

STATEMENT in the matter of:  
Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race Enquiry

Place: Bega Detectives  
Police Station  
Date : 17 May 1999

Name: Jason Charles STEVENSON  
Address: Bega Police Station  
Occupation: Senior Constable of Police

Tel. No.: 0264 929999

STATES:-

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence which I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable for prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

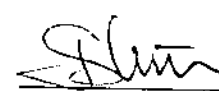
2. I am 28 years of age.

3. In the morning on Monday the 28 December, 1998 I was contacted at home in relation to the death of a number of persons during the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. About 11am that morning in company with Detective Senior Constable Stewart GRAY I attended the Merimbula Airport.

4. On arrival at the Merimbula Airport we spoke with Sergeant Mark WELSBY in relation to a rescue operation that was underway in relation to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Sergeant WELSBY informed us that a number of boats and crew from the race were currently missing at sea. Detective GRAY and I continued on and attended the Eden Police Station in relation to further enquiries.

5. On arrival at the Eden Police Station Detective GRAY and I spoke with Duty Officer Rick MAWDSLEY in relation to the rescue

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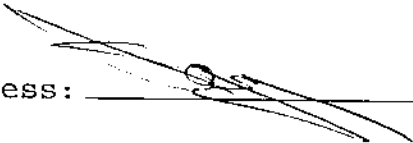
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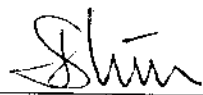
Name: Jason Charles STEVENSON

operation. Detective GRAY and I attended the wharf area at Eden where we spoke with the skipper of 'Trident Four', Mr Drew MURRAY. After speaking with Mr MURRAY we were introduced to three men I now know as Tony Andrew GUY, Robert Clive MATTHEWS and Stephen Ross WALKER. These men were introduced to us as members of the yacht 'Business Post Niaid'. After speaking with these men briefly in relation to their ordeal they were informed that we would like to officially record their story on tape. The men all agreed to taking part in this recording and we conveyed them to the Eden Police Station.

6. On arrival at the Eden Police Station Mr Tony GUY was taken to the interview room while the other men remained in the meal room. About 1.15pm that day Detective GRAY commenced a recorded interview with Mr GUY in relation to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. During this interview Mr GUY revealed to Police that his uncle, Bruce GUY and fellow crewman Phillip SKEGGS passed away during the yacht race. The entire interview between Detective GRAY and Mr GUY was recorded on three audio cassette tapes as the interview took place. At the completion of the interview Mr GUY was given an audio tape copy of the interview and another copy of the cassette tape was sealed for Court purposes.

7. At the completion of this interview Mr MATTHEWS was brought into the interview room. About 1.43pm that day I conducted an electronically recorded interview with Mr MATTHEWS in relation to his involvement in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. The entire interview between Mr MATTHEWS and myself was recorded on three cassette tapes as the interview took place. At the completion of the interview Mr MATTHEWS was given an audio tape copy of the interview and another copy of the cassette tape was

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sealed for Court purposes.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THAT AUDIO CASSETTE TAPE

8. At the completion of that interview Mr WALKER was taken into the interview room. About 2.22pm that day I conducted a recorded interview with Mr WALKER in relation to his involvement in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. The entire interview between Mr WALKER and myself was recorded on three cassette tapes as the interview took place. At the completion of the interview Mr WALKER was given an audio tape copy of the interview and another copy of the cassette tapes was sealed for Court purposes.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THAT AUDIO CASSETTE TAPE

9. At the completion of the interviews these three men were conveyed back to the wharf at Eden. Detective GRAY and I attended the Command Post which had been set up inside the Harbourmasters Office at the Eden wharf. At the command post Detective GRAY and I spoke with the Local Area Commander, Superintendent AMBLER and Duty Officer MAWDSLEY in relation to the rescue operation and the progress of our enquiries.

10. Detective GRAY and I spoke with three further members of the 'Business Post Niaid', these were Laurence James ROGERS, Matthew Robert SHERRIFF and Shayne HANSEN. Detective GRAY and I conveyed these men to the Eden Police Station where they were spoken to in relation to their involvement in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. About 4.10pm that day Detective GRAY commenced an interview with Mr ROGERS which was electronically

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recorded. At the completion of that interview Mr ROGERS was given an audio tape copy of the interview and a further cassette tape was sealed for Court purposes.

