



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no.: 1 Date: 14/03/2011

Statement of

Name of witness: MCDONALD, Douglas Francis

Date of birth: _____ Age: Occupation: Acting Inspector of Police

Police officer taking statement

Name: MCDONALD, Douglas Francis

Rank: A/Insp Reg. no.: 4008091

Region/Command/Division: Southern Station: Regional Office

Statement:

Douglas Francis McDonald states:-

1. I am currently performing duties as an Acting Inspector – Regional Traffic Coordinator, Southern Region. My substantive position is the Senior Sergeant – Regional Intelligence Coordinator, Southern Region.
2. I was sworn in to the Queensland Police Service on the 7th of December 1990.
3. I have approximately 20 years of policing experience. This service is comprised of general duties/intelligence officer in the Metropolitan South Region for approximately five years, Intelligence Officer at the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence for four years, Covert and Surveillance unit for approximately five years, and Senior Intelligence Officer at the Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) for four years. I have been in my current position at Toowoomba for just under two years.

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orientated courses and exercises. As a member of SERT and having completed the Incident Command Course as part of the Management Development Program I have a sound knowledge of incident response structures and roles, particularly in the area of intelligence. I have participated in and written training exercises and courses concerning major incidents at a national, state and regional level.

5. In response to the written requirement of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 9 March 2011, I provide the following information:

6. As part of regional preparedness for major incidents, particularly disasters, a Regional Police Operations Room (POR) structure had been developed prior to me commencing duty within the Southern Region. In late 2010 in conjunction with Acting Inspector Steven STEWART - Regional Crime Coordinator, it was decided to review and exercise the Regional POR to ensure staff were aware of their roles as per the Queensland Police Service Incident Command Structure and that all required equipment was available and operational.

7. On the 3rd of November 2010 a training session and short scenario discussion was held in the Southern Regional Office for Regional Office staff that may be called upon to perform duties in response to a significant event in the POR. The scenario focused on a significant rain event affecting South East Queensland that may require the allocation of resources from the Southern Region. In addition, all computer equipment, printers, phones and faxes were set up by Information Technology staff to ensure functionality.

8. On Friday the 24th of December I commenced leave for two weeks. I recall that the weather was particularly wet before then and for most of the time I was leave.

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9. On Monday the 10th of January 2011 I returned from leave and commenced duty as the Acting Inspector, Regional Traffic Coordinator at the Southern Regional Office. I started my shift at about 7.00am. I recall during the morning having discussions with The Chronicle news paper and WIN television news regarding road safety, in particular safety around roads that had been damaged as a result of recent rain.

10. Between 1.45pm and 2.00pm this day I went to the front of the Regional Office building in Neil Street and observed extremely heavy rain and large amounts of water running down Neil Street towards Margaret Street. Vehicles travelling along Neil Street had to move to the centre of the road to avoid water overflowing from gutters on either side.

11. A short time later I returned to my office and dialled my office phone in to Toowoomba Police Communications. At this time I heard a large amount of radio chatter including details of police vehicles being stuck in water in the Toowoomba CBD. I then had a conversation with Acting Inspector Jason HOPGOOD and Inspector Dave ISHERWOOD about the situation. As a result of that conversation we all got into Inspector ISHERWOOD's unmarked four wheel drive and travelled onto Neil Street to see if there was area where assistance could be provided.

12. Shortly after driving onto Neil Street we heard police communications issue an urgent request for police to attend the intersection of James and Kitchener Street regarding people trapped in flood waters. As a result we advised communications that we would attend and proceeded through heavy traffic towards the intersection.

13. After about five minutes of negotiating our way through traffic we approached the James and Kitchener Street intersection travelling east down James Street. Inspector Isherwood parked the vehicle on a traffic island to the west of the flooded intersection and we all proceeded on foot to take up

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with uniformed police who were already at the scene. I would estimate that the time was about 2.15pm.

14. Upon arriving I observed two males clinging to a traffic pole or sign about fifteen meters away. Further into the intersection from them were a further group of males holding onto the traffic lights. The water was at least up to their waist in height and was moving extremely rapidly. My attention was then drawn to a semi trailer further away on the opposite side of the intersection. I would estimate that the truck would have been close to being on the James Street Bridge over East Creek. A short distance away I observed a vehicle that had been inundated by flood water. This vehicle was facing in an easterly direction, opposite to the semi trailer and appeared to have a female on the roof. This female appeared to be holding a rope or strap that was connected to the semi trailer.

