

Name of Witness	Brian MARFLEET
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED] Armstrong Creek ph. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Occupation	Communications / Coordinator Officer/Acting Brigade Training Officer
Officer taking statement	Detective Senior Sergeant Mark Reid
Date taken	6 April 2011

Brian MARFLEET states:

1. I am a married man, [REDACTED] years of age and currently reside at [REDACTED] Armstrong Creek. I currently serve as the communications coordinator and acting Brigade Training Officer for the Dayboro and District Rural Fire Brigade. I have been involved in the Comms/Coord officer role for about 8 years and acting Brigade Training Officer for about 10 months.
2. During 2001 I joined the Dayboro & District Rural Fire Brigade merely to be a volunteer fire fighter as I live in the community and in bushland in the area. In addition to operating in the field, I took on the role of comms/coord officer to lessen the burden on the Treasurer of the brigade and at the time worked for the Qld govt and was able to use Govt resources (mobile phone) to assist at times of emergency in the area. In 2009 I left my employment due to PTSD which was linked to my service in Vietnam. I was asked by the Management Team of the Brigade to take on the acting Brigade Training Officer role owing to the elected person unable to carry out those duties at the time, and my role in part within South Australia Police STAR FORCE and Underwater Recovery Section. I have continued to provide services to the Dayboro and District Rural Fire Brigade in my roles up to this time.
3. On 1 March 2011 I provided a 33 page submission to the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry regarding issues that I think should be addressed relating to the function of the Rural Fire Brigade in future emergencies and disasters

Witness Signature, [REDACTED]

Signature of officer

Page Number 1 of 87

400 George Street Brisbane
GPO Box 1738 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone 1300 309 634
Facsimile +61 7 3405 9750
www.floodcommission.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

Exhibit Number:

384

QFCI

Date:

13/05/11

fm

I am now able to produce a copy of that 33 page submission dated 1 March 2011 regarding the Rural Fire Brigade and its future function in emergencies and disasters.

TENDERED AND MARKED EXHIBIT NO.....

4. During the submission I have made reference to a number of issues that I will now try to explain for the purposes of clarity.

5. At the top of page four, I am explaining the process by which we call out our staff to assist in an incident or emergency. In paragraph one, our Brigade Officer requested a paging service to all brigade members on 12/1/2011 so that we could assemble to provide community assistance. In response to our request to have the page broadcast, the paging company had installed a recorded message stating that the system had been taken over by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service for their traffic. This effectively meant that we could not call our members out using our current paging system. As the Comms/Coord Officer I am required as part of my duties, when asked by the Brigade 1st Officer (the most senior operational ranked officer within the brigade), who has the authority from the Brigade to call for members to attend at the station or elsewhere, to call the paging company, use the Brigade identifier and place the message for transmission. Normally this in turn would then be sent out and received by the members of this Brigade only. They should then make contact with the Comms/ Coord Officer regarding their availability, ETA etc. I had not received any information as the Comms/Coord Officer of the Brigade that this service was no longer available to us apart from the recorded message. I would also have to reiterate that I did not retry the service a short time later as I believed the response required for the emergency unfolding in Dayboro was NOW not later.

6. I would also like to add something further in regard to my general comments on page four of my submission regarding training. Due to the stated position from QFRS with regard to TRAFFIC CONTROL no training has been made available with regard to assistance to motorists or anyone else who may face a road blockage either from a vehicle related incident or as we have seen, a flood related incident.

Witness Signature.



Signature of officer

7. I do have some further detail to add about some of the following issues:
- a. In regard to assistance offered by the RFB; there was no prioritisation of tasks. I.e. - what must be done to assist householders/businesses for their continued survival;
 - b. requests for assistance to RFB varied but one such request related to washing down people's lawn and boat ramp;
 - c. and the actual assistance we did provide was as senior crew man on the appliance that day my prioritisation was 1. House internal to enable people to move about and commence their cleaning processes, 2. Drive way and walkways to enable people to move into their dwellings/buildings to carry out their cleanup duties. 3. Adjacent roadway to enable vehicular access into the said dwelling/building;
 - d. DAYBORO & DISTRICT RFB provided positive practical assistance during the flood event using manpower and equipment dependent upon need. We assisted at the Community canoe club at Indooroopilly, where we cleared floors of mud and debris. We helped with the cleaning and clearing of dwellings, walkways and driveways hosed out, and pumped the water out of the underground car parks in the areas to which we were tasked.
8. I would also like to support the comment that I made on page 6 of the submission that it is "the common belief that the only situation at which Brigade personnel can effectively operate is on rural tracts of land". These comments were made by a senior QFRS official at a Brigade meeting within the last 18 months. Although there was a degree of debate at the time there has been no information/policies/instruction from QFRS provided to indicate otherwise.
9. In relation to Recommendation 1 (p6) the legislative effect did have a practical effect on us during the flood events. The FRSA is specific as to the role the RFB can take. Without any 'direction' so far received from the Commissioner QFRS (we have not received any at Brigade level) it does not include assistance/action as occurred on 11/1/2011 and most likely would not include, cyclone, earthquake or any other

