

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Prepared by: Legal Services Unit

Date: 25 November 2011

Name of Witness: Nathan Cole CHADWICK

Address of Witness: c/ Department of Community Safety

Occupation: Firefighter

Position: Senior Firefighter

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

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Requirement to Provide Statement No. 1776853

I, Nathan Cole Chadwick, Senior Firefighter, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (South Eastern Region), Department of Community Safety, state:

1. I am a Senior Firefighter employed by Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.
2. I have been so employed for seven years.
3. I am stationed at 45 Station, Ipswich on B shift.
4. I am trained to Level 2 Technical Rescue. This is specialised rescue training, and includes swift water / flood water rescue.

Question 1: Who contacted you on 10 January 2011 requesting that you report for duty? What time were you contacted? Please provide details of the conversation?

5. I recall the events of 10 January 2011.
6. On that day, I was rostered for duty commencing at 1700 hours.



This is page 1 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick):
[REDACTED]

**JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for
Declarations:** [REDACTED]

7. Shortly after 0933 hours, I was telephoned by Station Officer Mark Stephenson who was the duty station officer at 45 Station that morning. Mark Stephenson said to me, "I see you're working tonight. Are you available for duty earlier?" I said that I was, and I was then stood up for duty commencing at 12 noon that day, at 45 Station.
8. At around 1147 hours that day, I received a further telephone call from Station Officer Mark Stephenson who confirmed that I was required for duty commencing at 12 noon that day. I was travelling through Riverview towards 45 Station in my vehicle, when I received that call from Mark Stephenson.

Question 2: If no one contacted you on 10 January 2011 requesting that you report for duty, why did you decide to report for duty?

9. I was rostered for duty on 10 January 2011, and refer to paragraphs 5 – 8 of my statement.

Question 3: Which fire station did report to for duty? What time did you arrive at the fire station?

10. I reported for duty at 45 Station (Ipswich).
11. I arrived at 45 Station some time after 12 noon. I am uncertain of the exact time; however, I believe it was around 1210 hours as the trip from Riverview to 45 Station took about 20 to 25 minutes in my estimation. Riverview is about 10 kilometres from 45 Station.

Question 4: Please outline in detail your movements and activities on 10 January 2011.

12. I had been advised by Station Officer Mark Stephenson that the plan was that I would form a swift water team with Station Officer Phil Paff, and that we would stand by at Gatton for the day.
13. Upon arrival at 45 Station, I was advised by the crew of the fire appliance that Mark Stephenson, together with Phil Paff and Senior Firefighter [REDACTED] had been responded to a swift water rescue at Ripley.
14. Some time between 1230 hours and 1300 hours on 10 January 2011, FireComm rang the duty office at 45 Station and requested that I proceed to Undulla Road at Ripley. I travelled to the designated location in 645 Yankee. 645 Yankee is a technical rescue vehicle which is equipped, amongst other things, for swift water rescue.
15. My task at Ripley was to collect the crew of 643 Alpha, which is a fire appliance based at Bundamba. It had become stranded by flood waters. The location was just before the Ripley rifle range.



This is page 2 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick):	JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for Declarations
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

16. I duly collected the 643 Alpha crew and took them to 45 Station to collect the spare fire appliance there, so that they could stand by at Bundamba.
17. When I was about five minutes away from 45 Station, I heard on the radio that 645 Mike had been responded to a swift water rescue. The crew of 645 Mike requested that I respond with them to that incident. I dropped the Bundamba crew at 45 station and then proceeded as tasked. The intent was that I would form a rescue crew with Phil Paff.
18. When I was in the vicinity of Plainlands – which is about 30 minutes drive from Ipswich – I received a radio message from FireComm responding me to an incident at Postman’s Ridge. I was still travelling alone at this stage. The incident to which I was responding concerned a report of two persons being washed from a house. I informed FireComm that I was still a crew of one. FireComm advised me that they were aware of my situation, but that they had no other resources available to back me up.
19. I then radioed Station Officer Mark Stephenson to advise him that I was responding to the Postman’s Ridge incident. We arranged to meet up at the corner of the Warrego Highway and Postman’s Ridge Road. There is a bridge there.
20. I duly met up with Mark Stephenson and his crew at the agreed rendezvous point at 1420 hours. I recall looking at the creek there and it appeared to me to be flowing normally. I thought it was unusual given the number of radio calls which I had been hearing about major flooding.
21. Station Officer Phil Paff joined me in 645 Yankee and together we proceeded up Postman’s Ridge Road. It was apparent to me that we were on our way to a major incident, because of the volume of radio calls coming through which were all referring to major flooding in the area.
22. We remained in company with 645 Mike, following that vehicle and complying with Mark Stephenson’s directions. Mark was the officer-in-charge of the crews of 645 Mike and 645 Yankee.
23. The two vehicles proceeded up Postman’s Ridge Road for another 2-3 minutes and then both crossed another bridge. The terrain on the other side of this bridge was uphill. The intersection of Postman’s Ridge Road and Murphy’s Creek Road was on our right in the direction of travel, and there was an electricity sub-station at the intersection.
24. As we proceeded to crest the hill above the bridge which we had just crossed, 645 Mike stopped. I stopped 645 Yankee, and both Phil Paff and I dismounted from the vehicle and walked up to 645 Mike to see why they had stopped.
25. At this point, I saw what I can only describe as a massive flood of water carrying vehicles, houses and shipping containers come rushing down the creek in front of me.



