ensured that those requests were accepted, prioritise, authorised and forwarded to the SDCC logistics and filled and finalised within 24 hours.
22. The South Burnett LDMG made no formal requests for assistance during the flood events, however were allocated the use of a helicopter that was apportioned to the Gympie DDMG for one day on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011. During that time the helicopter conducted a number of low priority food and medical supply drops to isolated properties in the Proston, Murgon and Kingaroy areas, and redeployed police, nurses, various council employees and tradesmen in and out of Cherbourg and Murgon to relieve staff that had been working in those isolated areas for extended periods.

**Measures taken by the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Disaster Management Group to manage, maintain or reinstate the supply of essential services (water, power and communications) during the 2010/2011 floods:**

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

23. The only instance where I as the Gympie DDC and the DDMG as a unit were required to play a role in the management, maintenance or reinstatement of the supply of essential services such as water, power and communications, related to the Cherbourg Community between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011. During that time as a result of the flood effects on the Barambah Creek, the two pumps which had previously operated the water and sewerage treatment plants had been significantly damaged. One pump was totally destroyed and beyond repair, the second was damaged and repairable however due to the power services to that sector of the community being destroyed for up to two weeks, there was an urgent need to repair the one remaining pump, and secondly have a suitable sized generator installed to ensure the pump could maintain operation of both treatment plants. That request for assistance was then forwarded to me as the Gympie DDC by the Cherbourg Mayor, and subsequently prioritised, approved and forwarded to SDCC Logistics.
24. The request included the footnote that unless the pump could be repaired and reinstalled by 6pm on the 13<sup>th</sup> at the latest, due to current town water levels, the community would run out of drinking water or sewerage system. I provided the relevant level of urgency with the request to the SDCC logistics cell and it was subsequently approved and filled within 8 hours. By 3pm on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 the remaining pump had been repaired, the generators installed and the community water and sewerage treatment plants were operating to a suitable and reliable level. By the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011 all electrical main power to the treatment plants had also been reinstalled.
25. The only other area within the Gympie disaster district which was affected by the loss of essential services, was a number of low lying residences and businesses in the Gympie suburbs and streets most affected by the rise of the Mary River. Those issues were entirely handled at a Gympie LDMG level without request for or a need of involvement by me as the DDC or the DDMG. From my own observations however at the Gympie LDMG meetings, the shut downs, checking and resupply of power to those affected areas was conducted

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

in an entirely orderly, well managed, risk reducing and community informing manner by the LDMG and particularly the management and staff of Energex.

**Measures taken by the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Disaster Management Group to inform the community about the 2010/2011 flood events and the response thereto:**

26. Due to the nature of the flood event and its impact on all three local authorities contained within the Gympie disaster district, namely Gympie, South Burnett and Cherbourg councils, as the Gympie DDC, I, as well as the Gympie DDMG, played a minor role in actually informing the public about the pre or post flood event as it impacted upon their communities. That role was carried out to a high standard prior to, during and after the floods by the Mayors of each respective regional council and supported within the Gympie and South Burnett LDMG's by their duly appointed media liaison officers. My role as the Gympie DDC and chair of the Gympie DDMG in this regard was the transfer of up to date statistical data, information and future contingency plans between the SDCC and all three affected regional councils and LDMG's. All three councils had a strong media plan whereby both the radio and written media outlets were kept informed twice daily with the latest and most relevant information by the one allocated LDMG community source.

**The nature and timing of all communications between the District Disaster Coordinator and/or the District Disaster Management Group and the Local Disaster Management Group and/or the Local Disaster Management Coordinator relative to the 2010/2011 flood events:**

27. As the Gympie DDC I conversed at least once daily with the Mayors of each local authority contained within the Gympie disaster district. I attended the first Gympie LDMG briefings at 9am on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and then the 8am and 4pm Gympie LDMG meetings on each day of the flood event from the 10<sup>th</sup> until the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2011. In my role as Gympie DDC, I also liaised

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

directly with the chairperson of the Gympie LDMG at 11am each day having that person (the Acting Mayor of the Gympie Regional Council) present during the teleconference with the SDCC. As the Gympie DDC, I also participated in the first South Burnett LDMG briefing on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 by way of telephone link. I then also spoke at least twice daily to South Burnett Mayor David Carter during the mornings and the evenings. As the Gympie DDC I also ensured that I spoke with the Mayor of Cherbourg at least once daily via telephone during the flood events effect on that community.

