STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Prepared by: Legal Services Unit  Date: 12 December 2011

Name of Witness: Lee Anthony Johnson

Address of Witness: Emergency Services Complex, Park Road, Kedron, Brisbane, Queensland

Occupation: Fire-fighter

Position: Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Requirement to Provide Statement No. 1795086

1. Lee Anthony Johnson, Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service ("QFRS"), Department of Community Safety, Associate Diploma Applied Science (Fire Technology), AFSM, MiFireE, FAIM, state:

Attachments

1. As there are voluminous attachments to this statement, those attachments have been captured in an electronic format and are saved on the attached compact disc marked “Statement of Lee Johnson – Attachments”.

Background

2. I commenced my career with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in 1975, as a fire-fighter with the Townsville Fire Brigade Board. In 1985, I transferred to the South Coast Brigade as a Sub-Station Officer, and was promoted to Station Officer that same year. I was promoted to Deputy Chief Officer at Rockhampton in 1988. Following the transition to the new Queensland Fire Service, I was appointed District Commander in 1990. When the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority was established in 1997, I was appointed as Commissioner, Central Region and then as Commissioner, Brisbane South Region in 2001.

3. I was appointed as the Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in November 2001.

This is page 1 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.
4. I am a recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM), Australia's highest individual honour for a fire-fighter, acknowledged in the 2004 Australia Day Honours List. I was also awarded the QFRS Diligent and Ethical Services Medal in 2009.

5. I am the President of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC). Further, I represent Queensland as a Director on the Board of the National Aerial Firefighting Centre.

6. I have previously provided a submission to the Commission dated 13 September 2011. Rather than providing the Commission with documents already filed, I will refer to this document (and its attachments) throughout this statement as "the QFRS Submission".

7. In relation to the flood related incidents attended by QFRS personnel in Grantham, I have caused a search of the Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch ("ESCAD") system to be undertaken and that data has been collated into a spreadsheet which is attached to this statement and marked "LAI-1".

8. I will refer to this spreadsheet throughout this statement and draw the Commission's attention to pertinent parts of the data as it relates to each of the responses.

9. For convenience, I have highlighted all incidents that are recorded as being for Grantham on the spreadsheet. However, it should be noted that some of the incidents recorded for surrounding areas were a direct result of the same flooding events.

10. Unless otherwise stated, my answers in this statement are provided on the basis of QFRS records.
Question 1 To provide a written statement, under oath or affirmation, to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, in which the said Commissioner Johnson advert to Queensland Fire and Rescue Service records and any other information available to him and says, in respect of the flooding of the town of Grantham on 10 January 2011:

(a) when and how the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service was first made aware of

i. the flooding of the town;

ii. the fact that there was an emergency situation there likely to require Queensland Fire and Rescue Service assistance to residents of the town;

11. On 10 January 2011, QFRS was monitoring weather conditions at a regional level. As the weather events unfolded in Toowoomba, Murphy’s Creek and other areas below the Toowoomba range, QFRS responded continually to flooding related events from approximately 13.00 hours. Refer attachments 1 and 3 of the QFRS Submission.

12. In relation to question 1(a)(i): The first recorded call for assistance in Grantham was a call for assistance at 16:06:09, and is recorded as incident number QF6-11-002892. This incident is detailed in “LAJ-1”.

13. In relation to question 1(a)(ii): This was followed by a succession of further calls for assistance, which indicated the nature of the emergency situation that was unfolding. To assist the Commission in identifying those incidents, all incidents in Grantham on the afternoon of 10 January 2011 have been highlighted.

(b) What personnel and equipment were sent to the town of Grantham on the afternoon and evening of 10 January 2011, giving details by name of who attended, their usual station, and all vehicles sent;

14. Attached and marked “LAJ-2a” and “LAJ-2b” are photographs of whiteboards at the Gatton Incident Command Centre (“ICC”). These whiteboards were used by the ICC to record and manage the various fire vehicles that were responding to incidents in and around the Gatton and Grantham area on the afternoon and evening of 10 January 2011.

15. I have caused a further search of QFRS records to be undertaken to ascertain the personnel crewing those vehicles. That data has been collated and is attached in a table marked “LAJ-3”.

This is page 3 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Lee, Anthony, Johnson): 

J/P/Lawyer/Commissioner for Declarations: 

16. In relation to the usual station of the personnel in attendance, I have included a column in “LAJ-3” that details the usual station of each fire vehicle. Vehicles were initially crewed by officers from the vehicle’s home station. For example, vehicle 645M, on the first line of the table, is usually based at the Ipswich fire station and it was crewed by QFRS officers from that station.

(c) the precise times of the dispatch of each of those personnel and vehicles;

17. For those incidents recorded in the ESCAD data (attachment “LAJ-1”), the column titled “time of dispatch” indicates the dispatch time of QFRS personnel / vehicles to each incident.

(d) the precise times of the arrival of each of those personnel and vehicles (or if they did not arrive, an explanation of why);

18. For those incidents recorded in the ESCAD data (attachment “LAJ-1”), the column titled “time of arrival” indicates the arrival time of QFRS personnel / vehicles at each incident.

[There were multiple reports of incidents that could not be accessed because of the roads / points of entry being cut-off by flood water. Those incidents are recorded in the ESCAD data (attachment “LAJ-1”) as “no access” and/or “no vehicle assigned / responded” at that time, in the “time of dispatch” and “time of arrival” columns of the spreadsheet.]

(e) details of the directions or instructions given to each of those personnel as to the tasks they were to perform in Grantham;

19. For those incidents recorded in the ESCAD data, QFRS personnel were tasked by the Fire Communications Centre (South East Region). A copy of the communications between the Fire Communications Centre and each of the vehicles is attached and marked “LAJ-4”. All audio communication files for each particular incident are numbered as per the numbering in attachment “LAJ-1”.

(f) a description of the tasks performed by each of those personnel and vehicles and the times at which they were performed;

20. The column entitled “comments” in “LAJ-1” provides a description of the core tasks being performed at each incident.
(g) an explanation of how and why swift water technician Mills separated from Appliance 850L and joined the Gatton 91 unit in Grantham, with details of what other personnel were involved in that unit, what functions it performed in Grantham and at what times they were performed;

21. I have no personal knowledge of these matters.

22. I am advised that Mr. Mills has been consulted regarding these matters, and attached and marked “LAJ-5” is an email from Mr. Mills relating to these matters.

