



# QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE STATEMENT OF WITNESS

QP 0125  
01/06  
A14

Occurrence #: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement no.: 1

Date: 9 March 2011

## Statement of

Name of witness: PITMAN, Garth Stuart

Date of birth:                      Age:              Occupation: Police Officer

## Police officer taking statement

Name: PITMAN, Garth Stuart

Rank: Superintendent

Reg. no.: 4004322

Region/Command/Division: Southern Region

Station: Ipswich District

## Statement:

Garth Stuart Pitman states:-

I am a Superintendent of Police, Ipswich Police District Officer, Ipswich District Disaster Coordinator and I commenced in these positions on 4 December 2009.

I was sworn into the Queensland Police Service on 27 June 1980.

I have thirty years of policing experience having served in the Ipswich District, Inspector First Year Constable Program - Education and Training, seconded to Department of Transport as Change Management Manager, District Inspector in the Oxley District, Venue Commander Olympic Operations, Superintendent / Business Director - Information, Communications and Technology Command, and District Officer at Ipswich Police District.

On 4 December 2009 I was appointed District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) for the Ipswich District Disaster area. The role and responsibilities of the DDC are specified in S26 of the Act as functions and responsibilities of the chair of the district group are to manage and coordinate the business of the group; to ensure, as far as practicable, that the group performs its functions; and to report regularly to the State

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group about the performance by the district group of its functions. In performing the role of DDC, I received training at an Emergency Exercise Management Course; a Chemical, Biological & Radiological Hazards Course; desk top exercises/scenarios regarding Bush Fires and Floods; and Incident Management Training. I attended briefings in 2010 on the draft Disaster Management Legislation.

I performed the duties as the Ipswich Disaster District Coordinator throughout the flood disaster event in January 2011. I was supported by capable, professional and dedicated police officers, and personnel from other government and non government agencies.

In response to the written requirement of the Qld Floods Commission of Inquiry dated 28 February 2011, I provide the following information:

The Ipswich Disaster District has a Disaster Management Plan in place which was reviewed during 2010 and again just prior to the event due to the changes in the Disaster Management Act. On 30 November 2010 at the scheduled District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) meeting the current status and weather, seasonal warnings were discussed. Contact details and christmas holiday representative arrangements for all members were obtained in early December to ensure availability of members should they be required. Just prior to the event, members of the group had been receiving weather advices on the impending rain events, advices from SEQ Water on releases from the Wivenhoe Dam and expected water levels. The Ipswich City and Somerset Regional Councils and the DDMG had been in a lean forward status monitoring the situation and consulting with BOM and EMQ South East Region regarding expected impacts on the local communities in the week leading up to the event.

The Ipswich Disaster District Coordination Centre was activated on 10 January 2011 to coordinate the District Response in support of the Somerset Regional Council. This was the initial main focus at that time. At 1400hrs I was notified that the Somerset Regional Council main offices and the Local Disaster Coordination Centre, in Esk, had been inundated by water and they were attempting to relocate to

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Fernvale. The Ipswich City Council had its first LDMG at 0830hrs to commence planning for the expected flood event.

At 0930hrs on 12 January 2011 the DDMG met officially to discuss operations and coordinate the response and recovery. The Recovery Committee had been activated but had significant issues due to the Department of Communities offices being inundated by flood waters and needed to be relocated. A total of 24 Evacuation Centres, including Council activated and community generated were established during the event to provide assistance including accommodation and food to support those who had to leave their residences in Kilcoy, Toogoolawah, Esk, Lowood, Fernvale, Rosewood, Ipswich and Goodna. District Recovery centres were set up in each of the above locations as the waters subsided and access was gained to all of these areas. These actions were outlined in daily briefings to the SDMG during morning teleconferences and SITREPs provided multiple times a day throughout the event.


Throughout the event both the Ipswich LDMG and Somerset LDMG made requests for assistance involving resources and personnel. These requests were coordinated and responded to at a District Level where resources were available or forwarded to the State Disaster Coordination Centre as a request from the Disaster District Coordination Centre to source the requested equipment or personnel if not available from a District level. These resources were then made available to the Local Governments for deployment by them to meet the needs of the community.

The coordination and two way information flow of the numerous Requests for Assistance (RFA) was a challenge in some instances, and in future it will need to be a standard agenda item and a 24 hour monitoring tasking. The use of the electronic tracking tasks system for RFA at a district level would be a benefit in this regard. This will assist in all stake holders knowing the status of the RFAs in a timely manner to respond accordingly.