This is page 3 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick): [REDACTED]	JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for Declarations [REDACTED]
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26. A plan was then formulated whereby 645 Mike, which is a Command and Recue vehicle and is equipped as such, would vacate the immediate area and to set up somewhere safer as a command and control centre, whilst Phil and I went to check houses in the area where we had just arrived.
27. I saw 645 Mike make a U turn and commence re-crossing the bridge we had just traversed. Phil and I started to proceed in 645 Yankee down the driveway of a Queenslander style house which I could see was being smashed by floodwaters.
28. I later learned that 645 Mike, as it was about to cross the bridge to which I have referred, was struck by a large surge of floodwater. This nearly resulted in 645 Mike being swept off the bridge. The vehicle managed to reverse off the bridge, and the crew set up a command post where they were.
29. Phil and I continued in 645 Yankee along the driveway to which I referred earlier. We travelled as far as we could, until we were a few metres from floodwaters flowing across the driveway. These were rising rapidly. I observed a lady and a girl in a paddock near the house to which I have referred. These two people were trying to round up horses in the paddock. They were both in water up to their knees. Either Phil or I – I cannot now recall which – said to them, “Get out of the water! Get into your house!” Both of them complied with this direction.
30. Phil and I had planned that, once the lady and the girl were back in the house, we would set up a rescue. 645 Yankee was equipped with an Inflatable Work Platform (IWP). This is essentially an inflatable rubber boat. We inflated and deployed the IWP and I established a Tension Diagonal. This was a rope which I secured at one end to 645 Yankee and at the other end to a tree near the house. The IWP was then tethered to the rope by means of a shackle which is fitted to it. The IWP is then free to slide up and down the rope between the two anchor points. I have prepared a sketch of the layout used. It is attached and marked “NC -1”.
31. Whilst I was attending to this, Phil walked to a barbed wire fence which ran across the property behind the house. He entered the floodwaters and clambered along the fence through the flood. When he reached a point on the fence near the house, he dropped into the floodwater and drifted down to the house to where he could assist the occupants.
32. The IWP floated along the rope down to the house. I then left the point where 645 Yankee was stationed and made my way to the fence. I then repeated the exercise that Phil had undertaken. The water was chest deep along the fence. However, where the fence started to traverse the rear of the house, the water dropped to around knee height. I proceeded to relocate the end of the rope which had been tied to a tree near the house, and I secured it to the fence.



This is page 4 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick):

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[REDACTED]