(h) If there was any delay between the first notification of the need for Queensland Fire and Rescue Service assistance to residents of the town and the dispatch and/or arrival of such assistance, the reason for that delay;

23. Due to the prevailing weather conditions, access to the Grantham was cut by flood waters which delayed QFRS personnel in providing immediate assistance to the residents of Grantham.

24. The first recorded call for assistance to the QFRS in relation to Grantham was at 16:06:09, and is recorded as incident number QF6-11-002892.

25. This call was tasked for response, by the Fire Communications Centre, to rural fire appliance Grantham52.

26. As reflected in “LAJ-1”, other QFRS personnel were unable to gain vehicular access to Grantham from 16:31:30 onwards.

27. Whilst there was no vehicular access, QFRS tasked helicopters (Helitak 220 and Firebird 460) were operating in the area.

28. Helitak 220 recorded its first winch rescue in the Grantham area at 17:50 hours, as reported in their post-incident report. See attachment ”LAJ-6”.

[This report records that over 47 people were assisted from the floodwaters throughout 10 and 11 January 2011 by the crew of Helitak 220.]

29. Information in relation to Firebird 460 activities can be found in the statements of John McDermott and Ben Sutherland, which were provided for the purposes of consideration for bravery awards. See attachments “LAJ –7” and LAJ – 8".
(i) at what time an incident control centre was established at Gatton, by what personnel it was staffed, and what functions it performed.

30. I am advised by Chief Superintendent John Gresty (who was the South Eastern Region Acting Assistant Commissioner on 10 January 2011) that he directed Inspector Brian Humphreys, and two other officers (Auxiliary Captain Peter Mason and Acting Station Officer [redacted]) to travel to Gatton to establish an Incident Control Centre ("ICC").

31. I am further advised that those officers proceeded to Gatton and took with them a cache of equipment (including radios, computers, stationary and a printer) to establish the ICC in Gatton.

32. I am advised that they arrived in Gatton at 17:40, Inspector Brian Humphreys met briefly with Acting Assistant Commissioner Gresty outside of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council chambers — where Acting Assistant Commissioner Gresty reiterated the direction to establish the ICC, and gave a further direction that the priority was to account for all QFRS staff and vehicles in the area.

33. I am advised that at approximately 18:05 on 10 January 2011, Captain Peter Mason commenced telephone contact with listed appliances to get their locations, and also set up radio communication on VHF channel 35, calling on all appliances for roll call. It should be noted that communications on VHF 35 are not recorded and that this is normal when this channel is used.

34. At approximately 19:15 on 10 January 2011 Gatton ICC was declared operational and all fire vehicles were notified of that via VHF radio (Chanel 35) and UHF radio (Chanel 78).

35. The Incident Management Team established in the ICC consisted of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire Commander</td>
<td>Inspector Brian Humphreys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations Officer</td>
<td>Station Officer Mark Stephenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Officer</td>
<td>Acting Inspector Peta Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics Officer</td>
<td>Station Officer Robert Fletcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Communications</td>
<td>Captain Peter Mason [redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Support</td>
<td>Acting Station Officer [redacted]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36. On 18 January 2011, Inspector Brian Humphreys wrote down his recollections of the events of 10, 11 and 12 January 2011. Extracted are those notes relating to 10 January 2011, which are marked as attachment "LAJ-9".
37. At approximately 19:45 on 10 January 2011 the Fire Commander received a fax from the Fire Communications Centre (FireCom South-East) detailing a list of jobs that required completing. A copy of this fax is attached and marked “LAJ-10”.

38. The list had outstanding jobs for Grantham and surrounding areas. Out of a total of 14 jobs, 2 had been completed earlier and 12 had yet to be completed.

39. I am advised that Operations Officer (Mark Stephenson) prioritised tasking of the outstanding jobs and tasked QFRS personnel to attend accordingly. All time stated in the proceeding paragraph’s [39]-[46] related to events on the evening of 10 January 2011.

40. I am advised that Gatton Fire Vehicle 91 had completed the first tasked job prior to 20:00, and further tasking of available vehicles and crews occurred until all jobs were attended to.

41. I am advised that at 20:10, a verbal situation report was made to the Regional Operations Centre (“ROC”) advising that:

   • There were 4 jobs in Grantham allocated and 10 to be allocated.
   • Firebird 460 had performed six roof-top rescues, prioritising unstable dwellings.
   • A further ten houses, that were in calm water on the Gatton-Helidon Road, had people on the roof and were waiting to be rescued by the EMQ rescue helicopter, as it had night capability.

   A handwritten note that I am advised was taken by Inspector Brian Humphries is attached and marked “LAJ-11”.

42. A formal situation report was then forwarded to the ROC at 21:38. This report is attached and marked “LAJ-12”.

43. Details of the jobs being attended to were captured in the Electronic Incident Action Plan (EIAP), which is a software package to designed to track operational tasks as they occur.

44. I am advised by Brian Humphreys that entries in the EIAP were occurring from the time that the ICC was established at 19:15.

45. I am advised by Brian Humphreys that the data was not saved by the system automatically (as it should have been) for information from 19:15 to 22:47, and a new EIAP session was then commenced to capture information. I am further
advised that these computers were taken and checked by regional data support officers, but the information could not be retrieved.

46. The earliest records that can be located of an EIAP report for the Gatton ICC commences at 22:47, and indicate that QFRS responded to incidents through the night and into the next morning. That report is attached and marked “LAJ-13”.

47. A hand-written radio log detailing radio traffic in the ICC between the times of 21:30 and 23:25 is attached and marked “LAJ-14”.

Interaction between the ICC and the LDMG

48. I am further advised that Acting Assistant Commissioner Gresty also traveled to Gatton on the afternoon of 10 January 2011. Mr Gresty advises that he left the QFRS regional office at Beenleigh at approximately 16:00 and arrived at Gatton between 17:00 and 17:30 with some delays being caused by the heavy traffic that had built up because the flooding events had blocked the highway.

49. I am advised that once he arrived in Gatton he attended the Local Disaster Management Group “LDMG” and that he and another QFRS staff member (Neumann) remained at the LDMG as the QFRS liaison throughout the evening of 10 January 2011. Communication between the LDMG and the ICC was initially by telephone and reverted to radio communications later in the evening.

