

Statement of Witness

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry

Name of Witness	Martin Craig WARBURTON
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED]
Occupation	28 Anzac Avenue, Grantham
Officer taking statement	Detective Sergeant Stephen Platz
Date taken	17/03/2011

ADDENDUM TO STATEMENT

1. I am a 41 year old male presently residing at [REDACTED] Gatton. I am a business owner and operate the [REDACTED] service station located at [REDACTED] Grantham. Between 2000 and 2008 I was elected to the local council and served as a councillor for the Grantham district.
2. I have previously provided a statement to the Queensland Police in relation to my involvement in the flooding at Grantham on the 10th day of January 2011. Further to this flood incident I have suffered inundation to my business on the 26th day of December 2010, the 4th day of January 2011, the 6th day of January 2011 and the 9th day of January 2011.
3. I have since spoken to a representative from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry and provided them with further information concerning the issues arising from my experience during and after the floods.
4. As a resident and business operator I have prepared and been subject to flooding for a number of years. The flood event which occurred on the 10th day of January 2011 was by far the most severe flooding I have ever experienced.
5. On the 9th day of December 2011, as a result of heavy rain in the area, I suffered flooding in and around my place of business. The flooding at this stage was relatively normal inundation which did not cause significant damage to my business premises. It was, however, concerning as the weather did not seem to be improving and was not receding quickly.

Signature of witness [REDACTED]

Signature of officer [REDACTED]

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6. The water was covering the road at the lower end of Anzac Avenue on this night. I made contact with Danny Maguire from the rural fire brigade, some time during the evening. I had a conversation with him where he told me that he was considering evacuating Grantham and had made a call to his superiors with regards to this issue. Danny told me that his superiors did not think an evacuation was necessary and were told to monitor the situation.
7. Also on the night of the 9th January 2011 officers from the swift water rescue from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) approached me at my business and I had a conversation with them. They asked me questions concerning my awareness of the dangers of flooding and checked to see if I had an evacuation plan. I told them that I had been subject to a number of floods and that I would proceed to the rear of my building towards the railway track in the advent of severe flooding.

Issues Pertaining to Qld Floods Inquiry Terms of Reference

Warning

8. On the 10th day of January 2011 at about 3.30pm I received a warning via text message from friends at Flagstone creek and Helidon that a significant amount of water was heading towards Grantham. I was up the road from my business at this time and walked back to my service station. I arrived about twenty minutes later and made sure that I had some equipment was up on the benches away from the flooding.
9. As this warning was not issued by anyone in authority I did not take it as seriously as I should have. I was aware that other people received warnings prior to the flood event but I do not think they took it seriously either. I believe that if this warning came from the Police, residents would have heeded the advice more urgently.
10. Leading up to the major flood event I was monitoring the Bureau of meteorology website. I was keeping an eye on river catchments heights of the Lockyer River

and Sandy creek and general rainfall in the area. The website assisted me in making a decision to make some preparations however nothing really indicated the amount of water that we in fact received.

Preparation

11. I do not think that there sufficient preparation for the floods at Grantham in general. Leading up to the event I received assistance from the QFRS who delivered sandbags to me at my shop to assist with low level inundation. I personally made preparations such as making an escape plan from shop, putting equipment up on benches, switching off mains power and placing my mobile phone into a clip seal bag. Unfortunately though these preparations were not sufficient for the amount of water received on the 10th day of January 20011 at approximately 4.15pm.

Response

12. As a result of the major flood that came through Grantham I believe that the response was not sufficient. The flood that came through my shop and almost drowning me, I was forced to the roof of my premises. I remained on the roof during the afternoon and the night. I watched as two Queensland rescue helicopters attempted to rescue countless other people off rooves and other areas but they were unable to save everyone. Once it became dark the helicopters could not operate and I was unable to be rescued. As the waters were so strong at this stage the only way of rescuing people was via helicopter. I do not think that the government had sufficient helicopters to cope with the situation and they lacked the capability to operate at night time.
13. I remained on my roof until after midnight on the 11th January 2011. By this time the waters had calmed considerably. I then swam through the flood waters towards the railway tracks and then to high ground. At this stage the waters were calm an enough for boats to travel through and I do not under stand why the emergency services were not using boats to save people stranded on roof tops during the night. I became aware that some residents wanted to use some of their

Signature of witness



Signature of officer.



own boats to rescue residents however they were told by the police not to do so and that they would be fined if they continued. I think that the local emergency services should have access to boats for this situation and not be restricted in utilising this resource.

14. As a result of my dealings with the QFRS swift water rescue team it became clear that the emergency services lacked local knowledge of the area. I think that the emergency services should utilise local people to assist them in their duties especially if they are not from the local area.

15. The initial response by the emergency services was overall, poor. I am aware that it was a very confusing situation and that they lacked resources to rescue people but I felt that there was a general state of confusion and disorganisation. The organisation and resources did however improve but the critical time was during the first few hours of the disaster. I also felt that some of the police were not sensitive to the residents of Grantham at the road blocks set up by the police. I think that the problem was that after the initial response and due to loss of the life the whole area became a crime scene and everything was locked down. Unfortunately the residents at the Grantham recovery centre were in the middle of this crime scene and the police did not want residents moving back and forward to this recovery centre, even through we required supplies.

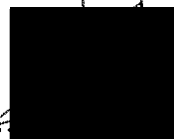
Recovery

16. The immediate recovery to the Grantham area has been slow. Not long after the major flood event it was discovered that a number of resources were required. The community evacuation centre located at the Grantham primary school was run entirely by the locals with very little government assistance. As this was not a dedicated evacuation centre it lacked essential systems such as showers, toilets, cooking facilities and communications equipment. As there was no power, generators were needed to run water pumps, lights and other essential powered devices. There was no government assistance provided with regards to generators and this had to be obtained from community resources.

Signature of witness



Signature of officer



17. The long term recovery process is slow but it is getting there. Little assistance was provided to the survivors within the first five days but after this time government assistance has improved steadily.

Insurance

18. As a result of the flood on the 10th of January 2011 I lost all my tools and equipment at my place of business. I was insured through ^{CALANDREW} ~~CCU~~ insurance and I made my claim through my broker, Ken DICKSON in Toowoomba. Initially I received positive feedback after I put in my insurance claim but after at least three assessors came to view my property, their attitude became less positive. At this stage I am still waiting on advice as to whether I'm covered but at this stage it doesn't appear I will be reimbursed for my lost possessions.

M. WARBURTON

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 17/3/11 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 5 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 GANNATHAM this 4TH day of APRIL-2011

Signature of witness
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Signature of officer