33. The lady and the girl, and two young boys who had been in the house, then boarded the IWP with Phil and they floated back along the rope to where 645 Yankee was situated. This was safe ground. A male person, who turned out to be a friend of the family, then arrived. The women and the children then boarded his truck and left with him. Before he left, he pulled 645 Yankee out of the soft ground where it had become bogged whilst the rescue was in progress.
34. Phil and I then returned to where 645 Mike was sited. A fire appliance with a Gatton auxiliary crew arrived at that time. Phil and I then proceeded along Postman's Ridge Road to a point a few hundred metres from where 645 Mike was situated. This was where what I would term as the main community of Postman's Ridge was located. This had originally consisted of about a dozen houses; however, these had either been washed away or had been moved off their foundations by floodwaters. The people here reported to us that there were people missing from this locality. This was around 1544 hours on the 10th.
35. Phil and I observed a helicopter flying around overhead, and we tried to attract the pilot's attention. However, we were unsuccessful.
36. I observed that there was still a lot of water flowing in this vicinity. However, it appeared to me to be receding.
37. There are three bridges on Postman's Ridge Road which provide access across creeks and the third bridge was surrounded by the remains of destroyed houses. It was covered in debris and was cut. This bridge was eventually cleared by someone – just who did this I am not sure.
38. At this point, we received a radio message from Mark Stephenson tasking us to proceed to Murphy's Creek. On the way there, we met the man who had collected the family whom we had rescued from the house located near the place where 645 Mike was nearly washed away. This man – whose name was [REDACTED] – had good local knowledge of the area and he joined us in 645 Yankee. We proceeded to the address which we had been tasked to check. There had been a report of a woman trapped up a power pole. However, when we arrived she had already been rescued.
39. We then proceeded to Ossians Road. We went down this road as far as we could and then we had to stop, as it had been washed away. Phil said he thought he heard a human voice. He called out, "Fire and Rescue! Can you hear me?" This was at about 1600 hours on the 10th January. I then heard a faint cry. We proceeded to the creek with ropes and rescue gear. There was a tangle of fallen trees with debris and rubbish caught up in them, and there was deep mud. There was a woman stuck behind a tree in the creek. She had lost most of her clothing, and when we brought her out of the creek she appeared to me to be suffering from shock and hypothermia.



This is page 5 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick): [REDACTED]	JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for Declarations: [REDACTED]
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40. This lady said that her husband and six year old daughter were somewhere in the vicinity. Phil took her back to the Murphy's Creek Hotel, which had been turned into a makeshift evacuation centre, while [REDACTED] and I commenced a search for her family.
41. We went about a kilometre upstream and found a vehicle sitting in fast flowing water. Its windows were open and water was flowing through it. I could not see anyone in the vehicle.
42. [REDACTED] and I then went back to Murphy's Creek Road and hitched a ride with a local to the hotel. There was no telephone or radio communication available at this time. I took up with Phil at the hotel and, at 1750 hours, we were tasked back to the Gatton Incident Control Centre.
43. We intended to go to Gatton via Helidon. We found the road was cut, so we detoured through Helidon township intending to get to Gatton via Grantham. We were at Helidon at 1900 hours on the 10th January, and it was then just getting dark.
44. When we arrived at Grantham it was obvious that the place had been pretty badly hit. There were overturned semi-trailers, shipping containers and many water tanks scattered about. There was an aeroplane stuck in the mud, and houses had been washed off their stumps. We had a large hand-held spotlight on 645 Yankee, but when I illuminated it I could not initially discern any people or vehicles moving in our vicinity.
45. Some time after I illuminated the spotlight, people started appearing. These were mostly young males. One young man – who subsequently appeared on the Channel Nine program 60 Minutes – was searching for his family and was very distraught. There was nothing practical which we could do to assist him in his state at that time, so we continued with our search.
46. We proceeded further down the road we were on and found two young males with an elderly lady. They asked us if we could take the lady to an evacuation centre, so Phil and I proceeded towards the Gatton bypass with the lady in 645 Yankee. On the way, we met another swift water crew and some auxiliaries about five minutes drive from Grantham. At this stage we had not entered Grantham proper.
47. We handed the lady into the care of the auxiliaries, and then Phil and I took up with the other swift water crew who were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We were also joined at this time by Mark Meier, who is an urban firefighter but who, on this occasion, was working as an auxiliary. This was at about 2000 hours on the 10th January.
48. When we returned to Grantham, I observed that there was still a large amount of water in the town. We drove as far as we could, before being stopped by floodwaters. I recall seeing two rural fire service trucks which had been impacted by floodwaters.