Question 2 To provide a copy of the Gatton incident control centre log and copies of all other records of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service not already provided to the Commission which document the activities of the Service in relation to the flooding in Grantham on 10 January 2011, through to the early hours of 11 January 2011.

50. The available data log(s) kept in relation to the ICC have been discussed at paragraph’s [36] and [37] of this statement and are attachments “LAJ-13” and “LAJ-14” respectively.

51. All data captured by the South East Region data collection team for the 10 January 2011 (attachment “LAJ-15”) and the early hours of 11 January 2011 (up until 0600hrs) (attachment ‘LAJ-16”).

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 today and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 9 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 12th day of December 2011

This is page 9 of a statement comprising 9 page/s.

Witness (Lee Anthony Johnson):

JP/Lawyer/Commissioner for Declarations:
L AJ -1
## Multiple jobs COMPLETION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCIDENT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>SUBURB</th>
<th>APPLIANCES RESPONDED</th>
<th>PERSONS REPORTED</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<td>DATE</td>
<td>TIME OF CALL</td>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>COMPLUTION TIME</td>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td>HOUSE ON ROOF TOTOP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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**Multiple Jobs**

**INCIDENTS**

- **QF6-11-002900**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 674A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:19:00
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FAMILY ON HOUSE ROOFTOP

- **QF6-11-002901**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 675A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002902**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 676A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002903**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 677A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002904**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 678A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002905**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 679A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002906**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 680A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **QF6-11-002907**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 681A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE

- **No Incident Created**
  - **DATE**: 10/01/2011 00:00:00
  - **TIME OF CALL**: 00:00:00
  - **LOCATION**: Murphys Creek Rd
  - **APPLIANCES RESPONDED**: 682A
  - **PERSONS REPORTED**: 1
  - **COMPLETION TIME**: 17:41:10
  - **COMPLETION DATE**: 10/01/2011
  - **COMMENTS**: FLOODED HOUSE, CARS WASHED AWAY, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS INSIDE
LAJ-5
From: Bradley Mills
Sent: Wednesday, 7 December 2011 08:20
To: Kevin Walsh (QFRS Superintendent)
Cc: Andrew Neil; Stephen Smith (QFRS Cannon Hill); Bradley Mills
Subject: RE: Information

Kevin,

Please find relevant information below in relation to issues for the Flood Commission of Inquiry.

RE: An explanation of how and why swift water technician Mills separated from Appliance 850L and joined the Gatton 91 unit in Grantham, with details of what other personnel were involved in that unit, what functions it performed in Grantham and at what times they were performed.

On the 10/01/2011 the specialist appliance 850L with crew of Station Officer Brad Mills and Firefighter Andrew Neil were responded at approx 1430hrs to a swift water incident at Withcott. While on route to that incident at approx 1510hrs I heard wordback from appliance 676A who were at a swift water incident with persons on top of a car that had been washed off the flooded Lockyer Creek Bridge at Helidon. I contacted 676A to obtain more information about this incident and to see if the roadway was open. They informed me that we could not get through so I contacted our fire communications and informed them that we would attend this incident and would require another response to the incident at Withcott. We arrived at the Lockyer Creek Bridge at 1531hrs.

There were three people stuck on the roof of a car in the fast moving floodwater. We could not gain access to these people from our position. At the time of this event there was a channel 7 helicopter in the air that was filming this incident. I made radio contact with the pilot of the aircraft and requested he land to pick up myself and Andrew to enable us to undertake a rescue. Once in the air the car and persons had disappeared from view. During a search of the area we had located the female of the car clinging to a small group of trees in the middle of the fast flowing water. I instructed the pilot to land on a small area of land as close as we could to the person. The helicopter then had to leave the scene to go and refuel. After a period of time we had made our way through the floodwater to rescue the female and remove her to an area of safety. I had requested a rescue helicopter to pick us up from that area. It was approx another 45mins until Helitack 220 arrived and returned us and the female casualty to the incident Control point at approx 1700hrs. At this point helitack 220 returned to the air to search for the man and boy. At approx...
1715hrs helitack 220 had located and winched the boy to safety and returned him to the control point. We were then instructed at approx 1745hrs to board the helicopter to continue the search for the remaining male person.

While in the air conducting a search pattern we were notified of another possible wall of water heading toward the bridge area and was instructed to check up river to locate any sign of this water. During this search of this area the pilot informed me that he was running low on fuel and needed to divert to the nearest fuel supply which was at Toowoomba, and was not able to drop us back to the control point at this stage. We then proceeded to Toowoomba with helitack 220 to refuel.

While refuelling the rescue crew had received a number of emergency calls requesting winching operations of persons from rooftops in the Lockyer Valley area. On returning from Toowoomba at approx 1830hrs we had located numerous people in need of assistance from flood water. There was a house that was located in the middle of floodwater that was falling apart with two people clinging to the rooftop. The pilot had notified me that he would have to put us on the ground to allow them to conduct winching operations of these and other persons that require assistance. We landed on the oval in Victor street and disembarked the aircraft.

Once on the ground we were met by a large group of locals who all stated they had people missing and required assistance. With no communications to contact the control point I requested the use of a mobile phone from a lady who was involved with the Rural Fire Service. I contacted the Brisbane Fire Communication centre to inform them of our location, sit rep and that we were ok. I had informed them of our previous incident and requested they contact the Incident Controller and inform him of this information. We were totally cut off by water within the Township of Grantham. After a period of time helitack 220 had returned with the rescued occupants of the house and they informed Andrew that there were numerous rescues to perform. I decided that we would conduct ground operations from our position. Andrew then informed the pilot of this decision and also informed him that we were in contact with our communication centre. We had no further contact with Helitack 220.

I was then contacted by Superintendent John Gresty by mobile phone to inform me of numerous 000 emergency calls for assistance from a number of locations in Grantham. I had also informed him of our situation and requested him to make contact with the incident controller from our previous incident. At this stage I had been liaising with a number of local people to gain information on persons missing, locations, persons injured and persons already evacuated. During this time we had conducted searches of wrecked vehicles, houses, railway bridge and had located and made contact with several persons trapped on top of their flooded houses. I provided this information to John and informed him that we would be staying at our location until the emergency situation was over.