Witness Signature.



Signature of officer

emergency on the scale of the flood. I am sure that had QFRS called for assistance as it did to clean up, it would be expected.

10. By being on the incorrect side of the roadway or driving on the incorrect side of the roadway to attend to victims dwellings, the drivers of the QFRS rural fire appliances are at odds with the instructions/policies of QFRS and thus could be liable to prosecution under the law. I recognise under the circumstances that QPS might be lenient however in this and other emergency/rural fire fighting situations the QFRS view is that it is not permissible (although Australian Road Rules say otherwise) and thus subject to prosecution or at the least disciplinary action from QFRS. Rural Fire Brigade members need to be confident that in carrying out their duties in emergency situations, where in the circumstances require particular action, they do not come under unjust scrutiny or criticism.

11. There has been no limitation from operating on a roadway, but the instructions and information provided from QFRS precludes operation on the incorrect side of the roadway or travelling on the incorrect side of the roadway. As an example about 2 years ago the Brigade responded to a call out with an appliance going up the Mount Mee Road (narrow and twisting road). As it emerged that it was a vehicle collision, something for which the Brigade is neither equipped nor trained to do, traffic assistance was sought by the local police officer and was provided to their best ability. Subsequent criticism occurred which culminated in the attendance at the station of the senior QFRS member. During the debate the query arose in relation to the Rural Fire Appliance moving past a line of banked up traffic to gain access to the scene, regardless if it was for traffic 'assistance' or to deal with a subsequent grass fire. The instructions stood. QFRS can block the road, not provide assistance to police for traffic control etc. Rural Fire personnel must comply with the Traffic regulations (this did not imply that the Australian Road Rule exemptions could be applied). This direction has direct relativity to the flood situation as occurred on 11/1/2011.

I have supplied a copy of an email to the Brigade Secretary, Mr Alwyn Weston on 2 December 2009 which reiterates the point. To this time that direction has not altered.

Witness Signature..



Signature of officer

12. There appears to be little scope for rural fire brigades to become involved, either off their own initiative or being tasked in the circumstances as unfolded in the day of 11/1/2011. Given the circumstances on the day there was no call out from QFRS for the Brigade to assist. (I do recognise that QFRS as indeed the QPS etc would have been stretched) Members off their own bat as members of the community offered assistance to others, albeit they chose to wear rural fire apparel for visibility sake. As Comms/Coord I had tried numerous times to contact the 1st officer by mobile phone (land line was down) during the day but without success, others were phoning me about our response to which I was unable to provide anything positive. As I was, as was the 2nd officer of Brigade, landlocked, we were unable to go into Dayboro. Later discussion with officers indicated that we were not permitted to frivolously use the Brigade resources. It was contended that the use of an appliance at the North Pine Bridge was not considered frivolous due to the perceived benefits.
13. The Brigade acknowledges that it report to QFRS 'FIRECOM' when leaving the station however in the circumstances of the day I believe that the scope as provided for in section 82 FRSA does not permit the Brigade to activate in anything other than that provided for or at the direction of the Commissioner. (No direction has been received from the Commissioner to do anything beyond that stated in the section)
14. A final recommendations about what could be done to better utilise the RFB in the event of a disaster would be that Rural fire brigade members are not the fit full time QFRS urban fire fighters but many are retired (over 60 yrs old) and younger members wishing to do something for the community or for other motives. We do not wish to be treated as the pick and carry group but have our abilities, expertise and motivation accepted as at least equal to the full time or auxiliary personnel. To have instructions/policies that inhibit natural common sense approaches to an emergency situation by perceivably an arm of the 'Emergency Service' spectrum leaves its members somewhat bewildered or conversely prepared to 'take the chance' to do what they believe to be right at the time.
15. The FRSA should be amended to clarify an RFB role in emergencies (which must include the disasters as identified in the DMA). It also must be remembered that

Witness Signature

Page Number 5 of 8

Signature of officer

Rural Fire Brigades exist where there is limited full time fire fighters (Urban), auxiliary fire fighters or large QPS establishments or perhaps SES.