This is page 6 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

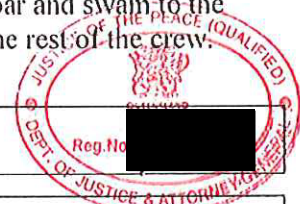
Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick): [REDACTED]	JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for Declarations: [REDACTED]
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49. We formed a plan whereby [REDACTED] and I would paddle the IWP into Grantham, while Phil and Mark checked some houses which were by then clear of floodwaters.
50. Just before I left in the IWP, Phil called me over to one of the rural fire vehicles. I observed three bodies in the driver's cab. A woman's body was in the driver's seat and was huddled over the body of a boy. The boy's body was in the middle passenger seat. A girl's body was in the passenger seat foot-well area beside the passenger side door. The body's feet were up against the passenger side window. The windows of the vehicle were up, and the doors were locked. This vehicle was parked on the curb, facing in the direction of Helidon.
51. After this [REDACTED] and I swam the IWP into Grantham proper. The surrounding waters were still flowing swiftly and seemed very deep. The night was pitch black.
52. After a short time, I began seeing lights on the tops of houses. These turned out to be the lights on people's mobile phones, which they illuminated when they saw and heard us coming.
53. Grantham has two main streets: Harris Street and Anzac Avenue. We went down Harris Street which was the more densely populated of the two. We started taking up with residents, telling them to stay where they were and that we would be back. Anyone who did not appear to have a safe place to stay was directed to one of the more stable houses. We received no reports of fatalities in Harris Street.
54. We then proceeded to Anzac Avenue. There was a lot of water coming down this street. I then saw some strobe lights on the other side of Grantham and proceeded to their location. The lights belonged to a swift water crew from Brisbane. They were Brad Mills and Andrew Neill.
55. We parted company with the Brisbane crew shortly after, and at about this time, a front end loader carrying a policeman turned up. I gave this officer a situation report as to where we had searched and we then parted company.
56. [REDACTED] and I paddled down Anzac Avenue towards the Grantham hotel, searching houses as we went. A lot of houses had been washed away, and movement was treacherous because of the presence in the water of barbed wire and roofing iron and other debris. There were also fallen power lines present, and the current here was quite strong.
57. We located a couple of survivors in one house, and there was a destroyed house next to the hotel.
58. I swam into the hotel and found two men sitting on the bar. I said, "How are you going, blokes?" They replied, "Not too good." These gentlemen offered me a beer. I declined but said I would have a lemonade. One of the men hopped off the bar and swam to the refrigerator, and came back with some lemonades for me and the rest of the crew.

This is page 7 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick):

JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for
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59. We continued searching. At this stage, we had no access to communications as my radio had been rendered inoperative earlier in the day by immersion.
60. [REDACTED] had a list of houses to be searched. This list had been provided by the ICC which had apparently received "000" calls from occupants of the houses on the list.
61. We searched every house we came to, and some were occupied. We then returned to the intersection of Harris Street and Anzac Avenue. By then we could hear the front end loader, which was moving around evacuating people in its bucket.
62. We started loading people into the IWP for evacuation. They were mainly young children whose safety was considered a priority. This was at 0100 hours on 11th January.
63. I was relieved at 0130 hours on the 11th January, and returned to 45 Station at about 0300 hours — from where I finished duty at 0700 hours on the 11th January.

Question : Did you have any contact (including by telephone) with any member of senior management from Queensland Fire and Rescue Service?

- (a) If so, who? When?
- (b) What was discussed?

64. I had no contact with any senior QFRS officer on 10th January 2011.

Question 6: Why were you not rostered on for duty on 10 January 2011?

65. I was rostered for duty on 10th January 2011, but was not due to commence until 1700 hours.

Question 7: Please provide details of any other matters you consider relevant to the Commission.

66. It is my personal belief that the decision by police to lock down Grantham and not to utilise Urban Search and Rescue Teams from QFRS did not assist matters. I feel that a lot of bodies were thereby left unfound for much longer than might otherwise have been the case.
67. I think that the initial decision to place Phil and me at Gatton was a good one — given our local knowledge, and our acquaintance with the past history of road closures due to flooding in the area. We were both also quite well aware of the potential for pockets to be isolated by flooding.
68. I think that the tasking which we received was appropriate, and that we achieved what had to be done with the equipment we had on hand.

This is page 8 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.



Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick): [REDACTED]	JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for Declarations: [REDACTED]
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69. I was aware that approval had been granted for two extra rescue technicians to be deployed. However, I am not exactly sure when I had that information provided to me — it was either on 10th January 2011 or subsequently.

I make this statement of my own free will believing its contents to be true and correct.

Justices Act 1886

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

- (1) This written statement by me dated today and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 9 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.

..... [Redacted] Signature

Signed at Brisbane this 25th day of November 2011



This is page 9 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Nathan Cole Chadwick):

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JP/Solicitor/Commissioner for
Declarations

[Redacted]

NC-1