During these proceedings it was identified that the vehicle Gatton 91 was at the Rural station and was available to be used. I then set this vehicle up as fireground communications and as a control point. We had no other communications other than mobile phone at that stage. I then contacted South East Fire Communications to set up a incident control point and to give them a sitrep of the situation. They informed me of the main control point at Gatton. All radio messages were then passed through Gatton control. I had instructed 2 male persons on how to use the radio transmitter for fireground use and incident control use. I would then pass information to them who would then transmit to the incident control point.

At approx 2100hrs I had made contact with the swift water crew that made entry from the other side of town. I am unsure of the time that Grantham 91 was officially shut down as a control point. Appliance 850L was being used by these crews. Both Andrew and myself remained in Grantham until approx 0230hrs 11/01/11. We then returned to the Gatton Fire Station incident control point.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]

Thanks

Brad Mills
Station Officer
Special Operations Unit
Queensland Fire & Rescue Service

8/12/2011
From: Kevin Walsh (QFRS Superintendent)
Sent: Tue 6/12/2011 12:36 PM
To: Bradley Mills
Subject: Information

Brad,
As per our conversation on the phone, the Flood Commission of Inquiry is requesting information to clarify some issues. The question in relation to you is as follows:

An explanation of how and why swift water technician Mills separated from Appliance 850L and joined the Gatton 91 unit in Grantham, with details of what other personnel were involved in that unit, what functions it performed in Grantham and at what times they were performed.

Brad, as discussed please provide information to above as fully as you can including the lead up and subsequent events. Hopefully this will satisfy legal arrangements without having to trouble you further on your long service leave.

Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Regards

Kevin Walsh ML.shipMgt.
Superintendent
Qld Fire and Rescue Service
Commission of Inquiry Implementation Team
FACTUAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Incident:</th>
<th>Lockyer Valley, Grantham, Clarendon contained in the Greater Brisbane Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time &amp; Date:</td>
<td>10-11 JAN 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot:</td>
<td>[REDACTED]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft:</td>
<td>UH-UAX (Helitak 220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation:</td>
<td>Flood relief and Personnel Rescue (Winching, Hover Entry/Exits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers/Crew:</td>
<td>[REDACTED] Winch Operator, [REDACTED] Down the wire Crewman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather:</td>
<td>Heavy Rain, Overcast, Thunderstorms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft type:</td>
<td>BK 117</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Prologue

Personal report on operations conducted by Rural Fire Service member [REDACTED]

Operational Details

On the 10th and 11th of January 2011 Helitak 220 was tasked to conduct Flood Rescue operations of personal stranded by floods in the Lockyer Valley west of Brisbane. We were based at Coolangatta Airport in support of SES and QFR,

We received tasking at approximately 4pm and proceeded to Archerfield airport to be briefed by Queensland Fire and Rescue air attack supervisors on an unfolding situation in Toowoomba and the Lockyer valley. We were immediately dispatched with a crew of four with instructions to assist in personnel extraction from flood affected areas.

WINCH RESCUE 1

Jan 10 1750: Grantham: Lockyer Valley

A car containing a family of three was swept down the Lockyer valley after been caught in a 5ft wall of water, the family was filmed sitting atop their vehicle by a 7 news media helicopter and swift water technicians from Queensland Fire and Rescue were dispatched to affect a rescue. Before rescue the family were swept from the vehicle and separated in the waters, the technicians were able to save the mother and get her to an island away from the main body of water. Our helicopter, HT220, was able to land and evacuate the technicians and rescued person to local emergency workers on the nearby highway. It was at that stage that we were informed of the missing male and his son. HT 220 then began a search of the area immediately downstream of the location. Approximately 5 minutes from dispatch [REDACTED] spotted the 1yr old boy situated on a hay bailer surrounded by swift flowing water. The decision to winch the child who was clothed in only a t-shirt and underwear was made and we conducted a 2 person winch. Upon entry to the helicopter we ascertained that the child had sustained severe cuts to his lower legs, was bleeding profusely and was in a state of shock.
After being rescued evacuation to awaiting EMS staff and his mother was undertaken. At the time of writing this report the status of the father was unknown. It was recognized by the crew that had the boy not been retrieved the chances of him surviving the night were extremely slim.

Family on car before rescue (7 news footage)  Child on Haybaler before winch extraction

Child in rear of aircraft  First aid assistance been given to child
Swift water technicians called us to a scene near the main rail bridge in Grantham. Reports stated a house containing an elderly couple had been swept 300m downstream. We arrived at the location and found the house with the persons trapped inside on the flow facing side of the dwelling. Water depth was chest height on the trapped people. The persons were trapped and unable to get to the roof or out from under the fallen eave of the house due to the current.
The decision was made to lower the rescue crewman on the wire into the water upstream from the house. He then made his way into the dwelling while in full view of the crew and secured the female before being pulled clear and into the helicopter. He then reentered the house for a second time to retrieve the awaiting male and family dog, upon returning to the machine we vacated to a nearby field where they were placed in the care of swift water technicians. The general consensus within the crew was that had they been left within the dwelling the persons would have perished. It was also noted amongst the pilots and winch operator that the down the wire crewman had performed a rescue that was above and beyond normal expectations and capabilities.

WINCH RESCUE 3
Jan 10 17:00: Grantham: Lockyer Valley

Re-tasked by authorities to the general area of rescue 2 we sighted a 2 story house surrounded by water. Adult male and teenage boy were situated in the house that was located in the middle of the flood stream. Winching was initiated and the Rescue crewman was placed onto the house. Both males were retrieved from the dwelling in separate winch sorties and relocated to dry land.

WINCH RESCUE 4
Jan 11 13:00 Clarendon: Lockyer Valley

Tasked to multiple houses surrounded by water in the Clarendon area. Several of the houses contained within the general area contained persons unable to vacate due to the swift water condition and general weather state encountered at the time. The first house we approached contained 1 male and 2 female occupants. The dwelling was situated well into the flood stream and was totally inaccessible via other methods. Winching was undertaken to retrieve all persons who were removed to the care of local emergency staff at the local sports ground. All winching in this event was undertaken utilizing the 2 person method with [redacted] as the rescue Crewman.

On two more occasions [redacted] was winch inserted into waist deep water at properties surrounded by water. He then assisted elderly and ill persons into the helicopter via the entry/exit method. One more occasion saw [redacted] inserted onto a roof where approximately 12 persons were stranded. He then supervised with the site
preparation and assisted with extraction of persons from this site. The 12 persons were evacuated by hover emplane from roof top.