One of the major difficulties in the Somerset Regional Council area was access caused by roads being cut by flood waters or wash outs of bridges. The Council area was divided into a number of large isolated areas namely: Moore, Kilcoy,

  
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Toogoolawah, Esk, Lowood, Fernvale, Coominya/Wivenhoe Pocket, and a number of smaller groupings of farms. This resulted in a significant reliance on aircraft which were in short supply due to the scale of the event.

The deployment of additional personnel to the Ipswich Disaster District areas was done in a timely and supportive manner from QPS, SES, EMQ and ADF. In some cases the logistics to support personnel attending was very demanding and done with short notice. Accommodation and logistics to assist with their provisioning were major impacts on support staff. Those that were self sufficient were a definite benefit in this regard.

A major loss of power to the Fernvale area was caused by loss of critical tower structures which collapsed due to flood water. Energex provided large generators to the town as soon as possible after access was available via roads. Telstra services were also significantly disrupted in the Lowood Fernvale area due to power loss and damage to equipment.

Water supply to the Somerset Regional Council areas was significantly impacted however coordination through the Council and SEQ Water was undertaken to fly bottled water into areas cut off by road.

Together with the weather warnings via the mass media in Brisbane there were releases in the local media through River 94.9 and the Queensland Times Newspaper. These releases were made through the Queensland Police Media Section and each of the agencies involved in Disaster Management. EMQ activated a SMS message on 11 January 2011 to Ipswich City Council and Somerset Regional Council areas re flood warning. The Ipswich City Council through its own arrangements with personnel on the ground, at Evacuation Centres and its Call Centre provided advice to the Community on evacuation centres and support and recovery arrangements for after the event.

The Health Department provided advice on health issues relating to drinking water and entering flood water due to possible contamination of flood water. There were no outbreaks of health related issues in the District as a result of the flooding event.

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Discussions with the SDMG were undertaken at an early stage on the release of information and advice received on information to be provided to the community including warnings and action being taken to address community concerns in both the Response and Recovery phases of the event.


A request was made to have a fly over scheduled for the DDC and several members of the DDMG. We were working from diverse situational awareness reports from numerous areas, flood maps that were available 24-72 hours after new flood peaks were advised and media reports when able to watch such. This meant that at various flood peaks or disaster critical milestones, key DDMG members and decision makers were only working from perceived impacts, hardcopy maps, and diverse field reports. In the Somerset Regional Council area there were no maps available and media reports were very limited due to major access issues. In my opinion, there would have been significant value, situational awareness, understanding of the communities' impacts and issues, and scale and scope of the disaster from a 15 to 30 minute fly over on the 13 or 14 or 15 January 2011. This would have included Ipswich City and Somerset Regional Councils' areas.

Formal DDMG meetings were held which include the LDMG/LDC as members on the 12, 13, 14, 18, 20 and 27 January 2011 to discuss issues and plan operations of the DDMG in response to the event. LDMG's held regular meetings with representation from the DDMG either in person or by phone throughout the event. SITREPs were provided to the DDMG from the LDMG's during the event and again in the initial recovery phase. Requests for assistance were received daily throughout the event where district responses were provided or referred to the SDMG for consideration. Continued contact via email or telephone was made throughout the event as required to address any urgent or other issues as they arose.

SDMG teleconferences were held daily at 0900 hours and 1700 hours and some additional discussions were held when required to progress specific issues. SITREPs, using the format requested, were provided to the SDMG from the DDMG daily on 9 and 11 January and then three times daily from 12 January to 17 January. This was followed by two SITREPs on 18 January and one daily SITREP from 19 January to



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20 January. Post the 20 January 2011, the communications were by exception, and recovery SITREPs were provided as required.

Requests for assistance were received daily throughout the event and were either dealt with at District level or referred to the SDMG for consideration. Continued contact was made throughout the event as required to address any urgent or others issues as they arose.

All disaster response staff and equipment were reallocated from both operational and non operational areas within the police service that can be utilised before and during an event. Examples are the Executive Officer is an operational District Duty Officer, the Deputy Executive Officer is the District SCAN coordinator, the staff to operate the District Disaster Coordination Centre were from the District Office, District Education and Training area, Watchhouse, Brief Manager, Community Policing Coordinator, Intelligence Office and members brought in from the Academy and Police headquarters to support the District. Significant support and advice was provided on policy and Disaster Management arrangements from Disaster and Major Events and Planning Branch. The equipment and staff number were adequate and provided in a timely manner however the scale of the event was overwhelming in the beginning. The flood impact in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley did limit the resources available from the Southern Region.