15. I then had a conversation with Constable Jarrad BRUCE who was standing on the waters edge. Constable BRUCE pointed out to me a male person who was clinging to a light pole on the eastern side of Kitchener Street, approximately thirty meters downstream from the main intersection. I now know this male to be Chris SKEHAN. I could see that SKEHAN was in a very dangerous situation with fast flowing water washing over his back as he wrapped his arms completely around the pole.

16. At this time Constable BRUCE also informed me that he'd been told by witnesses that two other people, possibly an adult and a child had been swept away from the intersection in a northerly direction along Kitchener Street and into East Creek. I could see that the water was flowing very fast and contained a large amount of debris. A number of vehicles had swept from the intersection and were stationary in flood water a short distance away. I could see at this time that it would be too dangerous to attempt any further rescue of the trapped persons until the water receded.

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17. At about this time I instructed Constable BRUCE to make contact with police communications to have any available police position themselves downstream of the intersection in an attempt to locate the persons who had been swept away. Whilst standing with Constable BRUCE I could hear a high volume of police talk over the radio. Constable BRUCE and I had great difficulty in reaching police communications by radio and phone.

18. I then made further inquiries with witnesses that were standing around the scene. One female indicated to me that she believed she had seen the two people who had been swept away clinging to low hanging tree branches for a short time before they were swept further downstream. At this time I could see that from our position and from areas on the opposite side of the creek, it would be impossible to get close enough to check all the trees.

19. Around this time my attention was drawn to the fact that Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFRS) officers were positioned on the opposite side of James Street. I considered it a priority to advise them of the situation concerning the missing people and males trapped in the intersection. Given the tree line and distance, I was of the opinion they may not be aware of the full situation.

20. A short time later I identified that a police traffic vehicle was positioned on the opposite side of Kitchener Street near the QFRS officers. I was able to identify that this officer was Senior Constable MCLOUGHLIN who I subsequently contacted by mobile telephone. I was then able to speak with the QFRS officer who I now know to be Mark HADDOW. I became aware that these two QFRS officers were equipped for swift water rescue. I then briefed HADDOW regarding missing and trapped persons in the intersection.

21. During this time I could see the water levels continuing to rise in the intersection to the point that it was flowing over the shoulders of SKEHAN

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22. Over the next twenty to thirty minutes while the water continued to flow strongly I contacted Police Communications by phone and radio a number of times. During these conversations I requested the assistance of a helicopter. I also observed HADDOW and the other QFRS officer attempt to probe further downstream of the intersection to look in the trees and examine rescue possibilities for SKEHAN.
23. After some time the water slowly began to recede to the extent that the QFRS officers were able to retrieve the female from on top of the vehicle. The males stranded on the poles in middle of the intersection were eventually able to make there way back to the western side of Kitchener Street with the assistance of police. One of these males was a young child who I now know to be Blake RICE. I instructed Constable BRUCE to go with RICE while the Queensland Ambulance Officers treated him and to ascertain as much information as possible regarding the missing persons. I asked Constable BRUCE to pass this information onto police communications to assist with the search along the creek.
24. At this time I was able to make eye contact with SKEHAN and indicated to him to remain holding the pole and wait for QFRS. After some time HADDOW and the other QFRS officer were able to cross Kitchener Street and with assistance from other QFRS officers were able to retrieve SKEHAN from the pole.
25. At this time I further instructed Constable BRUCE to get as much information from SKEHAN and pass it onto Police Communications to assist with the search for the missing people. At this time, based on information obtained from Blake RICE and SKEHAN I was aware that we were missing a middle aged female (Donna RICE) and a teenage male (Jordon RICE). Also missing from the intersection was the white Mercedes Benz.

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26. As soon as the water receded sufficiently to make it safe to search along the creek line, all available police and members from the QFRS commenced checking around the flood lines and in trees. About this time I received information via police communications that a female body had been found at the rear of the mill area in Chalk Drive. I was advised of this female's general description including details about a tattoo on her wrist.

27. During this time Inspector ISHERWOOD came to the scene along with Assistant Commissioner GOLLSCHEWSKI. I subsequently spoke with them about the search for the missing persons.

