

New South Wales Police

STATEMENT in the matter of:
Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race Investigation.

Place: Tasmania Police Search & Rescue
Hobart.

Date: 10th November 1999.

Name: Peter Malcolm ALLAN.

Address: Tasmania Police Search & Rescue, 76 Federal Street, Hobart, 7000.

Telephone: 03 62302454

Occupation: Police Officer, Tasmania Police Service.

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. This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable for prosecution if I wilfully state in it anything, which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.
2. My full name is Peter Malcolm ALLAN, I am a Senior Constable in the Tasmania Police stationed at Marine and Rescue Services. I am 41 years of age. I have been a Police Diver for 18 years while I have been employed within the area of Marine and Rescue for the past ten years.
3. On Sunday 19th September 1999, in the company of Constable's G. PEARCE, R. STACEY, L. STANLEY, D. BIDGOOD and J. PRATT, I attended the Australian Maritime College, at Launceston in Tasmania. Our assistance had been requested by Detective Senior Constable S. GRAY and Senior Constable D. UPSTON, both from the New South Wales Police Service. GRAY and UPSTON had a number of tests which they required performed on certain items of marine safety equipment.
4. The first exercises were conducted on the Sunday in the Maritime College pool. Thirty volunteers had been organised, through a local yachting club, and divided into two groups. Fifteen of these volunteers had, apparently, some previous exposure to life rafts whilst the remaining fifteen had none. All were required to be dressed as they normally would whilst yachting, and each was given a life jacket to put on before entering the pool.
5. In the morning the group with some prior life raft experience were in attendance. Individually (the remainder of the group remained isolated from these activities awaiting their turn), they were required to swim 50 metres before climbing into a 10 man life raft.

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6. During these exercises I was performing the role of 'safety diver' being close to the scene of the action at all times. PEARCE and STACEY were playing the roles of 'survivors', taking it in turns to be either already positioned in the 10 man raft or 'exhausted/unconscious' and floating some distance from the raft, neither was to offer advice.
7. The volunteer, now in the ten man raft, was required to effect the rescue of the person in the water utilising whatever means available in the raft. There were a number of different options taken by the volunteers to assist the 'exhausted person' back to the raft. The safety/throw line was not always utilised. Most problems were encountered when attempting to lift the 'exhausted person' into the raft, with the volunteer usually remaining in the water and thereby relying on the role player in the raft to do the lifting.
8. Once this segment was completed the volunteer had to get back into the water and into a six man life raft before securing that rafts' door from the inside. This raft was then turned over. The volunteer was then required to exit the raft through the now submerged doorway and right the raft, (Whilst the volunteer had been in the six man raft, the ten man raft had been turned over) before swimming to the ten man raft and righting that. Some individuals were obviously physically challenged by the size and weight of the ten man raft.
9. The final exercise saw the volunteer swim from the ten man raft to a helicopter rescue strop attached to an overhead winch. The individual was asked to put the sling on and signal when they thought they were ready to be lifted from the water. Due to the size/bulk of the life jackets being worn, most of the volunteers experienced difficulty getting the sling over their head and properly positioned behind their backs and under their arms.
10. The remainder of the Sunday saw the same exercises being attempted by the second group of fifteen volunteers, those with no prior life raft experience. I continued my role as a safety diver. During the unconscious person exercise there were again many options taken, These included the volunteer remaining in the raft and paddling same, using hands or paddles, to the unconscious person. Most participants experienced some problems exiting the submerged six man raft, this appeared to be caused by them either leaving the raft head first or twisting the body whilst exiting, entangling themselves in the door ties. I had to physically assist some of these people clear of the raft.
11. Problems were encountered righting the rafts, including little thought given to the heavy Co2 bottles which, more often than not, were on the opposite side of the raft to the volunteer. The size and weight of the ten man raft again caused difficulties.

Witness:

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12. On the morning of Monday the 20th September 1999, we were back at the Maritime College pool for the day. Mr T. BOYLE from the Maritime College in company with PRATT, STACEY, STANLEY and myself entered an upturned six man life raft. With the aid of a gas sensor meter, the build up of carbon dioxide levels within the raft was measured four separate times.
13. The raft was re-righted between tests and aired out. Each time we attempted the exercise, within four minutes of the last person entering the raft, we were asked to exit as the carbon dioxide content within the raft had risen to a dangerous level.
14. Following this we tested two different types of six man rafts, one square one round, by capsizing and re-righting them with firstly one occupant, then two, three, four and finally five occupants. During the movement of the rafts, especially with two or more occupants, it became apparent that there was a major chance of injury to those inside with limbs flailing around and bodies landing on others. On all occasions there was enough water on the floor/roof to drown an individual should they be trapped for a prolonged period under the weight of others. The participants in this exercise were warm and alert to what was happening, yet bodies still got entangled.
15. For the remainder of the Monday BIDGOOD and STACEY tested the release mechanisms on a number of safety harnesses and strops. I was a safety diver for these exercises and for this purpose I had set up a block on the bottom of the pool to which was attached a static line/strop with a safety 'quick release'. BIDGOOD and STACEY took it in turns diving down to a depth of approximately two metres, where I clipped then onto the free end of the static line. They then attempted to release themselves and surface.
16. Similarly we set up a length of rope on a pulley system and dragged BIDGOOD and STACEY, individually, the length of the pool whilst they attempted to release themselves.
17. We ran out of time on the Monday so the morning of Tuesday the 21st September 1999, was utilised completing the tests on release mechanisms.
18. The afternoon of Tuesday was used to test the two six man life rafts in Bass Strait, off Low Head at the mouth of the Tamar River. The Tasmania Police vessel 'Van Dieman' was utilised to transport all involved to the testing site.

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19. Once again I acted as a 'safety diver', whilst similar tests to those performed on the Monday - entering and capsizing the rafts - were performed in the open sea. These tests culminated in a hole being cut in the floor to which pressure was then applied. The roof and floor of both rafts were quickly destroyed in this manner.

20. The final tests using the rafts endeavoured to simulate the effect of 'rougher' sea conditions on the bits of tubing that remained. The passage of the Van Dieman created a bow wave, of 1 - 1.5 metres in height, which effectively swamped those clinging to what was left of the rafts.

21. Later, that same afternoon, in the sheltered waters of the Tamar River, BIDGOOD performed three, towed harness release, tests behind the Van Dieman. I was situated on the stern of the Van Dieman and the line to which BIDGOOD was attached, was secured to the boat by a quick release clip next to me. During the test if BIDGOOD raised his arm I was to release the rope. The first two tests I had to release the rope whilst on the third test BIDGOOD freed himself.

Witness:



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