11. About 4.43pm that day I commenced an interview with Mr HANSEN in relation to his involvement in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. The entire interview was electronically recorded as it took place, at the completion of the interview Mr HANSEN was given an audio tape copy of the interview. A further cassette tape was sealed for Court purposes.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THAT AUDIO CASSETTE TAPE

12. About 5.07pm that day Detective GRAY commenced an interview with Mr SHERRIFF in relation to his involvement with the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. The entire interview was recorded electronically as it took place. During the course of that interview Mr SHERRIFF drew a sketch diagram on page 107 of the Official Police Notebook no. F187999 on issue to me. The diagram was of the 'Business Post Niaid' and it indicated the layout and structural damage of the yacht.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE POLICE NOTEBOOK NO. F187999

13. At the completion of the interview Mr SHERRIFF was given an audio tape copy of the interview and another cassette tape was sealed for Court purposes. After completing these interviews Detective GRAY and I returned to the command post where we spoke with Superintendent AMBLER and Duty Officer MAWDSLEY.

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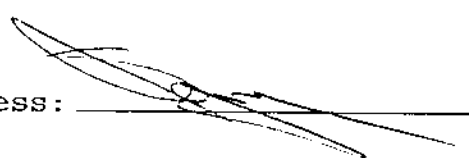
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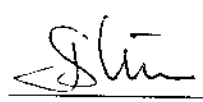
14. Travel to Pambula and attend Pambula Hospital and speak to Mr Peter KEATS, Mr KEATS is a further member of the yacht 'Business Post Niaid'. Detective GRAY and I drove Mr KEATS to the Eden Police Station where I conducted an electronically recorded interview with him. At the completion of that interview Mr KEATS was given a copy of the tape and a further copy was sealed for Court purposes. Mr KEATS was conveyed back to the wharf at Eden and Detective GRAY and I spoke further with the members from the 'Business Post Niaid' in relation to the deceased GUY and SKEGGS.

15. Detective GRAY and I attended the Merimbula Airport in relation to information received in relation to rescued yachtsmen from the yacht 'Winston Churchill'. At the airport I spoke with Mr Arthur HEATHAR of Australian Search and Rescue (AUSSAR) in relation to information from the naval craft conducting the rescue.

16. Detective GRAY and I then attended the Pambula Base Hospital where I saw two rescued sailors from the 'Winston Churchill'. These sailors were John STANLEY and John GIBSON, I had a brief conversation with both these men in relation to the missing sailors from their yacht. I was informed that there were three men missing from the 'Winston Churchill', these were John DEAN, James LAWLER and Michael BANNISTER. Detective GRAY and I completed our shift at 1am on Tuesday the 29 December, 1998.

17. At 7am on Tuesday the 29 December, 1998 I attended the Merimbula Police Station. While there I contacted the Pambula Hospital and enquired into the well being of Mr GIBSON and Mr

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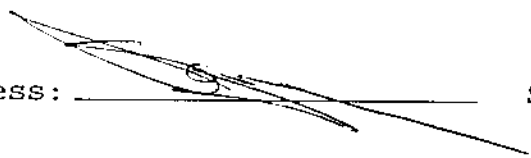
STANLEY. I was informed that Mr GIBSON had been taken to the Canberra Hospital at Woden and that Mr STANLEY was still in the hospital in good health.

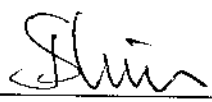
18. I then attended the command post at Eden in company with Detective's GRAY and GREY where we spoke with Duty Officer Mawdsley. We then attended the Merimbula Airport where we were informed that two bodies had been recovered at sea. Detective Neil GREY and I attended the Pambula Hospital where I spoke briefly with Mr John STANLEY. Detective GREY and I returned to the Merimbula Airport where we awaited the arrival of the Government Contractor and the Naval aircraft carrying two deceased males.

19. At 10.16am that date naval aircraft 'SEAKING 817' arrived at the Merimbula Airport with two deceased males on board. I spoke with Lieutenant HUTCHISON of Seaking 817 and he indicated to me the two deceased males they had recovered at sea. These men were placed into the government contractors vehicle and conveyed to the Pambula Hospital.

