

Statement of Witness

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Robert Dale CLEMENTS
<i>Date of Birth</i>	
<i>Address and contact details</i>	Graceville
<i>Occupation</i>	Human Resources Manager
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant Paul Browne
<i>Date taken</i>	05/05/2011

I, Robert Dale CLEMENTS state:

1. I am a [REDACTED] year old married man, and currently reside with my Wife Melinda in Singapore. Despite living in Singapore for work, we own and until the time of the flood maintained usually a residence at [REDACTED], Graceville.
2. We have owned this property since March 2005, and my Mother-In-Law was residing there while we were overseas, despite her having been away on holidays at the time of the January flood. The home was furnished with our contents and we also had pets living at the property, although these were also not present at the time of the flood.
3. Other than fulfilling the role of a Fire warden and First aid officer in the workplace I have no personal experience in disaster management or evacuation.
4. As a result of the flood, on 3rd April 2011, my wife and I made a submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. In that submission I raised issues in regards to the following issues:

Witness Sig
Page Num

Signature

- Flood information disclosure and advice in relation to property purchase;
- Flood level reports and warnings from Brisbane City Council;
- Insurance claim management;
- Land planning for property and surrounding properties by Brisbane City Council.

I am able to produce a copy of that submission (Attachment 1).

Tendered and marked Exhibit number

5. As part of my submission I referred to the availability of floodwise reports through the Brisbane City Council (BCC). I don't recall having made an inquiry with the Council specifically, at the time of purchasing our property, however I became aware that these reports were available only after the flood.
6. Because we were in Singapore at the time of the flood we were not in a position to see for ourselves what was happening and so we relied on communication through the Council.
7. After contacting the Council on Sunday 8th January we registered on-line thru the BCC website for flood alerts. This included alert options to receive both SMS messages and e-mails. At that time we registered for both.

Witness Sign

Signature of

Page Number

8. Despite registering, throughout the January flood event we did not receive any alert message from the BCC through either SMS or e-mail. I cannot understand why that happened as it was not a problem with the telecommunication systems at our end and we were receiving other communication.
9. the registration was also successful as since the January flood we have been receiving regular storm warnings about events in Brisbane, just not at the time when we really needed them.
10. Because we were in Singapore, throughout Tuesday 11th January I was in constant contact with the Council by phone and I remember at first I was calling and talking to the BCC approximately every 3 to 4 hours. I was at home on that day and decisions we made about the house were based on the information from Council.
11. I would ring the Council Call Centre (07) number and then be put through to what was the Flood Centre Response area. The people answering those calls were always incredibly accessible, always available and seemed to be highly responsible and capable people. I was very much impressed by that and never had to wait for long on the phone, before speaking to someone and getting the information I needed.
12. Throughout the day I got reassurance each time and the measurements did not change throughout that day. In fact on most occasions they would say that they didn't have any further advice and at that stage the

Witness Sign

Page Number

Signature of

...

expected peak was to be at 6.6 metres above our property but there was not anymore information than that.

13.I understood that this reference of 6.6 metres was in regards to a high tide in the Brisbane River and the Council were also advising of the time when that height was expected. This was as a point of reference or idnicator of the anticipated height of water which would enter our property.

14.As the day and evening went on the television started reporting that things were going to be pretty dire and I was listening to 'ABC' radio in Brisbane, who were also reporting dire circumstances.

15.At that time we started to panic and I began ringing the BCC more often throughout the late afternoon and early evening. I remember calling them around 5pm (Brisbane time) and the prediction had not changed.

16.Then in the evening (I have said around 12am in my submission, but in hindsight that was earlier, probably around 7pm Singapore time, so more likely around 9pm Brisbane time) when I called Brisbane City Council and was told that the predicted forecast had changed dramatically.

17.I was told the forecast flooding was expected to be in the vicinity of 11.6 metres. Although it was late at night and we were extremely panicked I tried to contact neighbours in the street and then I spoke with one neighbour who told me it was too late, as our house had already flooded with the water being about a foot above the floor.

Witness Si

Signature of

Page Num

18. Realising it was impossible for us to do anything about it I also rang a removalist company to see if they could assist with getting some of our belongings out of the property. Again I was told that it was too late and they couldn't get anyone in there. I think this was because of the streets being already flooded and cut off, but also because of the risk and workplace health and safety issues and Insurance not allowing them to send removalists in where water was lying around.

19. Throughout the rest of that day we continued to call and receive regular updates. We were also receiving information through other channels and starting to deal with the aftermath. I remember 'Tweeting' with another neighbour in the street who later sent me some photographs, confirming what we had been told about the house. From that point on we really didn't need to go back thru the Council for information.

20. In regards to other warning methods or door knocking in the street, because our house was vacant and nobody actually there at the time I do not know whether or not that occurred. All I do know is that because of our circumstances, personally we relied heavily on information from the Council.