28. In all instances as the Gympie DDC, I discussed the latest issues affecting each local authority, the status of evacuation centres, the level and risk of inundations, any other projected risks to the community or infrastructure, and any areas where the DDMG could be of assistance. In instances where through those conversations requests for assistance were made from the DDMG they were then further discussed with the DDMG EMQ representative, [REDACTED] and where required, the DDMG representatives for any relevant areas subject of the requests such as Energex or Transport and Main Roads etc. I then ensured that those requests were overviewed, where appropriate approved, and then authorised, prioritised and forwarded to the SDCC in the appropriate format.

**The nature and timing of all communications between the District Disaster Coordinator and/or the District Disaster Management Group and the State Disaster Management Group and/or the State Disaster Management Coordination Committee and/or the State Disaster Coordinator relative to the 2010/2011 flood events:**

29. As the Gympie DDC I was involved in daily conferences with the SDCC via a state wide teleconference. Those briefings were conducted at 11am daily and I participated in them from the 8<sup>th</sup> of January until at least the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. I ensured that on each occasion that I participated in those teleconferences that I was accompanied by the DDMG EMQ representative Ms Jenny Millers and on [REDACTED]

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

most occasions by the Gympie LDMG chairman, Acting Mayor Tony Perrett. During those teleconferences the content of the discussions related to the number and levels of inundations of houses and buildings, the standard and future viability of essential services, the potential risk to the communities, the condition and future risk to infrastructure and particularly roads, the current and projected needs for resupply of stores, and any other issue that were relevant to the floods as it effected the Gympie disaster district.

**The availability and provision of services or logistical support within the disaster management hierarchy before and during the 2010/2011 flood events, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof:**

30. During the 2010/2011 flood event the availability and provision of services and logistical support to me as the Gympie DDC and the Gympie DDMG itself, was of the highest standards in quality, timeliness and management. As the Gympie DDC, I was required to make a number of requests for assistance from the SDCC and those requests were always approved, met and finalised in a timely and professional manner. All requests for equipment were also sourced and provided within realistic timeframes and reporting protocols and authority guidelines were effective and streamline. Advice was available from numerous avenues at SDCC level via telephone or email and where feedback was required, it was provided quickly and professionally.

**Any involvement with Commonwealth agencies, including but not limited to Emergency Management Australia or the Australian Defence Force, in relation to the provision of emergency response measures, personnel, equipment or services, including an assessment of the adequacy and timeliness thereof:**

31. Neither as the Gympie DDC nor with the Gympie DDMG, did I have any involvement with any Commonwealth agencies before, during or after the 2010/2011 flood events.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

**An assessment of the adequacy of the equipment and communications systems in the District during the 2010/2011 flood events:**

32. All equipment and communications systems available and used during the flood events of 2010/2011 as they affected the Gympie disaster district were of a suitable and reliable standard. There were no issues at any time that resulted in a loss of communications and there was no stage during the flood events when any rescue, response or recovery equipment was unsuitable or unavailable within a reasonable time frame.

**An assessment of the adequacy of the community's response in the District during the 2010/2011 flood events:**

33. The community's response to the flood events across the Gympie disaster district was generally of a high standard. In the South Burnett, although members of the public were caught unawares during incidents of flash flooding in Kingaroy and Nanango, which due to the very nature of those events was a high risk of occurring, the subsequent response to those incidents and later ongoing flood rises by the local volunteers, police, SES and Council personnel, ensured that no lives were lost, the loss to property and personal effects was significantly lower than could have been expected, and overall the community adherence to direction, warning and requests was extremely high and supportive. Similarly the attitude and overall adherence to directions and warnings by the vast majority of the Cherbourg and Murgon community's also ensured that the loss of life, injury to persons and general damage to property was relatively low taking into consideration that both those community's were totally isolated for up to 5 days. The community's of the Gympie LDMG, and in particular Gympie, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Imbil, Kandanga and Amamoor itself were also well prepared, supportive of LDMG actions and directions, and compliant with warnings, directions and requests for information and support from emergency services staff and Council and SES staff.