Many more evacuations were carried out by the method of winching to the roof top, securing the site and loading evacuees onto the helicopter by hover emplane.

Summary

In all over 47 people were assisted from the floodwaters throughout the two days of operations; was an essential and vital member of the crew throughout all aspects of the operation. Conditions from a weather and environmental perspective would be described as atrocious at best. His conduct was exemplary for a person with relatively low experience in this field. All members of the crew were impressed by his maturity, attitude and willingness to place himself into what was a mentally and physically trying time in the face of true adversity.

It is the view of the crew and that his efforts in this time are truly deserving of recognition, persons would have perished if not for his efforts. In the eyes of myself, my colleagues and associated rescue staff on site he has earned admiration and respect to himself and the organization that he represents.

(author)

Winch Operator/Aircrewman

United Aero Helicopters

Pilot

United Aero Helicopters

Pilot

United Aero Helicopters
Witness Statement

McDermott, John.

6 April 2011

C/- McDermott Aviation, PO Box 600, Cooroy, QLD, 4563.

I, John McDermott state: I am the Director/Chief Pilot for McDermott Aviation Heli-Lift Australia. McDermott Aviation is used by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service on request for support in their operations, which is primarily wildfire.

On Monday January 10th 2011 I received a phone call from QFRS around 1515hrs asking for helicopter availability. I advised we had 1 AS355 ‘twin squirrel’ available but that it was scheduled to depart at 1600 for flood work at Tarong power station – Kingaroy. [REDACTED] ‘tasked’ us as Firebird 460 to Wittcott and asked if we were winch capable – we were not but was still required as a priority.

I piloted 460 and was in company with my son [REDACTED] as crewman. We departed Cooroy around 1530hrs and arrived at Wittcott approximately 1635hrs. The flight across to Wittcott itself was quite ‘marginal’ due to low cloud, heavy rain and gusty winds around the hills of up to 35 knots.

I flew an initial recce flight around Helidon which revealed extreme flooding, serious damage to infrastructure and obvious road closures due to flooding. We landed at Helidon School and waited for our QFRS ‘observer’, [REDACTED] to arrive, [REDACTED] was in touch with [REDACTED] via text message.

Helitack (HT) 220 flew over us around 1645hrs and landed at Wittcott School. [REDACTED] rang us and we repositioned to their location at 1650hrs. We were immediately tasked to transport 2 ‘Swift Water Rescue’ rescue guys up to Toowoomba. We left [REDACTED] at the School grounds due to weight considerations given we would have to ascend in difficult conditions.

The flight up to Toowoomba was extremely difficult due to very low cloud, rain and very strong gusty cross wind conditions. I tried a couple of direct routes to Toowoomba however the conditions made it impossible to fly that way so I found a ‘low level’ route via a power-line easement on the southern side of the Toowoomba mountain range.

We landed in Toowoomba and dropped the ‘Swift Water Rescue’ guys off while [REDACTED] made contact with QFRS. I was monitoring the weather very closely and I advised [REDACTED] that we had to get out of Toowoomba as soon as possible as the weather was moving in and we would likely have got caught there and unable to fly out.
We flew back to Helidon and began a further aerial inspection of the effected area. We were looking for stranded people who required rescue. During this early stage of flight, it was very apparent that had more than enough work to do just with communications, phones – radio etc and was not in a position to also act as observer. We decided to return to Wittcott School and pick up who would act as our second observer. The time now was approx 1730hrs.

It would certainly be fair to say, in my 30 years of flying helicopters, a lot of which has been in ‘disaster’ type scenarios, and I had never seen anything quite like what we were seeing. At this stage HT 220 radioed to advise they had to go for fuel, I explained the route we had found into Toowoomba including the presence of power lines and the other numerous hazards, they were able to land and refuel.

We flew along the flooded ‘river’ towards Grantham, where the extent of impact of the flooding was extreme. We began to conduct a detailed survey of the area, including flying ‘grid lines’ to determine and prioritise rescue requirements. There were dozens of people stranded on roofs, though most of these people were on roofs we were able to determine that they appeared to be on reasonably stable structures as well as having the ‘moral support’ of their neighbours in the same situation. Their lives did not appear to be in immediate danger so we plotted their locations and decided to continue, looking for people either stranded in trees, in cars or more isolated.

During this time, approximately 500 meters from the Grantham ‘pub’ I observed a house which ‘appeared to be moving’. Simon thought he could see people within this house. Closer hover investigation revealed two people in this house, holding on to the eaves of the house and waving frantically for help. The time was approximately 1815hrs.

We made an approach to the roof of the house to attempt a ‘one skid on’ landing to the roof to see if it was stable enough to help remove these people. Sections of the house had been severely damaged and it was apparent the roof was unstable. With the rotor wash, sections of the roof were moving so we pulled back. Simon opened the door and signalled to them that we would arrange help. It was necessary for us to remain ‘in sight’ of these people as we believe they were very desperate, we continued searching other areas but also kept returning to them to reassure them we weren’t going to leave them.

We could not initially make contact with HT 220 but I heard an airplane in the circuit at Toowoomba so I radioed him to call 220 and advise we required him ‘as a matter of urgency’. About 3 or 4 minutes later HT 220 radioed and advised they were back ‘in bound’. We guided HT 220 back to the house and they carried out a successful winch operation, recovering the 2 occupants – around 1830.

We had also found another couple of people stranded on top of a house approx 500 meters east of the ‘floating house’. Again, this was an isolated property and these people were on their own. We established via hand signal
with these people that we would return and we provided HT 220 with Lat and Long for them.

We followed the river further east, again, looking for more people stranded. We flew all the way to a crossing/spill way closer to Gatton where we decided there were enough peoples in that area to observe anybody in the water or in need of assistance. As such we returned back to Grantham area. We again flew grids looking for additional people, we found and ‘logged’ quite a few buildings with people in or on them and passed this information on.

We also went down low to inspect a few cars which were ‘floating’ with their headlights on. We did NOT find occupants in these cars. It was getting quite dark by now and we were also logging people who were signalling us with flash lights, mobile phones etc. We were trying to complete a ‘mental picture’ of where we were relative to ‘less effected’ areas.