28. Not long after this I received information that a white vehicle had been located in East Creek, approximately 200-300m downstream from the James Street intersection. As a result of this information Inspector ISHERWOOD, Assistant Commissioner GOLLSCHEWSKI, Acting Inspector HOPGOOD and I walked to the location.

29. Upon arrival I observed a white vehicle wedged under a small walkway across East Creek. At this time the water was still flowing quite rapidly and it was difficult to check for occupants and verify the type of vehicle. A short time later members of the QFRS were able to flag down a Sowerby's Heavy Vehicle tow truck and task them with retrieving the vehicle from the water.

30. During this time as a result of discussions with members of the QFRS I became aware that flooding had extended into the Valley area east of the range. A number of the officers indicated they may be tasked to attend that location and assist with rescues.

31. Once the vehicle was removed from the water it was evident that it was a heavily damaged white Mercedes Benz sedan. There were no occupants in the vehicle. I could not identify any other details about the vehicle.

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vehicle to be photographed by Scenes of Crime and seized. Constable CAHILL who had come into the area to assist with traffic control and searching was tasked with ensuring the vehicle was appropriately seized and towed.

32. While the vehicle was being attended to by Scenes of Crime officers a number of young males arrived at the scene. One of these males told me that he recognised the vehicle as belonging to one of his mate's mothers. I then asked this male to describe his mate's mother at which time he indicated that she had a tattoo around her wrist. I then passed this information onto Communications to ensure it was relayed to Sergeant GLEESON from Toowoomba Child Protection Unit (CPIU) as I was aware he was handling the identification of the deceased female located in Chalk Street.
33. I noticed that during this time a number of these young males were talking on their mobile phones. A short time later another male arrived who claimed the vehicle belonged to his mother Donna RICE. I informed him to attend the Toowoomba Hospital and request to speak with Sergeant GLEESON. I informed him that Sergeant GLEESON was at that location with Blake RICE and other members of his family.
34. Immediately after this conversation with Donna RICE's son I provided a brief television interview with members of the ABC media. I outlined the flooding incident and that police were currently searching for two people who we believed had been swept from their car in the flood waters.
35. Once the white Mercedes Benz had been photographed and towed from the scene I commenced travelling with Constable CAHILL back towards Toowoomba Police station. I would estimate that the time was about 5.00pm and traffic was very heavy.

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36. En route back to the station we received information from Communications that the body of a young male had been located on the banks of East Creek on the southern side of Margaret Street. I then travelled with Constable CAHILL to this location and took up with police, including Detective Senior Constable LOWE from the Toowoomba CPIU.
37. I subsequently observed the body of young male under a tree close to the footpath on Margaret Street. I observed that Detective LOWE was being assisted by a number of other detectives from the Toowoomba CPIU and Criminal Investigation Branch. I observed a Scenes of Crime Officer attend the scene and satisfied myself that adequate traffic control was in place to ensure the scene could be adequately preserved and investigated.
38. I then left Constable CAHILL at the scene to assist with traffic control and returned to the Southern Regional Office on foot.
39. When I arrived back at the Southern Regional Office I went to the Assistant Commissioners Briefing room and met with Assistant Commissioner GOLLSCHESKI, Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW and Acting Superintendent SCHAFFERIUS. At that time I became aware of the larger extent of the flooding that had not only caused significant problems in the Toowoomba CBD but had also caused severe damage and the possible loss of lives in Murphys Creek, Grantham and Withcott.
40. During this brief meeting, Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW allocated a number of these key areas to officers to act as Police Forward Commanders. Acting Superintendent SCHAFFERIUS was to continue in his role as the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC). Acting Inspector Paul MCCUSKER was tasked with managing the investigation into the deaths of Donna and Jordan RICE in Toowoomba.

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so he could get a gain a familiarisation of the event that lead to the deaths of Donna and Jordan RICE. I then took no further specific part in the investigation into their deaths.

42. After this handover to Detective MCCUSKER I returned back to the office and again met with Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW. At this time Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW asked me to establish the POR in the Regional Office Conference room to support the response to the flood event. The POR will now be referred to as its more common name as the Major Incident Room (MIR).

