



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF WITNESS



Occurrence #: _____

Statement no: 1 Date: 13/01/2010

Statement of

Name of witness: NORMAN, Sarah Jane

Date of birth: [redacted] Age: [redacted] Occupation: Home duties

Police officer taking statement

Name: SMITHARD, Allister Graham

Rank: Senior Constable Reg. no.: 4009854

Region/Command/Division: Southern Station: Toowoomba TCS

Statement:

- I am a [redacted] year old mother of two and I reside [redacted].
The residence is basically on the corner of Murphy's Creek road and McCormack road. My cottage is on the southern side of the creek closest to Murphy's creek road. I reside at this cottage with my husband Jethro William James NORMAN [redacted] and Israel Willem NORMAN [redacted] and Vera Estelle NORMAN [redacted]. I had lived in the house on the property in 2004. I then moved into the cottage in 2007 when I got married.
- My parents and two of my siblings reside on the same 10 acres in the four bedroom house. My mother Sandra Christine MATTHEWS [redacted] and my father Steven Noel MATTHEWS [redacted]. My brother Samuel James MATTHEWS [redacted] and my sister Victoria Kaitlin MATTHEWS [redacted]. My parents moved to the house in 2004.
- My parent's house is on the northern side of the creek. The house is a low set brick four bedroom house. On the northern side of the house is a 4 bay 12 x 6 metre colour bond garage. A 4 bay shed 12 x 6 metre colour bond shed also out the front of house. There was also a small garden type shed near the fence line.
- There is a spring fed creek and divides the house and cottage. There crossing over the creek is called Kirsop bridge. Generally the deepest part of the creek that runs through our property is around knee high. It is about just over a metre wide.

QFCI
Date: 29/4/11
Exhibit Number: 184
jm


[redacted]
(Witness's signature)

(Justice of the Peace (Qual.)/
Commissioner for Declarations's signature)

(Signature of police officer
preparing statement)

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **NORMAN, Sarah Jane**

5. On a heavy down pour the creek will rise and become a width of about 3 metres wide. It would be about 1 metre or so in depth. Even when the creek has been high after a downpour I have never seen it much higher than this. I have seen the water come in a burst but it has always been well below the level of the bank. The whole time that I have lived there I have never seen the water rise or come near the top of the bank. My parents, siblings and I have always been very aware of the rise and fall of the creek. I have also never seen the water come over the Kirsop bridge and it has never stopped us from getting in and out of the property. The water would rise and fall very quickly.
6. Also on the northern side of my parents house is hills or part of the range. There is a small creek that runs down from the above and through the spring bluff train station. This creek runs behind the house. When we first moved in it was a non flowing creek but it would flow if there was rain. Recently due to the amount of rain it has been flowing constantly. It is not as wide as the other creek but it is quite deep right behind the house.
7. About a week or so ago mum and dad got a small amount of water which had flowed from this creek and had spilled over the hill and banked around and seeped into the shed beside the house. It was just a very small amount of water that went into the shed. The front yard was covered by a small amount of water. I'd say it was about ankle deep. I think this may have been around the 27th of December as we had a birthday party for my daughter.
8. Because of this Dad put a sleeper wall up towards the end of the creek where it had begun to spill down the hill. This wall was about 20 metres long and about knee height. I think it was about two sleepers tall. I am aware that he had put metal pickets or post to hold the wall. This was put in place to divert the water back into the creek and away from the house. I noticed since this time it was working brilliantly. There was only a small trickle that would seep through the wall. It had stopped the flooding or water going into the shed and to the front yard.
9. Dad had also dug some trenches on the northern side of the shed. This was a small trench filled with rocks which diverted the water from the shed towards drains he had put in. Dad had put a drain out the front of the house/shed and also one behind the house near the pool. The drain near the pool had pipes buried


(Witness's signature)


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: NORMAN, Sarah Jane

underground and this ran the water into the creek at the back of the house. The drain at the front also had pipes buried and it ran water out to the other creek.

