

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Prepared by: Legal Services Unit

Date: 4.4.2011

Name of Witness: Bruce Wayne Smith

Address of Witness: Department of Community Safety---Toowoomba

Occupation: Public Servant

Position: QFRS Manager Regional Staff Development--South West Region
Rank: Superintendent

Telephone:

I, BRUCE WAYNE SMITH, hold the position of Superintendent within the QFRS-- Department of Community Safety state:

- Brief paragraph around your experience, i.e. background, time spent in current role/time spent in similar roles. -- Qualifications
 - I have been a Firefighter since the 5th January 1981
 - I have held senior executive positions in the QFRS since 1998
 - I am currently the Manager Staff Development and have held this position since November 2009
 - Prior to that, I held the position of Area Director for Toowoomba whilst at a Superintendent level
 - I hold qualifications in Incident Management (AIMS), Command and Control, Applied Management and hold a Diploma in Training and Assessment
- My current position, Manager Regional Staff Development requires me to oversee the -- overall co-ordination and management of staff development (permanent and auxiliary in south-west region).
- I am not involved in the strategic planning or preplanning for disaster management -- that role is assigned to the Inspector of Toowoomba command.
- On Monday 3.1.11 I was deployed to St George as the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Coordinator for anticipated flooding on Thursday 6.1.11. My role was to attend the LDMG meetings and co-ordinate QFRS activities. I was at St George until Saturday (8.1.11). My role included attending the daily LDMG meetings; coordinating the Swift Water Rescue (SWR) officers and tasking them as required.

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5. My involvement for the Toowoomba incident, on the 10.1.11, occurred after visiting a friend in North Street, when it started to rain around lunchtime. There was a lot of rain and as I drove down North Street in my vehicle I witnessed water about 30cm or deeper, gushing down the road.
6. I knew there would be a lot of water in town and when I reached the bottom of Ruthven and North Streets the water was approximately 30-40 cm deep across the road. My aim then was to get back to Anzac Ave fire station as I knew the ROCC was operating and wanted to assist.
7. I then heard on the fire service radio that an appliance could not make access to Murphys Creek due to water over the road at Griffith and Ruthven Streets; I then drove down Ruthven Street and turned into Jelliffe Street and saw about two feet of water over the road; and my access was blocked.
8. I then made my way via Russell Street, via town, to Anzac Ave. When I drove into Anzac Ave the fire service radio was chaotic. SWR were conducting rescues at James & McKenzie Streets and at Grand Central. I made my way up to the station and informed firecom that there were three auxiliaries on station and was able to respond if required. A job was tasked on the Range, at which point Station Officer Wensley arrived at the station. I advised that officer to man the Appliance with auxiliaries and respond to the range incident where cars were in trouble. The large amount of water had washed cars sideways; and there were stones and mud over the road causing a dangerous situation.
9. I informed Firecom that I would attend the incident at Grand Central to assist. In order to get to Grand Central I travelled down James St, and there was approximately 30 -40cm water across the road. When I approached Helen Street I saw there was a one metre wall of water on my right coming out of Helen Street. I then made my way to Prescott and James Street where there was up to 2 metres of water on the road in front of me. I turned left into Prescott Street with 40 cm of water on the road and made my way along Prescott Street. It was still raining heavily, and I finally made my way to Grand Central.
10. I saw an Appliance and water well over 1 metre across the road. I parked the car and went to assist with rescues. At Grand Central I saw approximately 200 bystanders with firefighters in the water endeavoring to rescue up to 8 people in a bus shelter who were standing on the fence. The water was well over a metre deep and fast flowing. The firefighters were not in the fast flowing water.
11. There was also a male clinging to a tree and firefighters were trying to rescue him.
12. It took about 30 minutes to get a rope to the people in the bus shelter as the water was fast flowing and cars were washing down the water hindering attempts.
13. My role was to contact firecom (Herrie St) because the officers were too busy doing rescues. During this time I was informed by a bystander that approximately 22 people were trapped in McDonalds on the other side of Grand Central. I waded through 45 -60 cm water to get to those people and entered via a side door as the front doors had been closed. The water outside was flowing very fast and about 2ft deep. but inside it was about 8 inches and static. I located up to 20 people at the rear of the building and advised them to stay where they were. It was too dangerous to move them.

