



**QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS**



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: _____ Date: 24/01/2011

Statement of

Name of witness: WILKIN, Robert John

Date of birth: [redacted] Age: [redacted] Occupation: Meat Works Supervisor

Police officer taking statement

Name: TUCKERMAN, Hans Paul

Rank: Detective Senior Constable Reg. no.: 8868

Region/Command/Division: SCOC Station: Organised Crime Investigations Unit

Statement:

Robert John WILKIN states:

1. I am [redacted] years old and I reside at [redacted] Grantham. I reside there with my wife Shandi-Lea WILKIN and my three children Kayla Tanara WILKIN [redacted] Alyssa Louise WILKIN [redacted] and Tanisha Lea WILKIN [redacted]

2. I have lived at this address with my family for five (5) years. Prior to that I lived at 211 Sandy Creek Road, Grantham then to Harris Street, Grantham for a couple of years.

3. I recall Sunday 9th January 2011. I saw that Sandy Creek had been rising as a result of heavy rainfall from about lunch time. I kept an eye on the rise and fall of the creek till about 5pm that afternoon when I decided to move some of my farm equipment to higher ground beside my house. I knew it was 5pm because I was looking at my watch.

4. I decided to do this because I went down to my farm at that time which is situated beside the creek between Railway Street and Gatton-Helidon Road

Exhibit Number: **QFCI**

Date: 27/4/11
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(Witness's signature)

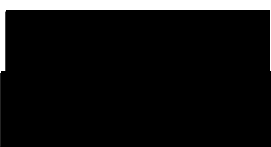
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Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, Robert John**

and saw that the water level had risen to about 3 feet around my shed. The farm is about 800 metres from my house.

5. After I did this I received a phone call from Kristy KUNDE asking if I could come to their house and help them move furniture to a higher part of their residence in Nicholls Street, Grantham. I am not sure of the house number. I got to their house at about 7pm.
6. On arrival at the KUNDE's residence I saw that the water level was about 18 inches high in the yard. At this stage the water had not entered the house as the house is built on raised footings.
7. After that I sat down and talked with Ben and Kristy KUNDE till about 10.30pm to 11pm. During this time Ben and I walked down to the creek to check the water level. We did this about three (3) times.
8. On the last occasion between 10.30pm and 11pm, I saw a Helidon Queensland Fire Service truck parked in the middle of Gatton-Helidon Road. We approached the fire fighters and had a conversation with them.
9. During this conversation we were told by one of the fire fighter that the Gatton Shire Council was thinking about evacuating people from houses closest to the creek. I offered to assist them with going to the houses to talk to the occupants as I knew most of them personally. They agreed so I then went with the fire fighters into the first three houses on Gatton-Helidon Road closest to Sandy Creek and spoke to the occupants.
10. I do not know the people from the first house by name as they had only been there for a couple of months. After speaking to them, they agreed to leave voluntarily. I walked with them in company with the fire fighters to their vehicle which was already parked on the highway.


(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, Robert John**

11. The second house from the creek was occupied by Wendy GORMAN. Wendy lives there by herself. She has two little white fluffy dogs. Wendy also agreed to walk out with us. She could not get her car out so she got a lift from Steve SPEIRLING who was there checking the creek level. At this time my brother Jim WILKIN arrived and volunteered to walk Wendy along the railway line. Steve drove Wendy and Jim to Railway Street where they walked along the railway tracks to her daughters' house which is above the school in Christopher Street.
12. I did not go into the third house because Jim and the fire fighters were talking to a Michael aged [REDACTED] and Katherine aged [REDACTED] who were there. I don't think their parents were home at the time. I do not know their surnames. Jim told me that they both refused to leave the house. I later learnt they both survived the flood.
13. I then hung around to watch the SES people launch their boats and headed towards Harris Street to begin evacuating people. I looked at my watch and saw it was 2.30am. I was standing about eighty (80) metres from the Sandy Creek Bridge on the highway. At this time I saw that the water had peaked and did not appear to be getting any higher.
14. I did not wait around to see if they had picked anyone up. I then went back to Ben and Kristy to check if everything was alright with them. They told me that the water had come into the lower part of their house but had since receded. I then walked home had a hot shower and then a cup of tea with my wife. We talked for awhile and I saw that dawn was breaking.
15. On Monday 10th January 2011 at about 5.30am my wife, my children and I jumped into the 4WD and drove to the farm to see if any damage had been done. I saw that there was no damage done at this time. We then drove to Helidon to have a look around and everything appeared to be normal.