We guided HT 220 back to the house were we had found the last two people and then began the flight back towards Wittcott, following the flooded river again. We landed Wittcott School around 1930hrs. By now it was quite dark, so we guided HT 220 into the school grounds and to assist with visual reference I activated our strobe lights and landing lights and of course radio.

We were met by many very disturbed people wanting information as many had relatives in Grantham etc. people had set the school up as a ‘base’. We conducted an extensive debrief of activities with HT 220 and [redacted]

There was discussion of where we may sleep which included being driven some distance, this is where that was possible, but I expressed concern that I did not want to be separated too far from our helicopters, again in case things worsened and we became isolated from them. Around 2230hrs the local school principal returned and both helicopter crews accompanied him back to his house to sleep the night.

On Tuesday January 11th we awoke around 0445hrs and drove to school grounds and completed our pre flight inspections. The weather was considerably worse than the day before and very marginal for flying. We had still not established where the fuel truck was located and both helicopters required fuel. Once we had established where fuel was being positioned and the weather improved slightly, we both became airborne and tracked along the flooded river, towards Helidon, Grantham, Gatton and finally landed at Plainland – in the Woolworths shopping centre.

We refueled and it was around 0700hrs. Ben was on the phone continually with his ‘superiors’ or whomever and it was decided that ‘Forest Hill’ was to be evacuated. We were told around 120 people. We began planning for this task then we were told that the military would undertake that operation. The weather was again very marginal and it we decided that we would conduct a reconnaissance as no one was able to develop situation awareness, the view
from the air was the quietest manner in which to assess what had occurred overnight and prioritise the people in need.

At this time and stage, we were the only helicopters in the area able to provide current information on the situation, which was worsening. The weather was deteriorating, rain was increasing and visibility and cloud base was worsening and water levels were again rising quickly.

We again flew the river looking for stranded people and flew to Forest Hill, where we found a lady stranded in a house and isolated. We were able to guide a ground team to her for recovery. We searched the banks of the creek looking for 'people / bodies' or anything requiring attention. HT 220 was tasked to quite a few winch ops.

We were tasked to a few 'addresses' looking for people reported as stranded but it was limited what we could do as of course there were no street signs etc. We devised a system of using lat and longs and with the GPS were able to operate more efficiently.

We returned to Plainlands to again refuel and wait further tasking. We were tasked to fly east along the highway to pick up another QFRS guy with a 'radio pack' as well as air to ground 'streaming' of information. During all of this, Ben was in constant phone contact with Brisbane and reporting on conditions.

HT 220 and ourselves had established a 'report and be seen' system, as visibility was low. We landed on the highway, east of Plainlands to pickup QFRS personnel. At this time, around 1045, the first of the arriving Blackhawks' over flew us in bound to Plainlands. We installed radio pack, took on the QFRS guy and became airborne, where we were tasked to Hattonvale to search for people in a house who were 'stranded' - we established it was not in imminent danger.

We again flew back to Grantham - Helidon - Forest Hill. At this stage the QFRS guys were filming and I believe direct streaming info back to Brisbane. We returned to Plainlands to refuel and get further instructions. A Navy Sea King arrived and required refuelling — unfortunately, this required our fuel truck to fit a 'pressure nozzle'. This did not work and the result was — despite great effort by [redacted] and the truck driver to rectify the problem, our fuel supply was now unserviceable. We later worked around this by flying into Amberley Air Force Base to refuel twice.

We were tasked to Fores: Hill to assist with the evacuation of people and flew a mission into the show grounds at Gatton. This had become necessary, as the Blackhawks may not have been able to evacuate all people in the remaining light.

We were then to fly a group of 4 Swift water guys to one of the towns, but by this time, there were a number of lightning strikes quite close to us and we had to shut down for a few minutes.
We off loaded the swift water guys to the military and flew another mission between Grantham, Fernvale, Gatton and Plainlands. Once the thunder storm had passed over the weather improved marginally and we were tasked to Fernvale – to assist HT 220 with retrievals and spotting.

Around 1800hrs we were tasked back to Brisbane Archerfield Aerodrome where we overnighted. We conducted a de-brief and arrangements were made for the next days operations.

Signature

Name/Rank

Witness Signature

Name/Rank
Witness Statement

Sutherland, Benjamin J.

9 March 2011

C/- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, GPO Box 1425, Brisbane, QLD, 4001.

I, Ben Sutherland state: I work within the telecommunications industry on the Gold Coast and I have been a Rural Volunteer Firefighter with the Coomera Valley Rural Brigade for approximately 7 years. I am also trained as an Air Observer and have assumed this role when called upon over the last 18 months. This role works through Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), Rural Operations - Air Operations and involves the coordination of air to ground efforts during significant wildfires.

On Monday the 10th of January 2011 at approximately 1430hrs I was called by the QFRS State Air Desk to respond to Archerfield airport and meet with Helitack (HT) 220 which was flying up from Coolangatta. The only information I had at that stage was that a house had been washed off the Toowoomba range.

As I made my way to Archerfield I was trying to get more information regarding who would be the contacts for air to ground communication for the operation, what channels we would be using and then configure a briefing for the pilot prior to departure which was mandatory. As I arrived at the front of the hangar at Archerfield HT 220 landed at the rear. I had been unable to obtain much more information, we hadn’t heard any news reports of what was occurring in Toowoomba so I briefed the pilot as best as I could. We then departed in the direction of Toowoomba.

Once airborne I could hear a lot of traffic over the South East Region Fire Communications channel. I was contacted by the State Air Desk and advised that Firebird 460 was also on its way from Cooroy. As HT 220 was a winch/rescue helicopter we would meet with Firebird 460 at Withcott primary school and I would transfer into this aircraft as an observation and coordination platform. Whilst flying I received a text message that literally advised me that I was ‘flying into a shitfight’.

As we neared Withcott I could see the EMQ helicopter conducting a winch rescue to the west – this was my first confirmation that the situation was significant if they were calling multiple air assets. It was approximately 1600 hrs and we received our first tasking. This tasking was that a Rural Operations truck had been washed away in Grantham. Once the 2 helicopters were on the ground in Withcott I moved into Firebird 460 with John McDermott. HT 220 immediately departed to conduct rescues and we were tasked to transfer 2
swift water personnel to Toowoomba, we had to leave his son at Withcott due to weight limitations.

