

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Date: 17th October 2011

Name of Witness: Deryck John TAYLOR

Address of Witness: [REDACTED] Lahrs Road, Ormeau QLD

Occupation: Area Director

Division: Emergency Management Queensland
Department of Community Safety

Telephone: [REDACTED] (Mobile) [REDACTED]

I, Deryck John Taylor, Acting Regional Director South Eastern Region Emergency Management Queensland, Department of Community Safety state:

1. I have been with Emergency Management Queensland since March 2008 and my substantive position is the Area Director for the Gold Coast. Prior to joining Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) I was a Queensland Police officer for six years, and a member of the Australian Defence Force for twenty three years.

2. My credentials include the following qualifications relevant to emergency and disaster operations: an Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management), Diploma of Frontline Management, Diploma of Public Safety (Police Search and Rescue - Coordination) and a Diploma of Public Safety (Policing). I also hold a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Certificate III in Public Safety (SES Operations), Certificate III in Public Safety (SES Rescue) and Certificate III in Public Safety (Aquatic Search and Rescue).

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3. My role is Area Director for the Gold Coast Local Government area. My duties include the following functions:
- Support the development and implementation of the EMQ regional operational service delivery plan.
 - Manage human resources, financial and asset management functions for the area.
 - Advise and assist government departments, Local Government Authorities, and non-government agencies on comprehensive disaster management programming, including risk management and mitigation strategies, volunteer matters, the development and maintenance of disaster management and response plans.
 - Provide strategic advice to the Regional Director on disaster management and response planning arrangements and programs.
4. During operations I am directed by the South Eastern Region, Regional Director, as well providing information to Local and District Disaster Management Groups.
5. Within my Area we have one SES Unit (Gold Coast), which comprises six SES Groups, (Carrara, Coolangatta, Pimpama, Runaway Bay, Southport and Springbrook). There are no paid SES members within the Gold Coast SES, however, Gold Coast City Council used to pay the SES Local Controller until they withdrew this funding about eighteen months ago.
6. Gold Coast SES Unit has approximately three hundred and fifty (350) members registered, however, only about half of these would be classed as regular active members. Recruitment has not been an issue following the recent flood events with approximately 50 new recruits joining, however; there have been some issues in relation to retention.
7. Members who leave the SES do so for a wide variety of reasons including family, work commitments, or because they are no longer interested etc however, some members leave because they become disillusioned. Some of the issues expressed to me over the last

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three and a half years include reporting to two different masters being Emergency Management Queensland and the Gold Coast City Council, a confused command structure, insufficient facilities (too small for the number of members and in one case, Southport Group, required to share with other organisations including Queensland Police Service and the District Disaster Coordination Centre. There differences in the availability of equipment and resources, stemming from the way they are supported by their local government, there is no requirement in legislation for a local government to support an SES unit within their boundaries, and in some cases limited training opportunities.

8. Request for assistance within the Gold Coast area comes via two different streams. Firstly the general public call the 132 500 phone number for flood and storm assistance, this then goes to our Regional Duty officer action. The Regional Duty Officer or the Gold Coast SES unit will then put the job into the RFA system. This procedure is changing with direct entry to the RFA system about to be conducted by Shared Services Queensland at initial contact with a member of the public through the 132 500 number.

9. As the 132 500 is advertised as being a single point of contact for the public in relation to flood and storm assistance a number of calls that get put into the RFA system that are not able to be dealt with by the SES and this then causes delays in response to the caller and ties up SES resources whilst they try to determine which is the appropriate agency to deal with the job. This could be attributed to the fact that the 132 500 number is now standard across the country however, the various States SES all have different responsibilities, with some such as NSW having legislative requirements for dealing with floods and storms.

10. Whilst police and emergency services contact the Regional Duty Officer direct, they then contact the appropriate SES unit who subsequently activate to attend to the task. The Regional Duty Officer's task is currently transitioning to the EMQ Watch Desk Officers

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at Kedron. Request from police and emergency services are put into the RFA system, by either the EMQ Watch Desk Officers or the Regional Duty Officer.

11. In general terms the prioritisation and management of jobs once given to the appropriate SES unit is left to the responsibility of the Local Controller. I will provide advice and guidance as required in order to enable the Local Controller to effectively and efficiently perform his functions. I will also act as the interface between the Local Controller and the disaster management system, whilst the regional duty officer forms the link back to the regional emergency operations centre.
12. During an event or at other times I will liaise with the Local Controller to ensure that appropriate tasking is completed and that if SES members are being deployed that only those who have the appropriate skills and qualifications deploy.
13. During the 2010 / 2011 floods a large number of SES members ranging from 10 to approximately 40 deployed from the Gold Coast SES unit on any particular day. I was involved within the disaster management system and as such was not involved with any deployments apart from being notified that they were occurring. As per standard practice, within the South Eastern Region, deployments were handled by the Regional Duty Officer and when it became too large for one person the regional emergency operations centre stood up to perform these functions.
14. Within the South Eastern Region each Unit (local government area) only has one Local Controller. As a result there are no issues in relation to sections 84A and 85 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*. Following local government amalgamations in 2008 we initially had two Local Controllers within Somerset and Scenic Rim SES Units however; one Local Controller within each amalgamated SES unit took the opportunity to retire. We did not replace them thus aligning these units in accordance with the SES Operations Doctrine which listed the structure of one Local Controller per SES unit.

