

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Graham Micheal PEALL
<i>Date of Birth</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Address and contact details</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Occupation</i>	Fleet Manager
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant Glen Catchpole
<i>Date taken</i>	18/04/2011

I, Graham Micheal PEALL state;

1. I am a married man, [REDACTED] years of age and reside at [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I have lived at this address for approximately 22 years.
2. I am the Chairman and First Officer of the Wivenhoe Pocket Rural Fire Brigade.
3. On Monday the 10/1/2011 an automated message was received at 10.21.08 pm advising residents in low lying areas to move to higher ground. On receiving this message I checked with the Fire Warden, Mr. Rob SCULLY who resides in the lower pocket on the current water levels and was advised that he was monitoring the water levels and at this stage there was nothing to worry about. We agreed to meet the next morning.
4. On Tuesday the 11/1/2011 at approximately 8am myself and my two sons, Ian and Anthony went to the Fire Station to get a fire appliance to survey the lower pocket in conjunction with the Fire Warden and we found three families residing in the Station.

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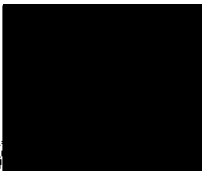
[REDACTED]


Signature of officer

[REDACTED]


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5. These people had heeded the automatic warning and moved to higher ground. I apologized to them that we weren't there to help them last night and said that I would look to have them billeted out but first I needed to inspect the lower pocket. They informed me that they had moved on the receipt of the warning message.
  
6. On the way to inspect the lower pocket area we found water across the bottom of Wivenhoe Pocket Road and I got my eldest son to walk the flooded section to determine the depth. The depth was about a foot and a half, as we continued on we found other families parked along the high parts of the roads. I informed them to stay put and I would return to lead them out. I then headed to the Fire wardens residence in the lower pocket to talk to him and let him know what I had found during my trip down. I informed him that all residents that I had come across were keen to be relocated, so it was decided at that stage to evacuate all residents in the lower pocket to higher ground and billet them out. At this stage the concern was more with access to the lower pocket being cut off than the lower pocket flooding itself.
  
7. The Fire Warden, Mr Rob SCULLY informed his wife to prepare to move and he would return for her. Rob came with myself and my sons, as we returned we came back to the residents parked on the road, two of the residents got in the front with myself and Rob, my sons Ian and Anthony got into the back of the truck and we lead the vehicle close behind us through two flooded sections of road up to Mrs Kath LYALL'S place as the first point of call.

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8. After unloading I gave Rob the fire truck to return to the lower pocket to evacuate more residents. I, Ian and Anthony grabbed another vehicle to help in the process. We returned home and took a twin cab truck and headed back towards the lower pocket stopping at the first flooded area to reinspect the height. While pulled up we noticed that the water was definitely rising and at the time Frank REID'S dam overflowed as well with more water running across the road and at that stage the truck stopped, I tried to restart the truck and I found the engine had locked up due to an intake of water.
9. A chap named Roland was coming up the road so the three of us hitched a ride back to get another truck, a large water tanker and we returned to the lower pocket area noting that the water was still rising.
10. We came across Rob coming out with another load of people and we stopped to discuss who was left to evacuate. Rob said that he was going to drop off the people he had and return to collect his wife and pets. Rob thought that all residents were out and he informed me where we needed to check.
11. We came across a chap called Clinton who was in his tractor and he was returning to collect his pets and we told him that we would meet him on the way out to make sure all was OK. Ian, Anthony and myself checked the houses that Rob had told us about and then we checked the houses right at the bottom of the pocket and came across a chap walking back towards his house, he had just moved his car to higher ground and was putting his family into his tandem tip truck and heading for the Fire Station and he also informed us that nobody else was left down near him.

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12. Confident that nobody was left in the lower pocket area we headed back towards the Fire Station coming across Clinton in his tractor with his pets, Rob on his return trip and a couple in their utility. The water was now at about three and a half feet deep so we decided to put the couple and their medicine in the front of the truck with myself, Ian and Anthony got on the back of the truck and they hung onto the ladder. The couple's car was parked in the driveway of the KEEGANS as this was thought to be the safest spot available and before we departed I told Rob that we would meet up with him on the other side of the flooded Wivenhoe Pocket Road. Clinton led off in his tractor through the flooded section of Vernor Road and the water was flowing quickly. I told my passengers that luckily nearly everyone was out as the water level and flow were becoming too dangerous to drive through. We then crossed the flooded section of Wivenhoe Pocket road. We stopped there and got Clinton to hook onto the broken down twin cab truck and we towed it up the road to a crest that the 1974 floods came to. We then headed to the residence of Mrs. Kath LYALL to drop off the people and then Ian, Anthony and I returned to the flooded section of Wivenhoe Pocket Road to wait for Rob to return.

13. On Rob's arrival at the Wivenhoe Pocket flooded section he decided to walk it and the water level was up to his chest. As he came across, a quick discussion was had and it was decided that Rob should go out through Delatraz Road as this section was too dangerous to driver through. As Rob walked back the water was now up to his chin. At the same time the STRANG family had been moving as much of their vehicles and machinery as they could with the help of the McDONALD family, I think

14. Frank REID had also been seen out on his tractor also helping. The last people to be evacuated from the Lower Pocket were at approximately 5.30pm. On leaving the Lower Pocket at this time no homes had been flooded yet but access to the area had been cut by flood waters.