20. Detective Neil GREY and I also travelled to the Pambula Hospital, on arrival there we attended the mortuary. Wardsman Andrew BARR was assisting at the mortuary and Doctor Frank SIMONSON was present to pronounce life extinct.

21. The first deceased male was taken into the mortuary. I would describe him as: a male, slight facial growth, he was wearing red coloured wet weather gear and a yellow coloured life jacket with the words 'WINSTON CHURCHILL' written on it. On further inspection of the clothing the name 'Mike BANNISTER' was

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recorded on the inside of the jacket. On the basis of what I had seen I identified this male to Dr SIMONSON as Michael BANNISTER. After examining the body Doctor SIMONSON completed a life pronounced extinct certificate for Mr BANNISTER.

22. The second deceased male was then brought into the mortuary. I would describe him as: a male person dressed in red coloured wet weather gear, wearing a yellow coloured life jacket. A search of this person resulted in a wallet being located with a New South Wales Drivers Licence in the name of James Michael LAWLER. I compared the photograph on the licence with the deceased and came to the decision it was in fact the same person. I identified this male to Dr SIMONSON as James Michael LAWLER. After examining the body Doctor SIMONSON completed a life pronounced extinct certificate for Mr LAWLER.

23. After informally identifying the bodies to Doctor SIMONSON I returned to the Hospital where I spoke with Mr STANLEY. Mr STANLEY agreed to accompany me to the morgue where a formal identification of the deceased males took place. Mr STANLEY identified the males as Michael BANNISTER and James LAWLER.

24. Mr STANLEY and I returned to the Hospital with Detective Neil GREY where I conducted an electronically recorded interview with Mr STANLEY. During the course of this interview Mr STANLEY revealed to me what his involvement was in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. He was also able to reveal to me the facts surrounding the deaths of Mr BANNISTER and Mr LAWLER. At the completion of the interview I gave Mr STANLEY a cassette copy of the interview and another copy was sealed for Court purposes.

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25. Detective GREY and I left the Pambula Hospital and attended the Command Post at Eden and spoke with Detective Stewart GRAY. I then attended the Eden Police Station where I made enquiries with the Government Contractors in relation to having the bodies of BANNISTER and LAWLER conveyed to Sydney. I attended to the completion of the P.79A's (Report of Death to the Coroner) which were to accompany the bodies to Sydney.

26. About 10.30pm that night I met Mister Barry MENNIE of the Nowra Funeral Services at the Pambula Hospital mortuary. The bodies of BANNISTER and LAWLER were removed from the mortuary and conveyed to Sydney by Mr MENNIE and I. We arrived at the Glebe Coroners Court at about 4.45am on Wednesday the 30 December, 1998. The bodies were entered into the mortuary at Glebe by the mortuary clerk, Mister Shane SPICER.

27. The post mortem examinations were carried out by Doctor DUFLOU. Senior Constable David NEAL of the Sydney Crime Scene Unit was present during the post mortems and I caused him to take a number of photographs of both BANNISTER and LAWLER.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THOSE PHOTOGRAPHS

28. At the completion of the examinations Doctor DUFLOU told me that the cause of death for Mr BANNISTER and Mr LAWLER was emersion.

29. On the morning of Thursday the 31 December, 1998 I again attended the Glebe Coroners Court in relation to further post

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mortems of deceased males. Shortly after 8am that morning the body of Mr Bruce GUY was unsealed and a post mortem examination was carried out by Dr DUFLOU. Again Senior Constable NEAL was present and I caused him to take further photographs of the deceased GUY.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THOSE PHOTOGRAPHS

30. At the completion of this post mortem Dr DUFLOU showed me the heart of Mr GUY and pointed out the arteries. Dr DUFLOU told me that the arteries in the heart were blocked, which meant the deceased had coronary heart disease and died from a heart attack.

31. About 9am that morning the body of Mr Phillip SKEGGS was unsealed and a post mortem examination was carried out by Dr DUFLOU. Senior Constable NEAL was still present and I caused him to take photographs of the deceased.

EXHIBIT: I PRODUCE THOSE PHOTOGRAPHS

32. At the completion of the post mortem Dr DUFLOU informed me that the cause of death for Mr SKEGGS was emersion. That afternoon I returned to Bega and spoke with Detective GRAY in relation to the result of the post mortems.

Witness: 

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