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15. I was initially on leave during the 2010 / 2011 floods however, I was recalled to work and began assisting other EMQ staff in the regional emergency operations centre. From there I was sent by the Regional Director to assist the Ipswich District Disaster Management Group. Before I got there I attended the Ipswich Local Disaster Management Group where I stayed and provided assistance to the EMQ rep and to the Local Disaster Management Group. I was subsequently re-tasked by the regional director to go to Somerset and provide advice and assistance where possible.

16. Once at Somerset I took up with the chair of the Local Disaster Management Group and the Local Disaster Coordinator and provided them with advice. I then commenced producing SITREP's and requests for assistance on behalf of the Chair of the Somerset Local Disaster Management Group. This included requesting assistance to set up a local disaster coordination centre.

17. Whilst there I also maintained liaison as best as I could with regional and state EMQ personnel. This sometimes meant driving back to Ipswich in order to gain communications. There was no mobile communications at Fernvale because there was no electricity available. I needed 3G reception to use my laptop and I needed to drive back into Ipswich to get this reception.

18. From my involvement at Somerset and limited involvement at Ipswich I did not observe any difference in expectations between what EMQ wanted as opposed to what the Local Disaster Management Group wanted. In both cases the Local Disaster Management Group expected the Local Controller to deal with any requests for assistance, supported by EMQ. I observed that both Local Disaster Management Groups were too busy to be involved in individual agency business and if there were any shortfalls within the SES they expected EMQ to sort it out. This included things such as obtaining extra personnel and resources, as well as dealing with other volunteers such as Surf Life Saving Queensland.

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19. Whilst at Somerset I did have to provide guidance to SES members self responding to jobs that were outside their approved functions, skills and training. I advised them of the responsible agency and the procedure for re-directing requests that were not for the SES. Responsible agencies are both government and non-government organisations.
20. The Gold Coast SES unit was successful in securing funding for three second hand vehicles in 2009/10 through the SES non-recurrent funding subsidy which is jointly funded by state and local governments. I discussed the funding options with the Local Controller and we determined that new vehicles were required. I then liaised with the local government re completion of the application process, as a result they were successful in receiving funding for the purchase of three second hand vehicles from within the council's fleet.
21. Funding is a concern that is regularly raised with me by SES members. Whilst they are aware that it is a joint funding arrangement between state and local governments many members believe that they do not receive adequate funding from the state and local governments. Most members believe these current funding arrangements are not appropriate for an Emergency Service.
22. Many SES members expressed a desire for a single dedicated funding stream facilitated through the State government, thus alleviating the disparity that occurs from unit to unit across the state. This would also ensure standardisation of things such facilities, vehicles and equipment. Similarly, this dedicated state government funding program would bring them into line with other emergency services throughout the state and country.
23. Generally the SES response by the Gold Coast SES unit to the 2010 / 2011 floods was well conducted. There were some individual performance issues which are difficult to deal with because there is not a dedicated command structure within the SES. Issues that required attention included members attending to tasks that were the responsibility of other government or non-government agencies, members working excessive hours

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leading to fatigue issues and members not following directions given to them by their team leaders or Local Controller.

24. In my opinion, for the Queensland SES to grow and mature as an effective and efficient emergency service it needs to be funded and commanded from a single point. If it is going to be a State Emergency Service then, in my view, it needs to be solely funded by the state government alternatively, hand it all back to local governments and make it a Local Emergency Service. I do not believe the latter would work because the funding, training and structure would vary greatly from council to council. You would also lose the ability to effectively deploy members to other areas around the state to assist where needed.

25. Similarly, in my view, the SES needs a structure that enables it to have effective command and control. I am not aware of any other emergency service within Australia that does not have a formal command structure be it full time, auxiliary or volunteer based, such as the Queensland Rural Fire Service. Nor am I aware of any emergency service that has to report to two different masters, i.e. EMQ and local government, neither of which actually command the SES. The effectiveness of the SES within any local government area currently relies on good working relationships being established between EMQ and local government, in some areas this works well whilst in others I have been informed that it doesn't appear to be as effective. Likewise the proposed memorandum of understanding with the local governments only serves to formalise the current dysfunctional system described above.

26. Noting that funding and effective command are the two most common concerns that have been discussed with me by volunteers, and as this is not an issue with other volunteer emergency services such as the Queensland Rural Fire Service I suspect that this may contribute to the disparity in volunteer numbers between the SES and the Queensland Rural Fire Service.

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27. SES is also experiencing difficulties attending to jobs due to traffic congestion in the south east corner of Queensland which is only further exacerbated over peak tourist season or when weather events are occurring. The SES as an emergency service need to have priority travel access and be fitted with red and blue warning lights and sirens to assist them in attending time-critical incidents; this is consistent with other SES organisations around the country. The use of red and blue lights would also increase the safety afforded to members whilst they are conducting operations; now days many people such as council road work teams have amber lights on their vehicles and as a result SES performing lifesaving functions can not be distinguished from road crews etc.



Deryck John Taylor

Justices Act 1886

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

- (1) This written statement by me dated 17/10/2011 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.

..... Signature

Signed at ELANDRA..... this 17th day of October 2011

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