10. On the evening of the 9th of January 2011, I went over to Mum and Dads and I observed that the water was still being diverted and the drains were still working and taking the water away.
11. I had also noticed that creek between my cottage and the house had risen and it was the highest I had seen it. It was still at least two meters from the top of the bank. The water was also still quite a bit below the bridge at the crossing.
12. I recall on Monday the 10th of January 2010 I knew that it had been raining but I hadn't taken any notice of the water level. I was at home in the cottage with my two children. In the early afternoon I received a phone call from my brother Sam asking how I was going.
13. Sam told me that the water had gone up onto the back verandah which is near door level. I heard Mum say in the background the water is coming in. Sam said he had to go and hung up the phone.
14. I tried to contact my husband who was at work in Toowoomba but I couldn't get onto him. I called a family friend Johnny FOWKES to see if he could come and help mum with the house. He said that he and another friend Brendon BAKER would come down.
15. After this I heard some really loud noises. I went out of my cottage and towards the creek. By this time it was completely flooded. I could see bits of shed being pushed down and washing down the creek. I also saw massive gum trees getting knocked down and swallowed up into the water.
16. I could see water forcefully coming down the hills, down McCormack road and the creek behind the house, the creek between the houses. I also could see another waterway behind the creek at the back of the house.
17. I have never seen so much water move so forcefully it was just knocking things down in its path.
18. I noticed that Mum and Dads house was under water. The water level was about 2 foot down from the gutter of the roof. This had all occurred in about twenty minutes. I went back inside my house and called the police.
19. After I got off the phone to the police I went back outside and ran down near the bridge to see if I could see anyone. I couldn't see anyone at that point. I did take


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CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **NORMAN, Sarah Jane**

a couple of photographs of the water. I went back up to Murphy's creek road to see if I could see anyone there.

20. I noticed two men up on the road and as I was yelling out they came over. We all went back towards the creek. One of these men told me that someone else on the road had told them they had seen someone over near the house waving.
21. I went back over to the where I could see the front of Mums house. I could see Sam was holding onto to a post near the front door. He was signally and trying to tell me something but I couldn't understand him.
22. I ran back to where the other two men were and told them. I then ran back to where I was and I could still see Sam holding on the post and trying to get a message across to me.
23. In the air I could see him write the words Mum, Dad with his hand. He signalled with his hand in a sweeping motion in the direction of the water. From this I interpreted that Mum and Dad had been washed away. Sam also then signalled to me the shape of a V and pointed inside the roof. From the way he was pointing I interpreted that Victoria must have been in the roof and safe.
24. I went back up and told the other two that Mum and Dad had been washed away. I think they then went for a drive. I do not know who these two people were. I ran back inside and called the police again and told them.
25. I called Johnny FOWKES again and told him the situation and was trying to get them to come down as soon as possible. At this point I couldn't do anything so I just waited.
26. About an hour or so I saw that the water had subsided a lot from the front of the house. The water was however still raging down the creek. I saw Sam and Victoria come out from the house and onto the front grass area.
27. I saw them walk over to the neighbours place. I know her name as Sharon. I don't know her last name. They came out with towels around them. I think that Victoria then rang me on my mobile phone and told me of the situation.
28. This had matched up to what I had interpreted as to what Sam had been signalling. I just tried to comfort her and was telling her, others were coming and so were the police.
29. After a short time I was aware that Victoria had been collected by Craig who is that care taker of the railway at spring bluff. In that time I saw Sam over near the

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bridge on the house side of the creek. I went inside to see my kids and next minute Sam came into the cottage.

30. Sam had seen some workers from the railway were on the other side of the bridge. He grabbed a snatch strap from my place and went down and was helping others come over the creek.

31. I got a phone call from Victoria as she wanted to come to my cottage. Sam went back to Victoria and he and Victoria came over the creek being helped by Craig. Victoria came over and she was in shock.

32. I received a phone call from my older brother Daniel Steven MATTHEWS who told me to disconnect the power at my cottage. I went out and turned this off. I then realised I didn't know where Sam was. I assumed he had gone to start searching for Mum and Dad.

33. Soon after this Jethro, Johnny POWKES and Brendon arrived at my house. They all left to begin searching on foot. They told me that they had caught up with Sam. A few other boys had also come along and went to help search.

34. During this time two police officers arrived and had come to the cottage and took some details.

35. A little while later my husband come back and told me that they had found both bodies and that Mum and Dad were dead. Sam, Victoria, Jethro and I then went down and we looked at Dad's body. Jethro, Victoria and I then went over and looked at Mum's body. I identified that they were both my parents.


