

Name of Witness	Bradley James STRONG
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
Address and contact details	[REDACTED] Thagoona
Occupation	Manager
Officer taking statement	Detective Sergeant Paul Browne
Date taken	03/05/2011

I, **Bradley James STRONG** state:

1. I am a [REDACTED] year old married man, and currently reside with my wife and family at the above address. We have lived at this address for about the past 5 years, and although I was cut off from getting home, our house was not flooded in the January 2011 flood event.
2. I have been a member of the Salvation Army all of my life and an employee of the Army for 12 years. I am currently involved with the Salvation Army Australia 'Eastern Territory' in two separate capacities.
3. Firstly I am the Manager of Employment Services at the Salvation Army Riverview complex. My role in this capacity is involved with working to train or educate and find employment for long term unemployed or people with barriers to finding employment. Secondly I am the Corps Sergeant Major of the Bundamba Salvation Army Corps. My role in that capacity is similar to that of a Church Elder.

Exhibit Number:

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4. When the flood hit Bundamba that effectively meant I was in charge, as the Corps officers (Church Minister's) were both absent for different reasons. As an Elder I had to make decisions and deal with questions or issues that arose.

5. The Salvation Army property at Riverview is quite well established and has a number of buildings that can be used for different purposes. The main building is set-up as administration for the complex, however there are other buildings on the property including a dormitory style building (used to house course participants), a workshop and machinery sheds plus a nursery. The property is also used to run a small number of livestock and grow crops, as part of our training function and could be described as a farm.

6. The Riverview property is bordered by the junction of both the Bremer and Brisbane Rivers and as the water rose the surrounding land became flooded. Fortunately most of the structures are on higher ground and with the exception of the workshop, the water did not come up that far. Because of the roads that were cut off throughout the greater Ipswich area, I was not able to get home during the flood and spent the next several days living and working out of my office at Riverview.

7. The Bundamba facility is on Brisbane road and consists of the Church building, a community centre and behind those an old Indoor Cricket Centre which the Army bought and we use to run an 'Op' shop.



8. From my experience and roles with the Salvation Army I have had some prior involvement and experience as a community volunteer, involved with evacuation and supporting the community in times of natural disaster. On the Tuesday afternoon of the flood I had only just returned to Brisbane from helping out with the flooding of Emerald. I think our plane might have even been the last plane to land in Brisbane and I only arrived back at Riverview as they were considering closing the Ipswich Motorway.
9. I became involved in the January flood through my two roles with the Salvation Army. On arriving back at Riverview I became aware of the possibility that the Bundamba facility was going to be flooded and then went down to Bundamba where I became involved in various activities.
10. My first real advice about the flood was through Media coverage of what was happening and word of mouth in the community. I do not remember receiving any specific warning, other than those that were being broadcast through the media. I would say that those warnings were timely and although the message was clear about the possibility of flooding, it was difficult to understand what the impact of the flood was going to be. For example, what did certain predicted levels of the River (19 metres) mean or refer too and what was the impact of such a prediction going to be in our parts of the River.
11. Because some of the predictors did not mean anything to me it was hard to understand what the impact would be. I believe this had an impact on the response, particularly as it related to the Salvation Army properties at Bundamba and Riverview. Because of the time that was spent moving

things, then going back and moving them again as the warnings changed, only to find that ultimately it was unnecessary to move some of those things in the first place.

12. Initially we tried to get word out by phone to as many people as we could for help to shift as much as we could from the Corps facility at Bundamba, but also to advise and help move people and possessions who were at risk out of their own houses in the area. This involved trying to work out which vehicles and people we had available to us and who needed what.

13. We tried to advise and assist as many of the local Bundamba residents in the area to also evacuate or get their possessions out and to higher ground. I particularly remember a lady who I spoke too around 8pm. As she walked past she asked what we were doing and when I told her she said: "What flood." After telling her she needed to make some arrangements, I convinced her too get her kids and get out and we helped her to move some of her belongings.

14. I remained at Bundamba until around 1am Wednesday morning and thought that we might have been OK. I then returned to the farm at Riverview and when I got there and saw water coming up in the paddocks, I realised we were going to flood at Bundamba.

15. We lost electricity at about 1am and with that our capacity to monitor the warnings. We lost landline communications with the electricity and whilst our mobile phones remained active, I can understand how difficult it would have been for authorities to relay those messages and warnings, given the lack of power and telecommunications in most areas. In saying

that, the actual receipt of those warnings was effective, but only whilst we had electricity and could access the television.

16. Having no power made things very difficult and the phone systems really struggled. Although we had only mobile phones we were able to communicate with Emergency Services if and when required and were still using whatever methods we could to try and warn people of what was happening. This included phoning who we could to tell them and in some cases this was our only way of contacting people. As a result of the flood my mobile phone bill was around \$500 and I know a lot of other people were also in a similar situation.