21. Our house was a single story dwelling but raised slightly off the ground. I know now that the water came up to about 30cm below the ceiling inside our house. Outside that level was equivalent to being inside the eaves of the roof. This resulted in total loss of the house and with the exception of some smaller items almost all of our contents.

Witness S

Page Num

..... Signatur

....

22. As a result of the flood I flew down to Brisbane on the Saturday after the flood. My parents had already been to the house and started the recovery process and I was able to stay with some friends nearby after getting into town.

23. I believe there were some problems in the aftermath of the flood and with the recovery effort. From what I saw and have been told there were issues with the recovery process and the way in which that was co-ordinated. There were also issues with looting which went undeterred for several days and I recall one morning when I arrived at the house around 5.30am and saw people just walking up the street with items that I knew had come from somebodies home.

24. In one instance we even lost some of the items that we had been able to recover from the flood. Some of those items we had retrieved and had stored on the property, were simply stolen and gone by the next morning when we returned to continued the clean-up.

25. I remember a couple of days later Police came around and took a statement from me about my experiences. In my view the Police were not active enough early and there was no presence. I remember they turned up the following Wednesday and then started to become a bit heavy handed with how it should be managed, but that was a week later and almost too late as a lot of things were already gone.

26. It seemed to me as though in the initial days after the flood there was a lack of disaster management and recovery in both our street and the wider area. There were a lot of S.E.S. people and volunteers moving through properties, we also had Military personnel and Council

Witness Signature
Page Number

workers wandering thru properties but little co-ordination or active management of how they went about what they were doing. For example they went into house and started just throwing out peoples' possessions without consent from the people who owned those properties

27.I do believe that a lot of the volunteers did a fantastic job, however some were quite bullish about throwing things out and in the immediate days after the flood, a lot was just left to volunteers to co-ordinate and provide leadership on the ground. I believe the Police should have mobilised better in those early days to secure properties and provide a sense of order as these type of events not only bring out the best but also the worst in some people.

28.From what I observed I believe the government needs to put in place a more structured disaster recovery or disaster management mechanism, something that wasn't existent here. Instead it was more piecemeal and despite the involvement of Police and the Military there did not seem to be any co-ordination.

29.I also think that some of this might not have been fault of the S.E.S. or the Volunteers who thought they were doing the right thing, but possibly because of lack of instruction or direction that they were given on the ground. As an example the S.E.S. were telling my parents what they could and couldn't do and I don't believe a lot of what they were saying was necessarily right. However because of the situation and my parents being somewhat older they didn't know any different and went along with what was being said.

Witness Sign

... Signat

Page Numl

30. In fairness to all of those people involved in the recovery, this was an un-precedented event, however this is why we need some type of pre-planned disaster recovery management mechanism with clearly outlined roles, guidelines and standard operating procedures for the community, S.E.S. and other organisations of what to do and what not to do in a similar situation.

31. With respect to the issue of Insurance, as part of our letter advising our claim had been denied we received a brief note from the insurer, drawing our attention to a particular section of the policy. That referred to our policy not covering us for this type of flooding (flooding that resulted from Rivers or Causeways).

32. I subsequently contacted Allianz and was given a "Contact officer" with whom I have been dealing with since. He provided me with further details on the grounds for which our claim had been rejected, including a copy of the Assessor's report and a general Hydrologists report commissioned by Insurance Australia. He also advised me on the appeal process and stated I would need to provide rationale for any appeal. That would then be reviewed.

33. I have since provided further information and outlined my grounds for appealing the initial decision, referencing the Hydrologists report. I am currently awaiting the outcome of that appeals process.

Witness Si

Page Num

Signature

34. The other issues that I have raised in my submission relate to advice in regards to property purchase and land planning for property development by the BCC.

35. I would again raise the issue of independence and need for some level of Governance regarding the relationships between Real Estate Agents, Building Inspectors, property buyers and sellers. Without going overboard I think some levels of protection could be introduced here to ensure a completely aboveboard transaction in the interests of both the sellers and buyers of a property.

36. In regards to land planning I could not add greatly to my submission, however as part of my preparation, I was able to obtain other information. Some of this information relates to a Graceville resident groups opposed to the Graceville Park development. I located this content on the Internet and took hard copies. I am not sure how the information or website was being hosted or through which domain, however this information has since been removed from the Internet.

37. I am able to provide copies of this information to the Commission if required. I would also be prepared to assist further in those areas of Land Use planning and Insurance once the Commission reaches that phase of its Inquiry.

38. As part of my submission I made a number of recommendations (contained between pages 6 and 8). I ask that the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry consider those recommendations as part of its report in regards to the January 2011 flood [REDACTED]

Witness Sign [REDACTED]

Signature of [REDACTED]

Page Number [REDACTED]

[Redacted]

S.

6th May 2011.

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 6th May 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 10 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and

[Redacted] knowing that, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to
[Redacted] in it anything that I know is false.

.....Signature

Signed atSingapore.....this.....6th.....day of.....May.....2011....

Witness Signature of

Page Nu

[Redacted]

[Redacted]