16. An alternative is to have a specific Act created covering Rural Fire Brigade operations in all times of emergency. Training for such deployment will be something that QFRS and/or Qld Govt will have to address in the future.
17. I did have some consultation with the Brigade's management committee. My consultation with the Brigades management extended to the Chairman, Mr Glen Bell, the Secretary Mr Alwyn Weston, the Vice Chairman, Mr Kevin O'Sullivan and the Brigades 1st Officer, Mr Scott Stewart. The purpose of the consultation was to keep them in the loop as to my thoughts and subsequent submission to the Floods Commission. I also conferred with the Brigade's 2nd Officer, Mr Steve McCabe, 3rd Officer Mr Selwyn Barr, Fire Fighters Ms Lee Tapper and Mr Steve James regarding the events on the day in which they became involved. I sought clarification from the 1st Officer and the Brigade Secretary as to any direction received from the Commissioner QFRS regarding any enlarged functions per section 82 RFSA. They had not received any. I have since conferred with Tapper and James regarding disclosure of their obtained statements to the Investigating officer to which they have consented.
18. Having perused the Moreton Bay Regional Council Local Disaster management Plan I have found little advice as to the prioritisation of emergency service activity to affected persons in an emergency.
19. From a fire fighting perspective once the fire is out totally, people go about sorting out their affairs and the fire fighters go back to replenishing their appliances ready for the next fire. The flood however presented a very different situation, albeit Brisbane and surrounds have encountered this in the past and historically not an unknown phenomenon.
20. I have also discussed the matter with Rural Fire Brigade Area QFRS officer to whom he was unable to provide any clarification as to what priorities RFB personnel attend to or indeed even QFRS beyond damage assessment. It is accepted that affected

Witness Signature

Page Number 6 of 8

Signature of officer

victims will want much however the community must be advised clearly what the emergency service personnel will be able to reasonably provide.

21. It must also be remembered that RFB are volunteer and their resources are maintained from moneys gathered from within the community. i.e *fire fighting* pumps used for pumping out flooded and muddied car parks, swimming pools, lift wells etc all need to be pulled down serviced and impellers etc may need to be replaced. This then takes away moneys that would be otherwise used for fire fighting operations.

22. My understanding is that in a disaster situation Local Government activates its Disaster Management Plan and seeks assistance from particular resource areas to counter. It does not provide any guidance as to prioritisation of how those resources will be used.

23. From my observations, Dayboro Rural Fire Brigade along with many others responded to a call Via QFRS from Brisbane City Council to assist in the flood zone clean up. There was no information provided as to prioritisation and extent of activities to be provided to affected persons/dwellings/building beyond specific tasking in some instances i.e. pumping out underground car parks or assist a community organisation to clean of mud from the floors. Dayboro also had been flooded in parts and people here wanted assistance too.

24. I have above outlined how I prioritised our activity on the day however I observed that mud in the street was dry and hardened and should have been lifted by earthmoving equipment rather than washed down the streets into the storm water drainage by fire hose. I also observed and received info that the 'washing had clogged the drains' causing localised pooling of rancid putrid waters. This is a task that BCC could have been actively involved. The action of washing everything down the 'drain' and into the Brisbane River also suggests an out of sight out of mind mentality. The pollutants etc all then get washed into Moreton Bay. That outcome is yet to be gauged.

25. People need to be properly educated regarding their responsibilities in such instances and what they might expect from an emergency service in order that they can survive.

Witness Signature.



Signature of officer

Washing down of boat ramps and lawns I do not believe are prerequisites for survival in a dwelling. I was also informed from one dwelling owner that he had made arrangements for a private company to attend and firstly treat and then pump out his swimming pool which he considered to an appropriate course of action and thus did not required the services of RFB to do that.



B MARFLEET

Witness Signature: 

Signature of officer