17. At about 5.30am on the Wednesday morning I went back to Bundamba but by that time I would not have been able to get to the hall without a boat.

18. Throughout the following days I became involved with door-knocking of properties and residents in a number of areas and became involved with helping people to deal with and recover from what occurred. The phone started to ring and go nuts to the point where I think we were only answering about every third call (we were physically not able to answer every call that came in). People were phoning looking for items they needed and also others were calling and wanting to drop off donations.

19. When we started to clean-up the facilities at Bundamba we found that we were not able to save anything that had been inside of the Op. Shop building. Because of the nature of those goods we had not moved anything out, everything was destroyed and just needed to be dumped. I knew a bloke with a bob-cat who was helping the clean-up and decided

that was what was needed. He in turn knew another bloke with another bob-cat and I think it was on either Thursday or Friday they both got in and cleaned everything out.

20. I had the idea that this would be a perfect spot to set up a distribution centre for the goods that were being donated. The Fire Brigade came in and helped by hosing out the building. I telephoned the Council to make sure there would not be any OH&S issues, then once I got the go ahead from them I also telephoned our own head office to again get the OK.

21. I think the electricity came back on sometime late Friday afternoon or evening and by the Monday after the flood we were operating a centre from that location and distributing goods to the community. The goods being distributed were mostly from donations we received and it is worth noting that the kindness of Australians and the donations they gave was just unbelievable. Literally truckloads of stuff was coming into and going out of the centre, one truck load even coming from as far away as Tasmania.

22. That centre was staffed by the Salvation Army volunteer's and served around 2000 people over the following 3 weeks. After about 3 weeks we were advised to close the Centre for Insurance reasons, as the assessors wanted it back so that they could commence the rebuilding process. I regret that now as the process is still yet to start.

23. When the Bundamba Centre did close we physically moved all of the items remaining, by hand back to the Riverview complex so that it could continue from there.

24. In regards to preparation for the flood in our area, the evacuations of people and possessions that I was involved with was not assisted by any Government Agency, Department or Emergency Services. The only real assistance during the preparation stage was thru information being publicised via the media.

25. I would describe the preparation as adequate in the circumstances, but don't believe the community could be ever properly prepared for an event such as the one in January 2011. Unfortunately the bottom line was even if we had had 1000 men available to us at the time of evacuation, we would still not have been able to shift everything or everyone in the area that needed to be shifted.

26. The Ipswich area has two different Salvation Army Corps, Bundamba and Central Ipswich and in the days following the flood both became involved with feeding people in different centres. The Corps at Ipswich were called on and became responsible for feeding people at the Evacuation Centre at the Ipswich Showgrounds. However, because of staffing and rosters we also helped out with manning that facility at night. I myself spent a couple of nights up there and also a couple of breakfasts.

27. At Bundamba we were also contacted by the Department of Communities regarding a recovery centre facility being established at the local T.A.F.E. Commencing on about the Wednesday we helped with feeding morning tea's, lunches and afternoon tea's to people who were waiting in the lines and also the workers at that Centre. We also distributed toys to kids as a lot of the people who were turning up at that facility had lost everything.

28. At Riverview we also housed some people who had been displaced in one of the buildings. This building was set-up for accommodation but it was more ad hoc than the other evacuation centres. As part of that housing we were also feeding those people and that was an issue at first because we had problems accessing food. Then on the Thursday someone from Riverview was able to get thru to Ipswich by road and got some supplies for us from other Salvation Army contacts we had at the Showground Evacuation Centre.

29. This ties back in with the communications issues created by lack of power and telephone as the information about roads and what was available was slow to get through. In those first few days it was like a war scene with Helicopter's flying everywhere but people just didn't know where you could or couldn't go. We did not want to get stuck or cause further drama's so we just kept going and doing what we could at our end. Then eventually by Saturday I think it was known that you could get through to Ipswich.

30. In the days after the flood the Council and community were brilliant. Through the Salvation Army alone we registered around 2200 people needing help, but we also registered 400 volunteers. Ross Llewellyn's Motors supplied us with three vehicles to use as we needed, we still have two of those and the Council are using one.

31. Apart from the Bundamba property we also made available all of the Salvation Army facilities and assets at Riverview. Anything that we had was made available as part of the recovery and although we were literally drowning with requests, everyone just got in and helped and it was a great effort to ~~just~~ do the best with what we had.

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32. Although the Emergency Services were not involved with the Evacuations that I was involved with, the response of emergency services during and immediately after the event was great. The response of other Government agencies was also timely and helpful, however one of the biggest issues I can see with the on-going recovery effort post flood has been with the co-ordination.