36. Sam, Victoria, my family and I went and stayed with friends that night.

37. I have provided the photographs I had taken to the police. I also had drawn a map of the layout of the property.


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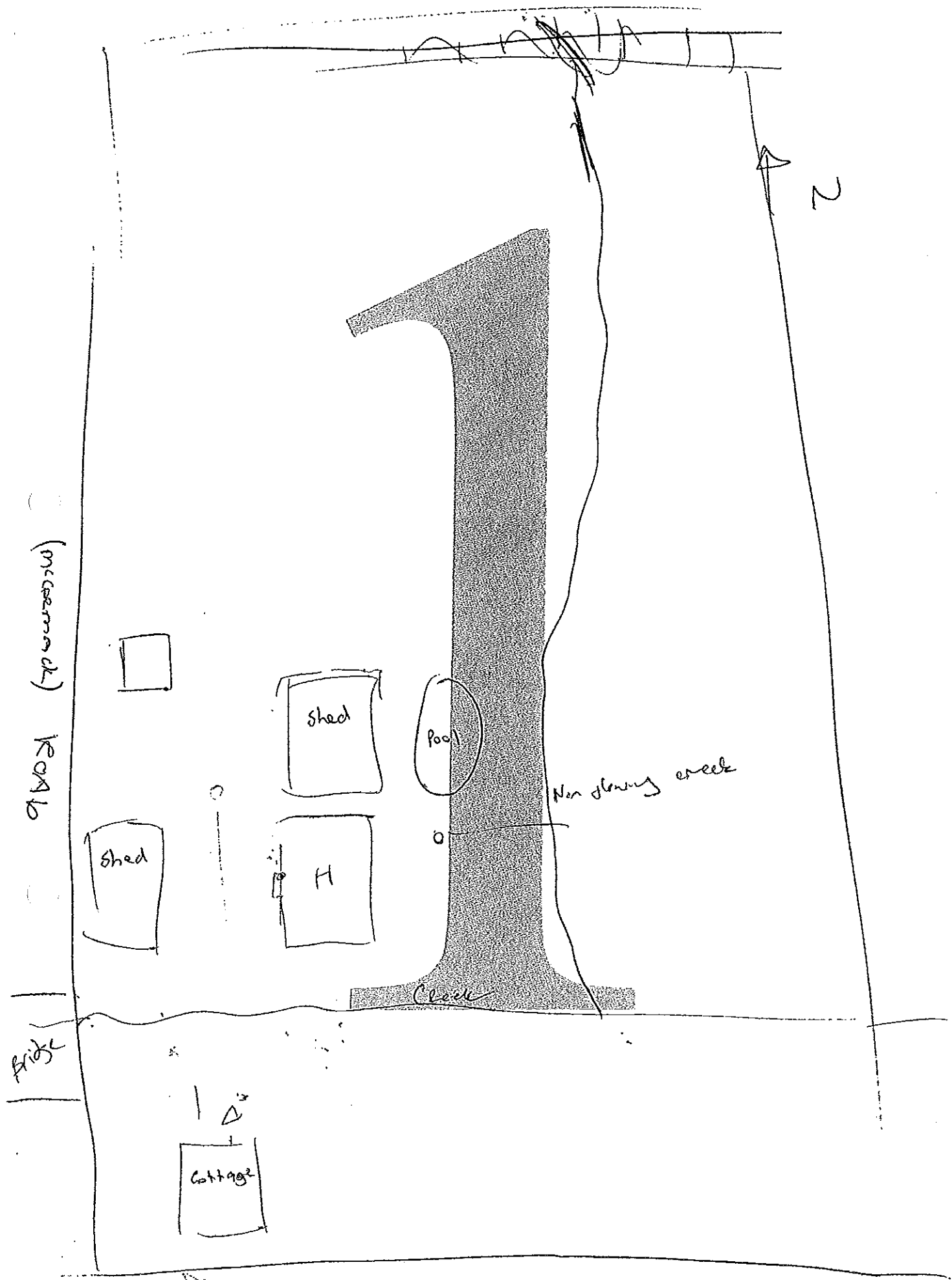
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Justices Act Acknowledgement


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(McCormack) ROAD

2

Non flowing creek

Creek

Bridge

ROAD (MORPHY'S CREEK)



13/1/2011