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## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

**The circumstances of any human fatality within the District, including the measures taken to prevent and/or respond to any such fatality, during the 2010/2011 flood events:**

34. On the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at approximately 4pm, Cherbourg Police had received information that approximately 5 minutes earlier a 19 year old aboriginal female had jumped into the fast flowing, and on the verge of flooding, Barambah Creek from the Frank 'Big Shot' Fisher Bridge, approximately 1.5 kilometres from the centre of Cherbourg, and had not resurfaced. Police from Cherbourg and SES staff from Murgon then immediately conducted a search of the area and at 5.45pm the body of the female was located deceased and approximately 200 metres from the bridge. It is believed that the female had become stuck under the bridge and drowned as a result of diving into the creek.
35. This was the only loss of life during the period of the flood event across the Gympie disaster district. Police and council staff had told numerous adults and children during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of January not to swim in the Barambah creek and to stay away from its edge, however many persons continued to do so irrespective of the best efforts of the persons in authority. After this tragic incident however, there were no longer persons diving into or swimming in the creek and it is indeed profoundly unfortunate that such a loss had to occur before the community adhered to the warnings and directions provided by the police, Council and SES personnel.
36. This matter will be subject of a coronial inquest at a date yet to be set.

**The measures taken within the District to protect private and public property and/or preserve vital infrastructure in connection with the 2010/2011 flood events:**

37. Throughout the 2010/2011 flood event as it affected the Gympie disaster district numerous measures and strategies were undertaken, introduced and

(Witness's signature)

Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **VAN SAANE, Ronald**

promoted by me as both the DDC and the Gympie Police District Officer to protect private and public property and preserve vital infrastructure. The floods across the Gympie disaster district although widespread, were also relatively slow in arrival and allowed emergency services personnel, council employees, community members and volunteers ample time to evacuate residents (all of whom self evacuated across the district), remove and relocate public and private property, and take the best actions possible to attempt to preserve and protect infrastructure such as water and sewerage treatment plants, electrical plants and radio communication towers.

38. The well planned evacuation and clearance of all at risk businesses in the Gympie CBD significantly reduced the costs to the community and business sectors, the similar actions taken by the South Burnett LDMG to provide support, staff and resources to relocate residential and business property from inundation risk areas at Murgon, Cherbourg, Nanango and Kingaroy also reduced the possible costs and loss of each respective community.
39. A committed, regular, well informed and well directed media campaign developed by each respective LDMG, overviewed by myself as the DDC and chair of the DDMG, and executed by all three Mayors through the local newspaper and radio stations across the Gympie, Cherbourg and South Burnett regions, further ensured maximum knowledge and awareness by the affected communities. This knowledge and awareness also subsequently assisted in the protection and preservation of public and private property and infrastructure.
40. The rostering of flood patrols by police at all locations across the Gympie disaster district also improved security of unattended public and private properties and infrastructure sites. These patrols included increased focus on looting, security of abandoned premises and use of SES and private boats to improve patrolling effectiveness. These efforts resulted in minimal reports of looting across the entire disaster district.

(Witness's signature)

Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

preparing statement)

## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

41. In an effort to further reduce the damage to infrastructure and associated risks of harm to persons, detour locations, 'no go' zones and road closed points were staffed 24 hours per day during the flood event in and around Gympie, and in some areas of Blackbutt and Kingaroy, by conjoint teams of police and Council or SES staff. Again these efforts significantly reduced the instance of further damage to already flood effected bridges, roads, shopping precincts and various community utilities such as water, sewerage and electricity plants.