Significant resources were provided by the ADF in support of the Local Government areas in the initial rescue phase including trucks and personnel to evacuate persons in low lying areas. Later the provision of human resources, trucks and earthmoving equipment to support the Local Government and communities in providing emergency road works and cleanup in impacted areas of both the Ipswich and Somerset Regional Council areas.

The assistance at the time of the event and during the initial clean up was very effective and timely however due to the scale of the event their availability after the initial deployment under the time lines of the Defence Force Assistance to the Civil Community arrangements were withdrawn. This meant that in some areas significant amount of work was not completed and their involvement could have been extended.

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The deployment of ADF personnel / resources during the initial stage of the flood was problematic. The method of deployment of ADF air resources was difficult from a district perspective and could have been more effective and timely, given the urgency for deployment during the initial phase. For example - DDCC would submit a request to SDCC for air-support who would then forward onto Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and they would then forward onto ADF for consideration. Agencies/ members of the DDMG (e.g. Energex, Main Roads) all had representatives at the DDMG who had the ability to commit resources on behalf of their respective agencies. Despite the ADF (RAAF) having a representative at the DDMG level, this avenue of deployment was not possible with the ADF, and requests were required to be processed as outlined above.


The initial impact on the communications systems in the Ipswich Police District came on Sunday 9 January 2011 with the significant rain event in the Toogoolawah and Esk areas. This was managed with the capacity available. Monday 10 January 2011 at about 1300 hours the Ipswich Police Communications room received a significant overflow of calls from the Toowoomba Communications room. The reasons for this occurring were not apparent for several hours. The large volume of calls to all emergency services in a short space of time resulted from events in Toowoomba; Grantham and Esk locations caused a number of issues with the emergency services. The Ipswich District Police Communications Centre received 89 '000' calls in the hour 1400 to 1500 hrs and 590 '000' calls for the 24 hrs on 11 January 2011.

The overflow status from Toowoomba Communications to Ipswich Communications means that information recorded in Ipswich needs to be sent through to Toowoomba as they remain the responsible location. Forwarding the information via telephone or fax was inherently difficult as Toowoomba Communications was saturated. Forwarding emails was working but advising Toowoomba of the email status was problematic. Ipswich could not offer response capacity in the circumstances.

When Ipswich Communications went into overflow to Brisbane Communications the problems continued and were exacerbated. This was due to two locations now being

  
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in saturation mode, telephones and faxes not efficient or effective modes of communications and emails were sent but managing this secondary method of information transfer was not a core communications process. The IMS's in Toowoomba and Ipswich Communication Centres were not compatible for data/information transfers or taskings, and Brisbane CAD is not compatible with either IMS.

The Ipswich Police Communications Centre activated a seven (7) day review to contact informants and update all Ipswich IMS jobs listed on the system from the flood period. This included all overflow jobs sent to Ipswich Communications by other centres.

The loss of power to the Esk, Lowood and Fernvale areas caused issues with the Telstra facilities resulting in the loss of telephone communications in those areas. There were also significant issues in the isolated communities in the Kilcoy and Moore areas due to the loss of power impacting on telecommunications in those areas.

Generally there were times in each 24 hour period from 10-14 January 2011 when the land lines and the mobile phones networks were busy and not able to be used for communications. There were no reported or noteworthy disruptions reported regarding internet or email services.

The community in most areas self helped in the initial stages of the event with Kilcoy, Toogoolawah, Esk, Rosewood, Lowood, Fernvale, Karalee, Karana Downs and Riverview being isolated from support. Most worked well together to support those impacted by the flooding. There was a significant efforts to self evacuate and support neighbours, friends and relatives. There were no incidents of major community unrest or disobedience during the incident. Both Councils provided support initially and to their capacity in the event and increased support as the recovery commenced. The community response in the recovery phase was significant especially in the clean up of houses, yards, businesses and public spaces in support of those impacted.

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There were some community areas that did not appreciate the seriousness of the information and warnings at the time. Some areas had to be revisited with further warnings were practical.

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At approximately 11:12am on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011, a submerged motor vehicle was located upside down in a flood creek bordering 180-266 Karrabin Rosewood Rd at Karrabin. Robert Gregory BROMAGE, DOB 08/10/60, was later identified as the deceased in the vehicle. Preliminary investigations were conducted by police within the Ipswich District after which it was handed to Task Force Galaxy.