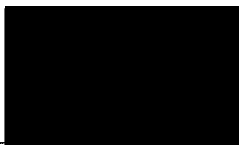
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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, Robert John**

16. We got back to our house at about 6.30am and had breakfast. At about 7.30am we cleaned up and drove to Ben and Kristy's. We stayed there for about twenty (20) minutes then drove into Grantham to see what damage had been done. I saw that all was again normal. The water level had dropped to within the creek banks. It was no longer on the roads.
17. We continued on to visit Ben's brother Peter KUNDE and his wife Megan who lives on Gatton-Helidon Road with their three (3) children. I do not know the house number. This would have been about 8am. We left the address about 9.45am and met with a few of the residents of Harris Street and spoke about the flood the previous night.
18. At about 11am we agreed to have a couple of beers at the Grantham Hotel. My wife and children went home a short time after that and I stayed at the pub with Grant BORWICK and Miranda KUNDE. We stayed there until 2pm. I know it was that time because Grant had an appointment at Withcott at 2.30pm. They dropped me off at my house and continued on.
19. I had a shower, something to eat and was about to catch up on some sleep when Grant rang me and told me that he could not get it to Withcott because the roads were flooded. I would say that it was about 2.30pm. I was not too concern as we knew there had been local flooding due to the heavy rain.
20. I then had a bit of a lay down and at about 3.15pm my brother Jim came around and told me that he had just come from the Grantham shop where he heard that water had risen up behind the Helidon Pub. Jim went back to his house to lift some personal items to a higher part of his house.
21. I then asked Shandi if we could go over to have a quick look. As I was getting dressed Gilbert KILAH drove into my driveway and told me that the creek level in Helidon had risen twice the height as the night before. After hearing this I became concerned.


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22. I then got into the 4WD duel cab with my family and drove to 11 Citrus Street and spoke to Darren KEEP and warned his of the rising water. At the time I was speaking with Darren I heard over the car radio on River 949 station that there was a wall of water about 150 metres wide coming towards Grantham from Helidon. Darren lives at this address with his wife, two children and his son-in law.

23. I then drove to the next house occupied by Sharon McCRAY and told her to pack a few things and get to their cars to the road beside my house because it was the highest road around that area. Also at Sharon's house was a male person who I only know as Ian. I saw Sharon immediately started to get things ready.

24. I then drove to Lisa SPEIRLING's house at [REDACTED] where I also warned her of the coming water. I reversed out and drove to the Sandy Creek Bridge where I notified Kenley ARNDT and another male person who I know is involved with the rural fire brigade.

25. When I turned my car around to head home I saw the water coming across the paddock in a westerly direction. I would estimate the height of the water to be about 5 foot. All this took no more that 5 minutes. I would say the time would be about 3.30pm.

26. I then pulled back into the SPEIRLING's driveway and yelled out for her and her three (3) children to leave everything and jump into the back of my 4WD because the water was only about 300 metres away. Lisa and her three (3) children aged [REDACTED] then jumped into the back of my car.

27. I drove back into Citrus Street and saw that Sharon and Ian were just about to drive out of their driveway so I yelled out for them to drive to Railway Street which is at the end of the street beside my house.

[REDACTED]

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28. I continued to my brother's house which is next door to my house and told him that the water was coming. I told my wife to get the kids and run up to the railway line together with SPEIRLING family.

29. I then hooked my eighteen (18) foot aluminium boat onto my 4WD and drove it to Railway Street about 20 metres from my house. Whilst I was doing this I saw Marcus CASSILINO walk past my house towards the highway. I then told him to turn around and head for the railway line. I then ran back to get my other car to also put on higher ground.

