



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: _____ Date: 20/01/2011

Statement of

Name of witness: WILKIN, James Edward

Date of birth: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: Forklift Driver

Police officer taking statement

Name: MURRAY, Kenneth William Gregory

Rank: Detective Sergeant Reg. no.: 9889

Region/Command/Division: SCOC Station: Task Force Galaxy

Statement:

Task Force Galaxy

Gatton Police Station

James Edward WILKIN states:

1. I am a [redacted] year old male that temporarily resides at [redacted] Blenheim with my sister Jody ALLEN.
2. Prior to this address I resided at [redacted] Grantham with my mum Lynette Anne WILKIN ([redacted]). The house was a wooden Queenslander on 2 foot stumps (not strapped). The house was a 2 bedroom place with a third bedroom veranda. The house was green with a silver zinc tin roof. The house faced East to West and had an old wood and tin shed at the back.
3. The house was owed by my mum but is not insured.
4. The house on the Southern side was number [redacted] Grantham. It was a White Queenslander built South to North. It had one adult male in it who worked for the council. He had a twin cab Red ute.

Exhibit Number:

QFCI

Date:

27/4/11
147

JM

[redacted signature]

(Witness's signature)

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

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, James Edward**

5. The house on the Northern side was number [REDACTED] It was owned by my brother Robert John WILKIN (28 years). It was a Cream Queenslander which faced North to South.
6. My phone land number at home was [REDACTED]
7. My mobile phone number [REDACTED] and the carrier is Telstra.
8. I do not have access to the internet.
9. I am a Forklift driver by trade and have worked and lived in the area all my life.
10. I am currently employed by [REDACTED]
11. I owned a 1989 White Honda Civic, I can't remember the registration plate.
12. I remember Monday the 10th of January 2011.
13. Around 3:30pm I was down the town Service Station on Anzac Avenue helping Marty Warburton by placing stock onto higher shelves as the creek was flooding a bit nearby. The recent flood water had reached the bridge on Gatton Helidon Road and was lapping just on the bitumen. Marty was worried about the water lately getting in the store. He said the street was flooding recently and people driving through the flood water were putting bow waves into the store ruining stock.
14. A lady at the shop was on her mobile phone and I over heard her say that Helidon was flooding and cars were getting swept off the Warrego Highway at Helidon. I told Marty I was off home and took off on my bicycle.
15. I walked into the house and moved the TV off the ground and heard my brother Rob shouting.
16. I walked out in my driveway and saw a wall of water coming towards the house from the Lockyer Creek direction across the Gatton Helidon Road. The water was 2 metres high and brown like a chocolate milkshake. It was full of logs and even cars. I could not tell how broad it was from where I was standing. It was travelling real fast maybe 60 – 70 kmph.
17. I thought holy fucking shit and was worried that I was in some real trouble.
18. I saw my brother was driving his Blue 4wd towards me and stopped at the brick house at 13 Citrus Street Grantham. He was shouting at people in that house that the water was coming and to get to the railway line.


[REDACTED]
(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, James Edward**