Whilst we were flying to Toowoomba I was already being consumed by information. I had to juggle 2 mobile phones, 1 UHF portable radio, 1 VHF portable radio, the 2 CTAF aircraft radios that broadcast within the flight helmet and the internal intercom. McDermott made several attempts to ascend the range into Toowoomba with violent weather conditions and low cloud prevented us from taking a direct route. During this flight the communications increased and I had to insert one mobile phone between my helmet and my head and leave it there, the other phone I used for text messages, text communication for flight following is common practice in air operations due to unreliability of signal and noise. I had a writing pad on my leg for notes, the mobile phone in my helmet and juggled the remaining communications. Through some remarkable flying McDermott managed to find a path into Toowoomba. During a flight such as this we call and confirm any hazards when less than 500 feet so I assisted in calling for McDermott as we ascended the range avoiding powerlines and landed in Toowoomba airport.

We landed and dropped the Swift Water Rescue personnel off. I was in conversation with QFRS South West Incident Control Centre personnel as Toowoomba belongs to a different QFRS region than the Lockyer Valley which is actually in South East Region. They also have different radio channels and Fire communications personnel. We had initially been tasked to Toowoomba and technically belonged to South West Region. One of my duties is to confirm flight tasks and to account for all flight hours being as a result of legitimate tasking. McDermott approached me and advised that if we did not leave as soon as practical the weather would close in and we would be grounded. It was clear to us that the far greater need was in the Lockyer Valley so we exercised our initiative, informed the Toowoomba personnel and departed for another violent flight down the range.

As we descended I switched communications back to South East Region channels and we were immediately tasked to the area of Lockyer Creek. We re-established communications with HT 220 who needed fuel, McDermott verbally guided them along the path he had found and they also managed to fly into Toowoomba Airport and refuel. While descending we were experiencing what I have heard referred to as the ‘Hand of God’. These were violent up and down drafts. We would suddenly plummet or rise with force which made writing and juggling the numerous communications devices somewhat difficult.

We began to get a number of taskings however they were all for street addresses, we could not see the streets as they were under water. We requested latitude and longitude coordinates and I began to enter these into the GPS unit so we could fly to locations. It was obvious with the weather conditions, hazards and amount of people in need of assistance we needed another set of eyes for observation. This would bolster safety and also allow me to focus on maintaining the numerous modes of communication. We
landed at Withcott, picked up [REDACTED], and immediately set off toward Grantham.

We conducted a 360 degree primary search of Grantham, identifying people in need, assessed their urgency and plotted coordinates. We also received numerous calls from QFRS crews on the ground to fly over specific areas to look for people which took a degree of time.

We saw a house in a field that appeared to be moving, being swept with the current. As we flew closer it became evident that this house was indeed being swept along what was once farm paddocks, and to our astonishment we saw that 2 people were clinging to the front of this residence. We flew lower and due to their imminent danger we immediately began discussing options as to how we may be able to retrieve these people. HT 220 was still refuelling in Toowoomba. We considered various options such as placing one skid on the roof however the roofing iron was loose, we even discussed the option of landing nearby and removing the doors to allow quick emplane however this was not practical given the timeframes. Thankfully we re-established communication with HT 220 and they were inbound, communicated with these people that help was coming via hand signals and we continued to search for other people as the light was beginning to fade. We would circle back to ensure these people they were Ok until the arrival of HT 220 and their rescue.

We needed to assess the bigger picture and identify if there were other communities nearby in as much danger. We were the only observation platform and if we could identify areas or people in danger then we could prioritise, inform ground crews and also plan for the next day which was already on our minds. We conducted a low level sweep along the river down to Gatton and then back up to Grantham. We were assessing the structural integrity of dwelling that people were on top of so that we could prioritise. We found 2 more people isolated on a rooftop and we alerted HT 220 as well as 4 more on sheds that needed evacuation.

Throughout this entire time I was inundated with communication, I have never experienced anything like it. However I can understand it as there were very limited air assets and even the resources on the ground were in isolated pockets so we were the only available means to gain situation awareness over a broad area. Light was failing quickly so we had to conduct a last sweep to identify any urgent rescues or to plot people we hadn't seen and then we would have to leave. I vividly recall approximately 20 – 30 people waving to us, some with white sheets and as it got dark these turned to torches. It was very difficult to leave however we stayed until we absolutely had to leave. One disturbing image we saw as we were leaving was a car under water with its headlights flashing. We could not see if there was anyone inside and to this day I sincerely hope that it was just an electrical short.

We landed at Withcott primary school and McDermott activated his landing lights and Nav lights to assist HT 220 coming in behind us. We still had a lot of discussion regarding debriefing what had occurred, planning for how we
would refuel, planning for the mornings operations, finding food and even where we were to sleep was unknown as this stage. I debriefed and passed our information and coordinates of the people we identified onto the Gatton Incident Control Centre that was now fully functioning.

The Gatton ICC would then pass these onto the Swift Water Rescue teams converging on Grantham. I reflected on what had transpired and if there was anything we could improve on, I noted that what was appearing to work well was I had converted a system we use for fire mapping and was using it with these floods. We had never envisaged we would be used in this capacity and most certainly not in an event as catastrophic as this however the system we adapted 'on the fly' was working. We also needed security for our aircraft and luckily the school principal returned and we stayed at his residence for which we were very grateful.

I gave my overalls to [REDACTED] from HT 220 as he had been continually wet and didn't have a change of clothes and then I contended with approximately 3 hours of phone calls to coordinate the next days operations. It was probably about 2300 hrs before I was to attempt to get to sleep. We were up around 0400 hrs Tuesday the 11th. The rain was initially that heavy that we could not fly at all. We had a fuel truck enroute but the highway was cut off. The weather had improved marginally enough for us to fly and we met the fuel tanker at the Plainlands shopping centre car park at around 0730hrs.

The weather for this trip was atrocious and best described as marginal for flying. Heavy rain, strong gusty winds, the threat of lightning and reduced visibility, we were also wet inside and out. We took the initiative and conducted a sweep of Helidon, Grantham and the highway to assess the situation on the way to meet the fuel truck. Again we were the only aircrews and the only source of information on what was occurring over the Lockyer Valley at that time. As a result of this I fielded an extraordinary amount of calls and from some very senior people. At one stage there I believe I was on the phone talking with the Commissioner of Police, another call was from the Commissioner of QFRS and on another occasion on speaker phone to the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

We were once again tasked to assist people on roofs up river. HT 220 conducted the majority of these. In between HT 220 conducting winch operations we would conduct sweeps and we identified several cars that needed closer inspection in the flood waters. On several occasions the weather would ground us, or we would fly over aircraft that chose not to fly however this was not for very long.

