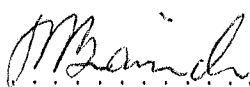


# Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry

## STATEMENT OF TESSIE MITIAM BRAMICH

Tessie Mitiam Bramich makes oath and says as follows:

1. I reside in the Bundaberg district and I have provided my address to the Commission.
2. My date of birth is 27 January 1971.
3. On Sunday 25 July 2004 at around 4.30pm, my husband Desmond Hartley Bramich, aged 56, was changing the wheels of our caravan when the supports failed and he was crushed by the caravan. His son Mark, managed to get the supports back up and restored the supports and stayed with Desmond until emergency services arrived.
4. A local doctor, Dr Vuetti, arrived. He inserted a tube into Desmond's side to assist with his breathing. When the helicopter arrived he said to the emergency services crew that as soon as Desmond is stabilised at Bundaberg he should then go straight to Brisbane.
5. The emergency crew got Desmond stable enough to travel to the Bundaberg Base Hospital (the Hospital) by helicopter.
6. I arrived at the Hospital and waited for around 15 minutes for Desmond to arrive. On or around 7.30pm, Desmond arrived at the Hospital. He was admitted to the trauma room and had scans to assess the extent of his injuries. They changed the tube he was breathing from to a bigger one and Desmond told me he felt better after they did that. One of the doctors came in and I asked him if Desmond would be okay. He said there was no reason

Signed:  .....  
Deponent

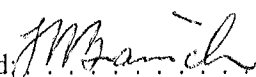
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why a fit middle aged man who did not smoke or drink would not make it. I cannot recall the name of the doctor who said this to me.

7. Over the next few hours Desmond had a number of scans. He became thirsty at one point and asked me for water. I went to ask one of the nurses who gave me an ice-cube. One of the nurses suggested that I should try to find somewhere to stay close to the hospital.
8. At about 11.00pm Desmond was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The nurses in the ICU hooked Desmond up to monitor his breathing and heart rate. He was given morphine intravenously. He was on an oxygen mask. I was told it was to allow him to breathe deeply so that it would reduce the chance of complications. Again I gave him an ice-cube after he asked for some water.
9. Around 1.00am, Desmond asked us to go and have some sleep. The staff told the family to go so that the patients could have a good rest.
10. We came back at 6.00am and found him to be a lot better. At around 7.30am, a nurse changed his oxygen mask to a tube through his nose. At 8.30 am, Desmond's sister and brother-in-law came in. Mark, his wife and our grandson came in at around 9am. <sup>Mark's</sup> ~~wife~~ was very upset to see Desmond hooked up to all the hospital equipment and started to cry. Desmond said: 'Don't cry, I'm all right'. He was talking, smiling and joking with everybody.
11. We had to leave his bedside for the staff to do some more x-rays. When I came back to his bedside, he asked to find out if he could have a cup of tea. I went to ask a nurse and she gave him some. Desmond really appreciated that.
12. I was so happy and relieved that he was okay. We started talking about what happened and he mentioned that had it not been for Mark, he would be in a box. We were told his condition was improving. I can't recall who told us this.

Around 1.00pm I left with the family to have some lunch. When I went back to the ICU, Desmond was not there. I saw Toni Hoffman and she told me he had been moved to Ward 18. I was very unhappy and worried that they had taken him out of ICU because the staff told me that it was vital for Desmond's heart rate and breathing to be closely monitored to reduce the possibility of complications. I asked one of the nurses how are we going to know if he is breathing correctly and his heart is pumping at the right rate if he doesn't have the monitors. I did not get an answer.

