

## Witness Statement

Shane Norman Bretz

22 March 2011

C/- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, GPO Box 1425, Brisbane, QLD, 4001.

I, Shane Norman Bretz state: I am a forty five year male who is employed as a firefighter by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) in South East Region. I have been employed in the QFRS for 6 years and I am currently stationed at Beenleigh Fire and Rescue Station. During this period, I have attended numerous emergency incidents. I am trained to Level 2 in Technical Rescue which includes Swiftwater Rescue. Being Level 2 enables me to enter the water to perform rescues.

On 10 January 2011 I was rostered on duty at Beenleigh Fire Station and commenced duty at 1800hrs. We were then instructed to travel to Gatton in the utility to await tasking. I travelled out to Gatton with Station Officer Von Nida and because we were a crew I was in the company of Station Officer Von Nida for the entire time we were out there.

Once at Gattan we changed vehicles into 645M (rescue vehicle) and proceeded towards Grantham. During the night we assist numerous people from their flooded homes by using the Inflatable Work Platforms (IWP) and assisted the Police in the search a many areas that they could not access due to the water.

The next morning, I advised Fire Communications that we were not able to go anywhere due to the restrictions because of the water. I then heard conversations about the provision of a helicopter so myself, Von Nida, [REDACTED] then went down to the showgrounds to take up with a chopper. Once at the showgrounds we were called over to a Blackhawk helicopter and we got on board thinking that this was the chopper allocated to us. Once on board they said where are you going and we told them an address but they needed latitude and longitude coordinates so they flew us to Forest Hill where they were doing evacuations. We then arranged for the coordinates and we got back on board the Blackhawk. We took off toward the coordinates but then we saw a house and the pilot flew towards it. The crewman asked if we were confident to go up and down the wire because he wanted to keep his mate in the chopper for additional observation because the conditions were so bad. The conditions at the time were horrendous with driving rain and very strong winds. We all said that we were ok to go down the wire. We received some concise instructions as to how to go down the wire and he harness etc and then Brad was the first to get kitted up to go down. Brad then went down at the first location and retrieved 5 people including a 7 month year old baby. We dropped them off and returned to another location in the same area when Von Nida went down the wire and brought up one young

man to begin with. We then went over to another shed where Von Nida went down again and brought up a mother, father, son and daughter. As they were entering the chopper I was doing some preliminary triage on the people checking their medical condition and their general wellbeing.

After we dropped these people off we then went to the Plainlands shopping centre and we were to await the chopper to come back after it refuelled. I got kitted up as I was to be the next to go down the wire. We waited for about 2 hours but they never returned. By this stage we had been working in excess of 24 hours.

I had never been in a chopper like this before and I was obviously very surprised when we were asked to go down the wire by the crewman. We thought we were going to a location to be dropped off at and go to work. I certainly never envisaged us going down the wire. I think that both Von Nida and [REDACTED] did an outstanding job given that they had no training or experience in going down a wire out of a helicopter. It is something I will never forget.

[REDACTED]

Signature  
Name/ Rank

[REDACTED]

Witness Signature  
Name/Rank *Superintendent*