We again took up with HT 220 and we had a job log with 20 taskings so we immediately set about working through this. At one stage we even assisted some people to higher ground in Firebird 460 from Clarendon as the larger aircraft were struggling to evacuate a large number of people from Forest Hill in the time available. The weather improved slightly and more aircraft came on line, at one stage I was coordinating 4 aircraft simultaneously with the usual blend of communications modalities.
I continued with operations on the 11\textsuperscript{th} until 1900hrs and then returned all aircraft to Archerfield airbase for yet another debrief in the days events.

Signature
Benjamin Sutherland

Witness Signature
Name/Rank
Date/Time | Details
---|---
Tango Training 19/20 November 2009 | nomination
Events relating to Lockyer Valley Floods 10-12/1/2011 | Recollection notes 18/1/11
Approx 1550 hrs A/AC John Greesty requested I attend | Gatton Fire Station with IMT Cache, Pete Mason +
1610 | Departed RTHQ for Gatton Fire Station
1720 | Got caught in heavy traffic congestion on Warrego Hwy new Gatton exit
1730 | At Gatton exit round about a member of public advised he received a call from persons on the roof of a house in the Gatton Grantham area. He had already run “000” but was concerned so I advised him to ring “000” again
1740 | Met with A/AC John Greesty outside the Lockyer Valley Regional Council Offices and he briefed me on the roadside. Not much information available from the LDGC which is set up in a room about ½ the size of the ROC, instructed to set up an ICC at the Gatton Fire Station and the main task is to located all QFRS vehicles on the fireground. The ICC is to look after QFRS vehicles and not take control – LDGC to provide taskings. Inspector David Caughley is in Murphy’s Creek area operating on Channel 35 VHF. David Caughley is returning to Gatton for the LDGC. Clinton Neuman is currently QFRS representative in LDGC.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Senior Officers Union of Employees (SOU)
Date/Time
10/11 0750
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1827
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(1915)

Details
Arrived Gatton Fire Station. Met up with Pete Mason and [redacted]. Commenced setting up IMT equipment in the Fire station training room. Problem initially with setting up radios - UHF aerial used from EPI car.
Received advice verbally that SES warn that all appliances in low areas of Murphy’s Creek to evacuate area.
Peter Mason advised Friccom to notify all QFRS appliances via radio of the warning.
Peter Mason commenced telephone contact of listed appliances to get locations.
Set up radio comms of Channel 35 UHF and Peter Mason calling all appliances for roll call. Checked SES Comms plan and decided to remain on channel 35 UHF as best option. Used station radio in engine room for UHF 78 communications. Problems with mobile phones and internet connection of computers.
Rang Supt [redacted] at ROCR via mobile phone with quick briefing of our situation. Rang David Caughley on mobile phone who was in transit back to Gatton Fire Station with quick overview of operations so far. Pete Miller returning back to Gatton Fire Station. AC Peter Berndtchamp requested we use the fire station land line 54683300 - a fire fight was designated to sit with phone in duty office.
Gatton ICC “operational. Advised all urban + rural appliance operating on Channel 35 UHF and Channel 78”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>IMT consists of:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/C - Brian Humphrey</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operations - SO Mark Stevenson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radiocomms - Peter Dawson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning - Peta Miller with assistance from Rod Pickett</td>
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<td>Logistics - SO Bob Fletcher</td>
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<td>ROC - Supt Peter Dawson.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peta Miller started setting up GIAP on arrival at Gatton.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1918)</td>
<td>Requested second roll call of all appliances - commenced by Peter Mason. Arrangements to commence change over of day crews started prior to 1900hrs. Firebird advised</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1940)</td>
<td>Ceased operations for night with Helitack 220 at</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Without requiring security. Firebird advised they picked up 6 rooftop rescues prioritising unstable dwellings. Some 10 houses in calm water on Gatton Helidon Rd with some people on roof, EMQ helicopter has night capability and refueling before continuing operations in that area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1945)</td>
<td>List of tasks from Firecom via Fax. 12 jobs to be undertaken and 2 jobs completed earlier in day. Ops Office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mark Stevenson prioritised tasking of urban pumper with SWR crews for support. Used Gatton 91 for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>850L SWR day crew with first job cleared in Grantham before 2000hrs. Shane Bowne from Firecom appointed to Gatton Fire Station.</td>
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<tr>
<td>~2010</td>
<td>Sit rep sent to ROC - 14 urban + 11 rural appliances with staging at Gatton Fire Station. 4 jobs in Grantham allocated and 8 yet to be allocated.</td>
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20/1/2011

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<tr>
<td>(1946)</td>
<td>Received request from RCC to check location of Withcott 51.</td>
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<td>(1950)</td>
<td>Received verbal advice from Peter Mason of possibility of two fatalities at Grantham.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1951)</td>
<td>Took photos of operational whyte boards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>~2120</td>
<td>Operations winding down at around 2200-2359 hrs and prepared to release crews, permitting day shift to return. Galton 91 crew stranded in Grantham.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/11/0100</td>
<td>5 Appliances still at Grantham, 4 crews waiting at BP Service station due to closure of Warrego Hwy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 Appliances at Galton Fire Station, 3 appliances enroute to home stations. SFR crews still active.</td>
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<tr>
<td>~0200</td>
<td>Briefing at Galton Command Office with RCC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>~0200</td>
<td>Forest Hill crew checking out access to Forest Hill and access to Warrego Hwy. A number of crews use this route to return to Ipswich.</td>
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<tr>
<td>~0300</td>
<td>David Coughley and I met with LDMG CEO Ian Flint and to assess situation and plan activities for morning. Were advised QPS will be conducting a forensic search of Grantham and therefore QFRS should not enter for recovery purposes without QPS consent. Council still to conduct a wider assessment of Murphy's Creek and Withcott. No advice on road conditions. LDMG to conduct an initial assessment at about 0700 hrs before any determination of tasking for the day can be made. No direct deploy as for QFRS.</td>
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<td>~0345</td>
<td>All appliances completed duty and back at Galton.</td>
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