**Any special consideration that should be given to the District by reason of a particular regional or geographic differences:**

42. The only special consideration that could be given to the Gympie disaster district is that it is made up of three distinct regional council authorities namely the Gympie Regional Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council. The combination of those three local authorities geographically spreads across over 250 kilometres from east to west and accordingly causes some managerial, logistical and coordination challenges for the DDC and DDMG when such a wide ranging and all encompassing event such as the 2010/2011 floods occurs.
43. Due to those issues and the general decentralisation of the many government and non-government agencies that form the key stakeholders of the Gympie DDMG, in times of widespread disaster and associated effects, the DDC in most instances would not be in a position to form a DDMG in any one location. As in this case, due to the isolation of all the larger Gympie disaster district communities, the closure of the Bruce Highway north and south and the location of most DDMG key stakeholder headquarters being situated in either Gympie, Kingaroy, Hervey Bay, Maroochydore and even Toowoomba, made the establishment and conduct of the DDMG in a physical sense impossible. This thus led to it being operated and coordinated in this instance in a relatively informal manner via telephone links where and when required or occasional personal meetings with a minimal number of representatives.

(Witness's signature)

Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

preparing statement)

## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

**Any feature of the disaster preparation and planning stages or the disaster response and recovery operations which, in the opinion of the District Disaster Coordinator, presented particular difficulty or may require practical or legislative change to improve future disaster management in the District:**

44. The preparation, planning, response and recovery efforts undertaken across the entire Gympie disaster district by the activated LDMG's, emergency services personal, volunteers and the community in general, ensured that this heartbreaking and at times overwhelming natural disaster was prepared for, experienced and overcome with the least possible amount of loss in terms of both human life and property.
45. There were a number of minor issues however which were identified by me as the DDC and from key stakeholders in the DDMG and LDMG groups that should be investigated in an effort to improve the management of any future disaster events. The first issue identified is the need to change legislation as it related to the enforcement of disobedience to Council 'road closed' signs. This issue, although relatively minor in nature, did however cause some frustration to police attempting to prevent persons entering dangerous or potentially dangerous areas.
46. The confusion lies in the fact that current legislation is not clear on whether there is a distinct enforceable breach for disobeying Council 'road closed' signs, however there most certainly is enforcement and prosecution powers against persons who disobey the red and white 'no entry' signs. It is strongly recommended that legislation be amended to either introduce enforcement powers for the offence of disobeying Council 'road closed' signs, or alternatively those signs be removed and replaced with 'no entry' signs.
47. The second issues identified that as the DDC I wish to bring forward on behalf of the Gympie DDMG and LDMG, is the need to modify the current method that Red Cross teams are deployed.

(Witness's signature)

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

(Signature of police officer preparing statement)

## CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: VAN SAANE, Ronald

48. It was identified during the recovery phase of the 2010/2011 flood events across the Gympie disaster district that Red Cross deploy a minimum of 10 staff per team when requested to assist in the establishment and management of evacuation and recovery centres. However the deployment of such relatively large teams to regional communities where the available transport in and out of the towns is limited and where accommodation is at a premium, can make the logistical costs associated with the request often ineffective or untenable.
49. Perhaps the skills and expertise provided by Red Cross staff in evacuation and recovery centres in smaller communities could be better served by deploying smaller multi skilled teams of 4 or 5 as unit leaders to manage and overview larger teams of suitable local volunteers or support agency employees.
50. Apart from those two relatively minor issues, there were no other areas that neither I, as DDC, nor the key stakeholders of the Gympie, South Burnett or Cherbourg LDMG's encountered or identified during the 2010/2011 flood events as being significantly problematic or dangerous to warrant further action or legislative changes.
51. The information contained within this statement is to the best of my knowledge and recollection an accurate overview and description of the actions, decisions and observations I made whilst undertaking the role and responsibilities of the Gympie Disaster District Coordinator during the 2010/2011 flood event as it affected the Gympie disaster district.

[Redacted Signature]

Ron van Saane

Acting Superintendent

Rockhampton District Office

(Witness's signature)

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

(Signature of police officer  
preparing statement)