

Name of Witness	Thomas William Brian THOMAS
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED]
Occupation	Beef and Lucerne Farmer
Officer taking statement	Det Insp Mark Ainsworth
Date taken	28/9/11

Thomas William Brian THOMAS states;

1. I am a [REDACTED] year old Beef and Lucerne Farmer who resides at [REDACTED] Thomas Road, Kilkivan. I have resided in Kilkivan all of my life and I possess a good local knowledge of the area and surrounding towns. I currently perform a number of community service roles including, Group Leader, Kilkivan SES (appointed 2011), Treasurer of the Kilkivan Meals on Wheels, Deputy Chair of the Mary River Catchment Co-ordination Committee and Secretary to the Local Water Advisory Committee. I have been a member of the Kilkivan SES since October, 2004.
2. I recall the flood events of January, 2011. During these events I received damage to my property including the loss of fencing and a water pump and flooding to my land. I did not sustain any damage to my residence.
3. During the flooding of January, 2011 I spent a lot of my time assisting the Kilkivan Community as the Acting Group Leader of the Kilkivan SES. The normal Group Leader was absent from the area recuperating in Mackay after suffering medical problems. At this time the Kilkivan SES consisted of three members, these being two females aged 55 and 40 and myself. The older lady had serious back injuries and was unable to perform a lot of physical tasks.

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4. At the time of the flood event, Kilkivan SES was equipped with one vehicle being a Toyota Troop Carrier, which was the oldest vehicle in the SES fleet. This vehicle was replaced with a new Troop Carrier on Monday 26th September, 2011. Kilkivan SES also has one flood rescue boat (due for replacement) and two box trailers containing rescue and other equipment.

5. The rescue boat had not been in operation since 2010, which was the time when the only licensed coxain in the group resigned. In order to operate a SES flood rescue boat you must hold the equivalent of a marine operators license and pass a strict testing program. Similarly, to be part of the crew of a rescue boat you have to pass a strict testing program which includes being able to swim in a full kit, tread water for 15 minutes, tread between boats and right an upturned boat, amongst other things. To crew the boat you require a coxain and at least one crew member. This allows for evacuees to ride in the boat if required.

6. During the January, 2011 flood event the flood boat was non-operational as we did not have a licensed Coxain. Eventually the boat was utilised by Murgon and Goomeri SES officers, to ferry food to stranded communities in Kilkivan, Goomeri, Cherbourg and Murgon. I would say that the flood rescue boat at Kilkivan has not been utilised for flood rescue work, definitely in the past 7 years and most probably the past 10 years due to the drought.

7. The obvious main issue with Kilkivan SES is the ability to recruit and retain SES volunteers. Since the January floods the Group Leader has resigned and I have taken over the role as Group Leader. In conjunction with Gympie Region SES controller, Terry Clark we have managed to recruit a further 5 new volunteers. Each of these volunteers have completed basic training requirements and are now field trained. The issue with recruiting in Kilkivan is that a lot of the younger community leave Kilkivan to work in the mines or larger city centres, making our recruitment pool a little light on. We are still attempting to rectify this issue.
8. During the flood event, communications was a major issue. The Kilkivan SES utilises a UHF radio channel, which was inoperable during the floods. In times of emergency we install an emergency repeater station on the hill behind Kilkivan to provide us with radio communication access. However during this event we were unable to install the same due to the extreme weather conditions. The issue of communications has been an issue for sometime, however Terry Clark is conducting a full review on enhancing communications for Kilkivan SES.
9. The flooding in Kilkivan was caused by a large wall of water emanating from One Mile Creek which flows to the east of Kilkivan. One Mile Creek runs into Wide Bay Creek to the north of Kilkivan. The wall of water was described by some people as being about 2 metres in height. There was little warning about this wall of water, however during this

period Kilkivan had experienced about 225mm of rain on the night of 7th January, 2011.

10. There was no official warning about the flooding from any person in authority, but this was a sudden event and warning of the wall of water was not practical. During the January period I continued to monitor the BOM site on my computer and was fully aware of the heavy rain in the area. There was a warning issued during the second flood event (morning of 11th January), from the Goomeri SES base that a wall of water 2 metres high was proceeding down Wide Bay Creek. We were not privy to any SMS or text messages warning of evacuations, however the local Murgon FM radio channel and ABC station did provide warnings about flooding in the area.
11. Once the flooding of Kilkivan occurred the response from the Police, Rural Fire Service and Queensland Fire Service were excellent. The Kilkivan and Goomeri police worked non-stop and were very effective in co-ordinating and assisting the community. I am aware that the Kilkivan police were involved in the rescue of two people from vehicles washed off roads in the area. I am aware of at least two helicopter evacuations from the area and the housing of 37 people in the evacuation centre in Kilkivan.
12. Initially the evacuation centre was set up in the Kilkivan Town Hall, however after a short period of time the centre was moved to the Kilkivan Retirement Units and private dwellings. Council closed the Town Hall down as the evacuation centre as it was not suitable. There were toilets and cooking facilities available but no showers and no bedding.

13. The Kilkivan Retirement Units kept two local couples ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]) for a period of 6 weeks after the [REDACTED] house was condemned and until the Southall's house had been repaired. The [REDACTED] house was condemned due to the flooding it sustained. Most of the other evacuees were travellers who were stranded between towns by flood waters.

14. Located just to the north of Kilkivan is the Kilkivan Sewerage Treatment Plant. This plant has about four open sewerage waste dams located behind the main centre. During the floods the water from One Mile Creek entered the dams. The [REDACTED] reside about 500 metres north of the sewerage treatment plant. On the night of the flood event I was not able to attend their residence, however SES crew from Goomeri and Murgon attended in their flood boat and were able to provide assistance.

15. On my arrival at their residence the day after, I could see that there had been considerable water through the house, up to a height of about three feet. The water had a very strong odour to it. I am aware about one week after the flooding to the [REDACTED] house a building inspector who I do not know, attended their residence and condemned the same. He stated it was his belief there was some evidence of sewerage being washed into the house. I am aware that Council have claimed to the [REDACTED] that there was no leak of sewerage from their waste pits.

16. With respect to an evacuation centre to be established in Kilkivan for any future events, I am aware that the Council are looking at upgrading the Kilkivan Town Hall to include showers and portable bedding. The

community is attempting to work out a suitable warning system for the area in conjunction with council. I am also aware that the Gympie Regional Council is now trying to establish within their council a Western Region Disaster Management Group which would incorporate Kilkivan, Goomeri and other areas to ensure an appropriate response for any future natural disaster.

17. During the flood event of January, 2011 the community banded together very well to help one another out. The assistance provided by local community groups was exceptional.



T.W.B.THOMAS

Justices Act 1886

I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(5)(c)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:

- (1) This written statement by me dated 12-10-11 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 6 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 atGympie.....this..... 13 day of OCT.....2011