Significant QPS, SES, Council and DTMR resources were deployed to signage mark, traffic manage and patrol flooded roads, bridges and water courses. There were several individuals spoken to and charged by Police regarding reckless and unlawful behaviour in flooded areas, and disobeying road closed signage.

Police resources were tasked to assist with evacuation warnings and patrols of flood affected streets, neighbourhoods and locations. Additional police resources were provided to perform anti looting patrols and to assist with policing duties at nominated evacuation centres. Traffic management taskings were also a major impact during the flood period as there were people trying to maintain their businesses and jobs, others were trying to assist family, friends and neighbours, and

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some were volunteering and needing to get to affected areas. In amongst these commuters there were the many sightseers and those with criminal intent.

SES personnel were also used to assist with evacuations warnings and being available in flood affected streets and locations as a community service. The work by SES and QFRS to perform Rapid Damage Assessments also provided a regular presence in the streets affected. In addition, visits by Council Officers and Energex personnel also provided a presence in the flood areas.

Numerous warnings were provided by BOM, Local Governments, media and various websites in the lead up to the flood event. These warnings included possible river heights and likely inundation areas. The SES provided a significant number of sand bags to areas that may receive flood waters and local area warnings were provided to residents both in the Ipswich City and Somerset Regional Council areas depending on access.

The significant and sudden rain event in the Somerset area occurred in a very short period of time and the primary response provided was the preservation of life. The size of the flooding impact on the Lowood area was such that major infrastructure including power and water systems were not able to be protected due to the logistical requirements to provide full protection.

There are a large number of dams either within the Ipswich Disaster District - for example Wivenhoe, Somerset, Atkinson's and Slityard Creek Dams, or in neighbouring Districts including Lake Manchester, Maroon, Moogerah, Bill Gunn, Clarendon, Perseverance and Cressbrook Dams - that have a significant impact on the creeks and rivers in the Ipswich City Council and Somerset Regional Council areas. All of these dams were impacted by the January 2011 flood event and their overflow or release impacts on water levels in creeks and rivers in the Ipswich Disaster District were numerous and complex regarding warnings, possible evacuations, and flooding of crossings, bridges and roads. Significant releases had considerable impacts on local areas such at Colleges Crossing, Mount Crosby Weir and access to areas in the Fernvale and Lowood areas.

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The two Councils within the Ipswich Disaster District are very different in capabilities and capacities. When both are fully involved in the same disaster event it does mean that reserve resources in the immediate areas are non existent. The Somerset Regional Council has limited human, and equipment resources due to its size. There were expectations that the local council can activate significant resources in the disaster response. Some expectations need to be clearly articulated and clarified so there is a reality as to what can be done in a response capacity.

The major arterial roads across the Somerset Regional Council were closed during the January 2011 flood. The Brisbane Valley Highway was closed at the Geoff Fischer Bridge Fernvale and south of Esk. It was also closed north of Esk in several locations. The flood proofing of this road would significantly benefit any future major flood event in regard to response, support and resupply and recovery.

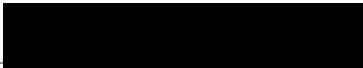
An issue for future operations is the alignment of Disaster District Boundaries and the Police District boundaries especially with the current overlap of boundaries. The Ipswich Police District encompasses areas of the Brisbane Disaster District at Karana Downs; and the Logan Disaster District in the Scenic Rim Regional Council at Boonah, Kalbar and Harrisville. The Ipswich Disaster District encompasses areas of the Caboolture Police District at Moore and Kilcoy.

The need for official road signage for disaster events can be overwhelming when there are numerous impacts at the same time. Both Councils and State Government agencies were not able to access signage for all of the roads and areas needing same. Usage of other signage formats can be helpful but it does not have the same authority or legislative basis when dealing with non compliance.

Planning needs to include alternatives where resources are not able to be accessed or are destroyed during the event. Positioning of resources needs a calculation for floods, bush fires or earth quakes for example. Linked to this is the need to identify localised community areas which are capable of being self sufficient or self sustaining within a Council area or the Disaster District. These would be needed for a short or long timeframe depending on access, communications, power, and support capabilities. The January 2011 flood event highlighted several locations particularly

  
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in the Somerset Regional Council area; however Ipswich City Council area also gave rise to this issue.

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.



Garth S. Pitman

**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 9 March 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 12 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 Ipswich this 9th day of MARCH 2011

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