43. I subsequently recalled regional Information Technology staff back to duty to set up computers and other equipment as per the MIR plan. At this time Acting Senior Sergeant Lisa STEWART, Regional Intelligence Coordinator was also called back to duty to provide intelligence support in the MIR. During this time Acting Inspector Paul HART was also recalled to duty to head up a Victim Identification and Liaison Cell with responsibility for managing all information pertaining to missing and deceased persons.

44. As part of the initial setup of the MIR Acting Senior Sergeant STEWART and I followed generic procedures for the initial setup of an MIR. These procedures included obtaining a Qprime Occurrence number (QP1100028000), obtaining an Operation name – Juliet Drew and establishing a central email business account – Op.Juliet-Drew(sor).

45. During the evening I was present during a number of briefings and teleconferences between senior management at the Southern Region and the Senior Executive of the QPS and police ministers. In support of these briefings and officers working in the field the MIR was initially focused on providing information concerning weather and flood information.

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clarify any intel regarding impending rain events and or flood levels. During the early hours of the morning of the 11th of January I identified a rain band heading towards flood affected areas in the Valley. Advice was provided to staff on the ground via police communications. This advice was further enhanced by direct contact with Brett HARRISSON from the BOM regarding rain fall rate.

47. In addition the MIR provided intelligence support to the Victim Identification and Liaison Cell regarding the mapping of deceased and missing locations. On this first evening a running log was commenced within the occurrence inquiry log of the Qprime occurrence for MIR activities.
48. Contact was also made with Detective Graham WALKER from State Crime Operations Command (SCOC) in relation to establishing an IMAC account for the investigation. Detective WALKER subsequently organised the IMAC account (1226) and stated that he and others from SCOC would attend Toowoomba as soon as they were able to travel.
49. During the evening I also provided support to Acting Inspector Jim MCDONALD who performed duties as the acting DDC after a handover with Acting Superintendent SCHAFFERIUS.
50. At about 6.00am the following morning I attended the DDC briefing with Acting Superintendent SCHAFFERIUS. I then attended the briefing with Assistant Commissioner GOLLSCHIEWSKI, Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW and others at regional office. I subsequently provided a handover to Inspector Wayne WOODS and ceased duty at about 8.00am
51. Later that day at about 5.00pm on the 11th of January 2011 I returned to the MIR at Regional Office and received a handover from Inspector WOODS.

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focused with a large number of resources moving in and out of the area. During this shift I was requested by Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW to come back onto day shifts to ensure appropriate intelligence coordination.

52. During this shift I worked with Acting Inspector Jim MCDONALD with DDC tasks and planning. Acting Senior Sergeant Lisa STEWART also worked during the night with a focus on intelligence requirements and support to the Victim Identification and Liaison Cell. At 5.00 am on the 12th of January I provided Assistant Commissioner GOLLSCHEWSKI with a briefing on events overnight. At 6.00am I attended a DDC briefing at Toowoomba District Office. After that meeting had concluded I attended the command briefing with the Assistant Commissioner and regional management. I then completed a handover with Inspector WOODS and ceased duty at about 09.00am.
53. Later on the 12th of January at about 4.00pm I returned to duty and completed a handover with Inspector Woods. I worked in the MIR with Acting Senior Sergeant STEWART who was again responsible for intelligence and Acting Senior Sergeant REHN who was tasked with logistics responsibilities. Acting Inspector Jim MCDONALD was again responsible for acting DDC duties during the night shift.
54. During the shift I identified a need to implement a timed Situation Report (SITREP) procedure to ensure activities being conducted at the Police Forward Commands in Murphy's Creek and Grantham were captured. This procedure was briefed to Acting Senior Sergeant STEWART for commencement by intelligence officers on day shift 13th of January 2011.
55. During the shift I assisted Acting Inspector Jim MCDONALD with a draft planning document for dissemination to Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW the following morning. I finished my shift at about 2.00am on

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56. I then returned to work at 06.00am on the 13th of January and attended the morning briefing with the DDC at Toowoomba District Office. During the day I attend to intelligence duties and other tasks in the MIR including monitor and disseminating SITREPS from the field. Later that day I liaised with Acting Chief Superintendent McCarthy and the ADF regarding a body that had been located in a vehicle at Brymaroo to the north west of Toowoomba. Senior Constable VANDERHAM was subsequently tasked with attending Oakey to conduct an aerial search from an ADF Blackhawk of creeks and water courses from the Bunya mountain catchment area into flood affected areas around the Toowoomba and Dalby District boundaries. Shortly after this I was asked by Acting Chief Superintendent MORROW to attend with him at Toowoomba airport to video record a flyover of flood affected areas in the district. I subsequently returned to the office and finish duty at 7.00pm.