30. I saw Sharon and Ian standing beside the parked cars on Railway Street and told them to get onto the train tracks. I also told Mrs KEEP and her two (2) children Brendan and Natasha to get onto the train tracks. There was also another male person with them who I know to be Mrs KEEP's son-in-law. I do not know his name. Darren stayed at the house. I later learnt that Darren was evacuated from his roof top by helicopter.

31. When I turned to look back up the street I saw that Marcus was still walking towards the Highway in Citrus in about knee deep water. I saw that he was having trouble standing against the strong current of the water. I then rush towards him and by the time I got to Marcus I was about waist deep in water. Marcus told me he must get home to help his wife because she was alone at home. I know that Marcus lives on Gatton-Helidon Road with his wife. I do not think anyone else lives with them. The driveway to his house is directly across the road from the Citrus Street intersection.

32. I told Marcus that I could not let him continue to his house as he would not make it. I then helped him back towards the railway line. When we got there I saw that we had been cut off by water and could not get onto the train tracks. Jim was waiting by the boat at this time and was also cut off by water.

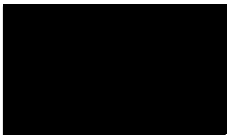

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33. Jim and I then got Marcus into the boat before undoing the straps and jumping in ourselves. We then sat in the boat and waited for the water to lift the boat off the trailer. Before the boat had lifted I felt my 4WD was beginning to move from the force of the water and the debris caught underneath.
34. At this time I saw that Mrs KEEP, her daughter, her son and her son-in law were hanging onto the railway fence. Mrs KEEP and her son were being forced against the fence by the water and her daughter and son-in-law were on the other side on the railway fence hanging on from being swept away by the force of the water.
35. By this time my boat floated from the trailer. I then started the engine and drove to Mrs KEEP and her son. Jim and I pulled them both into the boat. I attempted to get to the other side of the fence but the motor stalled and I could not get it re-started.
36. We were then pushed onto the railway line where Jim and I quickly got everyone on the boat to safety. Jim and I then dragged Mrs KEEP's daughter and her husband onto the train tracks. They were hanging onto the grass and appeared to be running out of energy.
37. When we were on the train tracks I looked back along the line towards Helidon and saw water about a foot or higher than the tracks heading in our direction. I then told everyone to run towards the school. The school is about 800 metres along the track from where we were situated.
38. Whilst on the bridge running towards the school I saw about two (2) or Three (3) cars with people trapped inside floating past me. I did not take much notice of the type, make, model or colours of these cars as I was concentrating on getting myself and the people on the train tracks to safety.


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39. I also saw a white Toyota Prado float past with Gilbert KILAH and two young girls sitting on top of the roof. The two young girls I believe live in Sorensen Street, Grantham. I saw the Prado hit a tree causing Gilbert and one (1) of the girls to fall off. I saw that the other girl stayed on the Prado roof. I later spoke to Gilbert and now I am aware that he and both girls survived and are well.


40. I saw people sitting on roofs of their house in Grantham. I also saw a male person who I do not know hanging in a tree.

41. When we reached the railway bridge we managed to get everyone across safely with the assistance of people on the other side. There were a total of twenty-one (21) people including children that got safely across. Whilst attempting to cross the bridge there were cars jammed up against the walkway, a shipping container, logs and a lot of debris making it very difficult.

42. I would estimate that it would only have been twenty minutes between the time Gilbert first warned me at 3.15pm to when we reached the safety of the Grantham School. I guess this would make the time between 3.45pm and 4pm.

43. On Tuesday 11th January 2011 after lunch my family and I were evacuated to Helidon Community Centre by helicopter. We stayed there for a couple of hour before moving in with family at Helendale.

44. I do not know of any flood warning system in place that may have provided us with early warnings. I do know that there is a flood water level tower in Sandy Creek and another at Helidon on the Lockyer Creek that is accessible via the internet. I think that this system can tell us the current water level compared to previous water levels. However I do not have the internet so I would not be able to access this information.


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45. I am aware of previous floods but not to the extent of evacuation. I am only aware of water rising but not of waves of water with such force.

[Redacted Signature]

R.J. WILKIN

Justices Act Acknowledgement

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 24/01/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 9 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.

[Redacted Signature]Signature

Signed at Gatton this 24th day of January 2011.