15. On Wednesday the 12/1/2011, Mr Trevor LUSH had gone to tell as many residents as possible that at approximately 8am a community meeting was to be held to discuss how the community would deal with the situation we were in. On my way to the meeting with my family I decided to check on the twin cab truck we left parked on Wivenhoe Pocket Road and I found it to be sitting in about two metres of water. At the start of the meeting it was decided that the rural fire brigade would take the lead in these meetings to show that there was an authorised structure in place.

16. The meetings dealt with the handing out of up to date information and we had people dealing with specific areas such as medical, housing, electricity, rubbish, working bees and government agencies. The meetings were held at 8am each morning and at 4pm each afternoon.

17. At the first meeting it was decided to send two people down to the Lower Pocket area on foot with radio communication to give us an update on the condition and damage if any to the area. Access to the area by road was still cut by flood waters. The party of two set out at approximately 10am reporting back at half hourly intervals, they arrived at the lower Pocket at approximately 11.45am and then they proceeded to check and photograph all houses for damage finishing this at approximately 2pm. It was

reported that some homes had water through at just above floor level and others had been completely inundated.

18. At the first days meetings we realised that we would need medical supplies, food supplies and fuel to run generators where there was no electricity. The community was asked the question and they responded in kind thus filling our immediate gap. After contact with a local emergency base a food order was sent to the SES as requested. Our community meetings highlighted that we had electricians, government workers in the community areas and many more available to us through our networking process. We also asked those who lived in the flooded areas not to go back to their homes until we could guarantee that the water would stay down and then we would have electricians check it out prior to their return, as we had lost nobody in the flood and we didn't want to lose anybody post flood.

19. On Thursday the 13/1/2011 after the morning meeting the community broke up into groups and performed tasks such as cleaning of homes, organizing food, electricity, government, medical and rubbish removal. These tasks were undertaken daily until all were finished. The food drop was becoming difficult as we had to redirect our order and nobody could give us any clear times so through our networking we were able to organise a helicopter and food drops which solved our problems. Fresh vegetables were also obtained locally with fresh milk and meat being sourced by Roland. Support in the form of food drops and other necessities were also obtained through the Wivenhoe Power Station.

20. Once the Esk Rural Fire Brigade group leader, Mr Bill DOORLEY was allowed into the Disaster Management Base at Esk contact with him provided food parcels, fuel and other needs. The community meetings continued to happen until the 22/01/2011.

21. I have not been instructed by my local council or any government agency on evacuation plans for our local area in the case of a natural disaster.

22. I consider that in the event of a future incident of an impending natural disaster the Emergency Services people need to be warned first so we can accommodate the evacuees.

23. I was not assisted in the preparation for the flood by any Federal/State/Local Government Agency. I would consider that the Emergency Services did not really provide any assistance to the local community at the preparation stage. I don't consider that the local community was adequately prepared for the flood event in January 2011.

24. The local Rural Fire Brigade were the only emergency services who responded in our area. I would describe the response from the Federal/State/Local Government with respect to the flood assistance as being very slow to respond thus leaving the local community no choice but to go it alone. The response from the Federal/State/Local Government was not timely.

25. I was offered the services of an SES person to help co-ordinate our community after a few days but declined this offer as our community was running smoothly and the resource could be better used elsewhere. Nil resources were made available to our community until medical and government agencies could drive in. All initial resources were sourced by the community networking.

26. Our Local Rural Fire Brigade had measures put in place to protect life and property. They co-ordinated the response. No lives were lost in our community. No equipment other than that available in the area or sourced by ourselves was used to aid our community. The local community responded brilliantly by working with the community committee to achieve our goals. During the flood event we had intermittent telephone service. On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> we contacted the Fire Communications Centre and informed them that the Local Fire Brigade was co-ordinating the evacuation and billeting of people. Also we had telephone contact with emergency co-ordinators at Fernvale and Ipswich during the time we were isolated with no benefit. Later contact with Esk co-ordinator provided what they could. I consider that there was inadequate information provided to the community in relation to road closures, evacuation points, water storage, food supplies and medical supplies. All information was sourced by us.

27. I would describe the recovery process in our area as those houses that were flooded were cleaned and stripped by our community, communication was intermittent over the following weeks, water in our area is tank water, power was the quickest to return and the roads have been slow. I consider that the recovery process by Federal/State/Local Government and Emergency Services as not being very sufficient in our

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area. After the flood the CEO of the local council came to see me on the Friday or Saturday. I don't consider that there were sufficient resources available for the recovery process.

28. I personally did not suffer any loss of property or possessions.

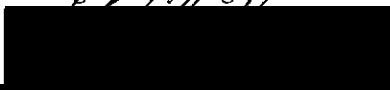
29. I would like to point out that the Esk Local Management Group didn't use local knowledge, as from the Rural Fire Service, who has expertise in these situations. It was only after Mr Bill DOOLEY had access to the Management Group that things started to happen in our area.

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G M PEALL


**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 18/4/11 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 9 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.

.....  
.....Signature

Signed at MAUSDEN this 20TH day of APRIL 2011....

Witness Signature..... Signature of officer   
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