33. The long term co-ordination going beyond the initial week or fortnight after the flood could have been better in terms of both finance and resources and as an example I am not even sure who co-ordinated the response. Despite having been involved at the time and on-going, I have not attended or been aware of any meetings held to try and co-ordinate the recovery effort.

34. After the flood, we door-knocked the Bundamba and North Booval areas to generate a list of peoples needs and those who needed help. Some of those needs and requests were beyond our resources but it was a way of trying to co-ordinate and collate what was required. Unfortunately the process was a bit hit and miss because some had not returned or didn't need anything at the time but maybe later. We also discovered that the same thing was also being done by other agencies and organisations so it became a bits and pieces approach and was not as effective as it could have been with some better co-ordination of groups and effort.

35. Apart from the members of the Salvation Army community, during the recovery we have also been able to call on Salvation Army trainees and utilise them as labour during the on-going recovery effort. Although this has been essential in helping us respond to and help fill the needs of the

community, it doesn't necessarily 'strictly' meet the criteria of their training. I am not concerned about that, however because of the way funding and the training is structured this could impact on whether or not those trainees and the program meet key performance indicator's in the future.

36. Recently we have received specific funding for two more training projects. Those will have a total of 21 positions for people who will be specifically involved with and focussed on the recovery in areas affected by the flood.

37. Apart from that, from a Salvation Army perspective the impact of the flood has been quite significant and affected both our roles as a Community organisation and also the Employment Services and training. As outlined previously we have utilised a lot of resources and personnel in meeting the needs of the community, however the impact of flooding on our workshop at Riverview has had a significant effect. Not only is the workshop not available for training purposes but it has reduced the services we can provide or call upon to assist the community.

38. Apart from the workshop the flooding at Riverview has also affected the Nursery through the loss of a pump and because of the wet ground we were unable to plant a crop that was due.

39. In dollars there has been approximately one million dollars worth of damage to the Bundamba property and approximately \$300'000 worth of damage at Riverview. It is my understanding that there is Insurance cover for these properties however that process has been extremely slow and is not yet finalised.

40. Initially we had contact with the State Member for Bundamba (Joanne MILLER) about the Distribution Centre. We have also had contact with the Federal Member for Blair and local Council members. The information received about recovery has been good from these people, with any questions being answered.

41. The involvement of different levels of Government and their agencies was sufficient, but we need more now. It appears as though the process is taking too long and has been slow in getting the help to those people who really need it.

42. Co-ordination of resources remains an on-going issue and I think that all of the Government and Independent or community organisations need to be working together. I acknowledge that this was an extreme event, but there is still a lot of "red tape" we are having to deal with throughout the recovery process. Probably one of the biggest frustrations has been finding someone in authority who could or was willing to make a decision. This has been a problem across the different agencies or groups involved and even in our own organisation, delaying how things are being set up or established.

43. In terms of recommendations from the Inquiry I think that the long term on-going co-ordination of recovery (weeks and months) must be a priority. I would like to see a greater 'Recovery Group' established and then implemented in circumstances such as this, to handle and co-ordinate the post clean-up recovery. Little groups are doing little things, rather than one larger structure, co-ordinating all of those groups and working together to achieve more.

44. The Salvation Army at Riverview are still fielding up to 20 inquiries a day for assistance and help from people in the community. As an organisation we are doing everything that we can to help these people but there are some requests that we simply cannot meet. Similarly, early in the recovery there were occasions when the Council were contacting us to assist residents with their clean-up.

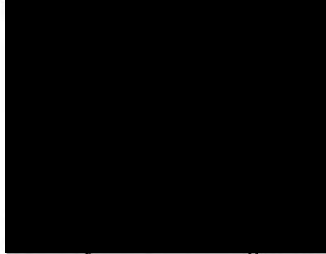
45. I believe a Recovery Group could best be set-up, managed and co-ordinated by the Council, however should include a nominated representative from each of the different agencies sitting around the one table and continuing for as long as the recovery process takes. For example government organisations, Council and community groups working together and in a co-ordinated effort so that everybody involved is aware of what is required and each group can have some input into resolving the issues.

46. As is the case currently there would be some requests and issues that a particular agency or group could not handle or would not have the resources to deal with, however with a representative from each agency present I am sure that there would be other agencies around the table that could help out or work in together to get the job done.

47. This was a big disaster, it has affected so many people in so many ways and I believe this has made the recovery process even harder. However, if we had more resources and better co-ordination we could do more and I am sure that is the case for a lot of other organisations involved with the recovery effort.



48. Regardless of the issues I have raised in my statement, overall a lot of good work happened and although we were frustrated on many occasions, everybody just got in and went on with the job.



.....
Bradley James STRONG.

16th May 2011.

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 16th May 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 13 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
- (2) I make this statement, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for making a statement that I know is false.

.....Signature

Signed at 16thday ofMay2011....

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