19. He drove past me and I saw a lot of people in his car and stopped at Railway Street. These people included Lisa SPEILING, Hans SPEILING, Claus SPEILING, Elsa SPEILING, Sharon McCRAY and a man called Ian
20. All the people jumped out of his vehicle and ran up to the railway tracks.
21. The water had not reached our house so Rob and I went back with the 4wd to his house and hooked up his 18-foot Quintex Aluminium boat which had a 90 horse power outboard.
22. Rob and I drove the 4wd with the boat back down Citrus Street and parked at the intersection with Railway Street and released the straps off the boat which held it down. The area was known as a dry place to park cars in case of flood. There was currently around 12 cars parked at that location.
23. I saw a large older lady and with a man and couple of kids walking quickly towards me down Railway Street past my brothers house.
24. I ran over to them and helped the lady move quicker towards the railway line.
25. I then looked back down Citrus Street and saw Rob and Gilbert KILAH helping Marcus CASSLANO run towards us. The water was right behind them and was around one foot high.
26. When Marcus got to us Rob put the steps down on the boat and Marcus got in. Rob helped me with the last straps and the water was up to my knees. At this time trees two foot round and 4 metres long were banging into the trailer. I saw the give way sign at the intersection get smashed over by debris.
27. I was trying to get the boat off the trailer and the car and boat started to shift sideways. A wave came towards me down Railway Street in an Eastern direction to join the water I was in. It was carrying cars including an OZ logic van belonging to Mat Keep past 84 Railway Street.
28. At this time I thought that the water was too strong and that we were going to die.
29. Rob started the engine and we were facing West along Railway Street. I was at the back with Marcus in the passenger seat. Everyone else we had saved was on the railway line watching us.
30. Both Rob and I acknowledged to each other that four people were hanging onto a fence post along the railway line around 30 metres North of the boat. They were all holding on and the post was bending under the strain.


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, James Edward**

31. Rob steered us towards the people and had the boat at full power but we hardly moved forward. After a couple of minutes we got close and saw that it was Brendan KEEP, his mother, Natasha KEEP and her husband. I pulled Brendan in to the boat and dodged some cars. We powered back and picked their mum. At that time the engine overheat light came on. Rob turned the boat off and the boat floated against the raised railway line.
32. We all got out and suddenly Natasha and her husband floated towards us.
33. At this time I saw a wave a foot high coming down the railway line towards me.
34. I thought fuck it and we all ran down the railway line in an Easterly direction towards the primary school over the railway bridge.
35. As I was running past a house around 48 Railway Street I could see two elderly people in a Cream Queenslander place. I could see the front window facing the railway line and they were belting on the glass shouting "Help us, help us!"
36. I shouted to them "Hang on and helicopters were coming!"
37. They keep yelling as we all ran towards the school.
38. As we all got to the intersection of Nicholls Street I saw Gilbert KILAH and two young girls on top of White Toyota 4wd. The car was floating down Railway Street towards the railway bridge. Gilbert was using his hands to paddle and attempting to steer the car. They did not acknowledge me.
39. We all kept running towards some trees past Nicholls Street along Railway Street. A male adult was hanging on to some trees near the railway lines. The water was up to his shoulders and splashing over his face. I couldn't tell who it was.
40. As we past [REDACTED] around Ian Gordon's house I could see a large object float by. It looked like a clothed body, I couldn't tell much more.
41. I just kept thinking we were dead.
42. As I ran towards the railway bridge it was starting to go under water.
43. Shortly after that I saw the Gilberts car hit a power poll with some force nearby. It threw Gilbert and one girl into the water. The last girl held onto the car roof until it the railway line and she fell off. She was close enough to the railway bridge and was grabbed by some people to safety.

[REDACTED]
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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: WILKIN, James Edward

44. I saw Gilbert and the girl in the water move past me quickly around 60 kmph. I could not make out there movements or condition at that time in the flood water.
45. I didn't see Gilbert or that girl after that.
46. As I got towards the railway bridge I saw Gilberts car get sucked under the bridge.
47. At this time I had my young nieces under my arms and wading through the water which was hitting my knee. Cars were getting sucked under the railway bridge and the noise was like crunching metal.
48. At this time my sister in law Shandie WILKIN was on Rob's mobile phone ringing triple 000. [REDACTED] I heard Shandie was telling someone about us and what was going on. I still felt that we were in trouble and the water was rising quickly.
49. I could see people on Victor Street near the edge of the water towards the school.
50. I was shouting at them to help us.
51. Andrew SMITH, Craig SMITH and another man came into the water and helped us out. They undid the railway gate for us to get across and out of the water.
52. We crossed one last deep ditch of water and got onto Victor Street near the school.
53. I stopped for a minute and looked back at the railway bridge and saw a male and female running towards us. The water was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a metre over the railway bridge.
54. Rob and I ran back into the water and helped them back to safety. They told me they were driving from Brisbane to Toowoomba when they got washed out of their car and onto the railway line.
55. At that time the water surged and the railway bridge went completely under water.
56. I breathed a little easy at this stage but was still worried as water was all around us and just didn't seem to be stopping. The water was all around us including Morgans Road.
57. The water was roaring and loud. I can't remember at times how loud the water was but overall it was like a jet engine. I recall that when speaking at distance I had to shout.