57. I returned to duty at 6.00am on the 14th of January and attended briefings with the DDC and Regional Command. I again attend to intelligence duties within the MIR. During the afternoon I attended the Police Forward Command Posts at Murphy's Creek and Grantham to discuss any intelligence procedures and issues with the Forward Commanders and intelligence staff. During this time I spoke with Water Police Officers - Search and Rescue Coordinators at Grantham about mapping requirements. As a result of these discussions a formal request was sent to have a member from the Geographical Information Services section of the QPS attend Grantham to produce and record mapping data regarding all aspects of the search.

58. I then worked from Saturday the 15th of January to Monday the 17th of January at Grantham providing intelligence support to Water Police Officers coordinating search activities along the broader flood zones outside the township of Grantham. This search area coordination was known as

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members of the ADF regarding search tasks, liaison with investigators from Task Force GALAXY regarding missing and deceased and providing SITREPS to the Inspector Mark KELLY and the MIR in Toowoomba.

59. I then had a day off on the 18th of January 2011 before returning to duties at 6.00am on the 19th of January. I again performed duties in SAR 2 on day shifts until Saturday the 22nd of January 2011.
60. On Monday the 24th of January I returned to duties as the Regional Traffic Coordinator at Southern Region. Over the following week I continued to liaise with Intelligence staff who continued to work in the PFC at Grantham supporting search activities in SAR 2.
61. In regard to improving performance and systems in areas that I was involved in and with the benefit of hindsight I offer the following points.
62. It is my opinion that communication functions within the MIR could have been improved by utilising role specific email accounts rather than individual accounts. These role specific accounts were in place prior to this event but were overlooked as the functions of the MIR escalated. The lack of a central role specific account was particularly noticed in the Logistics Cell where requests were received and sent from individual accounts rather than the centralised Logistic account, creating some tracking problems.
63. It is also my opinion that the appointment of an officer to act as a Liaison Officer (LO) between the PFC Intelligence officers in the field at Grantham and the Victim Identification Cell/Task Force Galaxy Investigators would have assisted with information flow. This LO role would enable information obtained from witness statements and other investigative processes to flow in a more timely and precise manner to intelligence officers in the field supporting search activities.

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64. In regard to areas where the QPS response worked well and with the benefit of hindsight I offer the following points.

65. In my opinion the early allocation of police command and resources into key areas based on geographical incidents enabled a quick and effective response. This response combined with DDC functions supported by the early establishment of the regional MIR enabled rapid situational awareness and resource allocation by senior management.

66. In my opinion the positioning of liaison officers from the external agencies such as the ADF, QFRS and the Queensland Ambulance Service with the MIR was extremely beneficial. The exchange of information and resources greatly enhanced the capability of the QPS and other agencies to respond.

67. In my opinion the intelligence officers performing duties in support of the search at Grantham and Murphy's Creek performed to a very high standard and despite not having experienced a job of this nature previously, proved very adaptable in their roles. A perusal of the National Search and Rescue Manual reveals the role of an Intelligence Officer in support of a search and rescue at Section 1.3.20.

68. It states: An Intelligence Officer shall be responsible for:

- liaison with the duty meteorological officer for the supply of planning forecasts and periodic updates of weather information;
- plotting, assessing and filing of sighting and hearing reports;
- interrogating witnesses and assessing other reports;
- obtaining data about the missing persons and/or craft;
- obtaining logistical data relating to the search area;
- supervising the personnel employed in gathering intelligence.

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69. I am satisfied that all intelligence officers performing duties in the field and in the MIR covered all these responsibilities and provided further specific support to Command during long shifts and in trying conditions.

70. The information contained in this statement is provided on the basis of the knowledge, information and material currently available to me and my interpretation of the information sought by the requirement at this point in time.

[Redacted]
DF MCDONALD [Redacted]

Justices Act Acknowledgement

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 14/03/2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 16 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.

.....[Redacted].....Signature

Signed at *Toombulga* this *16th* day of *March* 20*11*