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14. I then returned to assist with the rescue of the bus shelter people and the male in the tree.
15. Some time later another SWR level 2 officer arrived and we managed to get a line to the man clinging to the tree. The water was fast flowing and washed the SWR officer and the male about 8-10 metres down the water stream and onto the bonnet of a car. We were able to bring them in to safety and handed the man over to QAS.
16. Once the water had receded after approximately 15 minutes, I went to McDonalds and escorted the 20 people out to safety.
17. We then made up the gear and advised firecom we were available for further tasking. Firecom advised me to go to Chalk Street and Ruthven Street to assist with rescues. On approaching that area at approximately 3pm I was stopped by police and advised that leaking gas cylinders were floating in water at Rumours car park. I observed 2 x 250 kg cylinders dispensing gas. I informed Dave Lethbridge (Officer in Charge) that an Appliance and crew was needed to deal with the leaking gas. QPS also advised that gas was leaking at the back of Pizza hut on other side of the road near WOW.
18. I then tasked one of the QFRS officers (auxiliary from Highfields) to watch the floating gas cylinders, and took the other two QFRS officers with me. I requested QPS officers to move back the numerous bystanders and went through the shop to find the gas leak. I observed the gas was turned off and was later told that another crew had turned it off. I then went back to Ruthven St where the leaking cylinders were. I observed the cylinders were locked and that I needed bolt cutters to unlock the top of the gas LPG cylinder. We accessed a hose reel from a nearby shop for protection and managed to cut the lock and turn off the gas. A fire appliance also provided cover with a Case1 hose line.
19. I then made my way back to Ruthven St and advised firecom that we had dealt with the gas leak and were available for further tasking.
20. I was dispatched to Burstow and Margaret Streets to assist in locating a missing woman and her son. I spent 15-20 min there but was unable to locate anyone. The water was subsiding; the rain had stopped and I then went back to Chalk and Ruthven Streets. I was advised the missing woman was found in the flour mill by a QPS officer but her son had not been located. I was later advised by QFRS officers that the son had been found in a tree in Queens Park.
21. I advised firecom that Chalk and Ruthven Streets would now be the staging area for all appliances and crews.
Superintendent Waltisbulh arrived and informed me that another depression of rain was to hit town in one hour. Wayne and I set up a control point and tasked firefighters to do a final inspection around the flour mill, as a lot of cars washed to that point and were blocking the still very fast flow of water.
22. The biggest concern at this stage was the next depression of rain. Wayne and I planned where to place trucks and crews should the rain arrive; and hot spots were considered as well as where to locate SWR crews.

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23. Wayne and I went up to Anzac Ave and left a crew and two SWR officers near Chalk Drive, as QPS were having tow trucks pull cars out of creek and searching for missing people. All other crews returned to their stations.
24. The second down pour never arrived and I went home about 6 pm.
25. On Tuesday the 11.1.11 I was tasked by Tom Dawson to assist firecom in the deployment of resources as required. At approximately 10.00am I received a 000 call for Oakey advising that water was bursting the river bank.
26. At 1030am that day I was relieved from firecom and I escorted 4 Swift Water Officers to Oakey. We arrived at approximately 1130am and deployed the officers on the rail-line side of town. Houses were inundated and people needed to be rescued. My role was to provide assistance and oversee the operation.
27. My next tasking was in Goondwindl (from the 13.1.11 – 17.1.11) where my role was similar to that of St George. I was then sent back to St George on the 23.1.11 in the same role as stated above.
28. I make this statement of my own free will believing its contents to be true and correct.

Justices Act 1886

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

- (1) This written statement by me dated 8/4/11 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 8 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 Brisbane this 8 day of 4.....2011

W. Dawson

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