[REDACTED]
(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, James Edward**

58. Rob and I walked up to the primary school and saw a large shed getting flooded by water near the railway siding. The shed made a terrible noise as it was crushed and torn away towards Morgans Road heading East. As it floated away it took out a power pole with a crunch.
59. Five minutes after that I saw the living quarters of the Grantham pub ripped off the main building and float away heading East.
60. I saw water lapping on a tall stilted house behind the Grantham shops. I could see water up to the second story. I thought to myself how high was the water going to get.
61. It was getting dark and I could hear helicopters everywhere.
62. I walked back to school and spoke to the girl who was saved from Gilberts car. She said her name was Emma from Sorenson Street Grantham. She was stressed over her sister and dad. I told her I would look after her.
63. I asked some of the ladies at the school to look after Emma which they did.
64. I walked back down Victor Street and it was getting dark. At this time the water had receded a bit but so you just make out the hand rail on the railway bridge.
65. I saw a police officer at the school and he spoke to all of us grabbing our names. I couldn't tell you the time by this stage and didn't have a watch.
66. I stayed with my ex-wife at [REDACTED]
67. In the morning I woke up and got up around daylight on the 11th of January 2011.
68. I walked down Victor Street and see the water had dropped a bit but was on the way up again. Over the next three hours it rose again to be only a metre under what it had been before.
69. Helicopters came around 9:00am and picked up people from the school. I didn't go and told the police officer I was walking out. That day I was supplied food and water but we had no power.
70. The police officer and his wife who was a school teacher organised the refugees. They did the best they could and we were all looked after. At some point a generator was set up so we could cook a barbecue.
71. I walked out on the 12th of January 2011 around 7:40am. The water was back to normal levels. The mud was up to my knees and I saw debris and far as you could see.

[REDACTED]
(Witness's signature)

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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **WILKIN, James Edward**

72. I walked about 2 km down Gatton Helidon Road towards Gatton.

73. Police had a road block setup and I spoke to Percy CHARMERS nearby who drove me into Gatton to the Gatton Sports Centre. City Council had a refugee Centre setup and I supplied my name.

74. I walked to my friend, Anthony HUGHES house at [REDACTED] and stayed there.

75. I describe the entire event as horrific and the scene as total devastation.

76. I have always lived in the town and the Sandy Creek river had not run for ten years. The town flooded occasionally and flood water ran through [REDACTED] Gatton Helidon Street. The river would never get more than two foot high and definitely not over the railway line.

77. The week prior to the flood the town suffered some flooding but not too much. The water had come and gone about six times over a two week period without concern.

78. No person or authority told me of any warning or emergency plan for the town.

79. The only town plan during minor floods was to park our cars on the high land near the railway bridge. We always had plenty of time to do this as the water only rose and fell slowly.

80. I took some pictures on my phone the next morning which I am able to provide.

81. On Tuesday the 18th of January 2011 I was allowed to return to my home.

82. The house was totally destroyed. Grantham was basically wiped off the map. The house was a big pile of rubble.

83. My Honda was in Sandy Creek at the intersection of Lawler's Road and Victor Street. The car was smashed beyond repair with the roof crushed in.

[REDACTED]
(Witness's signature)

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84. This is a true and accurate summary on my involvement in this matter.



James Edward 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 20 January 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 7 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 at ..Gatton ..this.....19...day of...January...2011.



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