13. That afternoon, Desmond was helped to sit in the chair next to his bed. We left that night for some rest.
14. On 27 July 2004, at around 7.00am, I was back at Desmond's bedside. He told me he had had a terrible night and he was exhausted. He had woken at about 2am in pain.
15. I noticed when I arrived that his arm had a substance dripping from his hand where the morphine IV entered. The morphine IV had become loose and had not been checked during the night. I told the nurse immediately and Desmond had to wait another 45 minutes for a doctor to reinstate his IV. I believe this doctor was one of the junior doctors in Dr Patel's team, however I do not recall his name.
16. At around 10.30am, the physiotherapist and a trainee took Desmond out of bed and whilst holding him under his armpits on either side, walked him around the hospital corridors. Our friends, Mr and Mrs H; , were visiting Desmond at the time and were very concerned that he was expected to engage in exercise so soon after leaving ICU and that upper body movement may affect his broken ribs or fractured sternum.
17. At around 11.30am, Desmond's sister ( ) phoned from Perth. I spoke to her while the physiotherapist put Desmond back in bed. Desmond spoke to his sister for a short time. He told her he had felt better the previous day than

Signed:  .....


Deponent

Taken by:  .....

Solicitor/Justice of the Peace.

he did at the present time. He said he felt weak and was beginning to feel really unwell and in increased pain and that he wanted to rest.

18. At around 11.45am, Desmond's mother phoned from Far North Queensland, they only spoke to one another for one or two minutes before they had to say goodbye.
19. I left Desmond to have his lunch and I came back at around 2.30pm- 3:00pm. I found that he had collapsed and had been rushed back to the ICU. At 4.30pm, our friends, Mr & Mrs H came to visit. They were not allowed to go into the ICU to see him. We were advised that the doctors were in touch with a thoracic specialist in Brisbane for advice in treating Desmond to try and stabilise him for transport to Brisbane.
20. Nothing happened until around 10.30pm. Dr Patel advised that our family needed to pray for a miracle as Desmond had little chance of survival. Dr Patel also advised that after fifteen years of trauma, his observation was that 80% of patients with this type of injury do not survive. I asked why Desmond was not transferred to Brisbane. Dr Patel yelled "What what what" but didn't answer my question. Desmond's brother-in-law started to question why Desmond was removed from ICU with these sorts of statistics; he became defensive and a little hostile and also stated that Desmond had improved remarkably to allow his removal from ICU.
21. Shortly after, at around 11.00pm, a doctor arrived from Brisbane to try and stabilise Desmond to transfer him to Brisbane. She came to speak to us and told us she would try everything to make his transport to Brisbane possible. She also stated that had they had Desmond in Brisbane one hour earlier he may have survived as they would have operated on him and had all the necessary facilities on hand to deal with such injuries.
22. At around 12.10am on 28 July 2004, Desmond went into cardiac arrest and the doctors tried to resuscitate him. At 12.40am, the doctors advised us that Desmond had passed away. I was distraught. I cried a lot in the hospital. One

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Deponent

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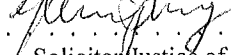
Solicitor/Justice of the Peace

of the nurses tried to comfort me, she was crying too. The doctor from Brisbane was also upset and crying.

23. When we received the autopsy report, Mark, and had far too many questions and there were far too many gaps and inconsistencies in Desmond's medical treatment. At the time, I was still in shock, trying to be a comfort for the children, looking for answers and trying to run the earthmoving business. We gathered the family together. We were all convinced that Desmond had died unnecessarily and wanted truthful answers. I realised that the coroner had only given me 14 days to request an inquest and I was one day over that date. I spoke to the coroner's secretary and was advised that I could still send my request so long as it did not make more than three days. I sent my letter of request on 30 August. I received a letter on 23 September from the coroner stating that he was going to do a further investigation. I did not hear anything from him until 10 May 2005.
24. Several weeks passed of absolute misery. Friends and neighbours and I wrote to Mr Paul Neville, Federal Member for Hinkler. The majority of the community advised us to see Mr Rob Messenger, the local member for Burnett Heads, which we did. It was common knowledge around the Bundaberg district that any complaint against the Base Hospital would just get buried. Mr Messenger listened and sent a letter to Mr Gordon Nuttall.
25. On 10 May 2005, the coroner called me to advise me that he was stopping his investigation because of the pending Commission of Inquiry and Crime and Misconduct Committee inquiry. I was very angry. I asked him what he had done so far as he had had eight months to investigate. He said he did try but the officials at Bundaberg Hospital kept everything stalled by taking a very long time, if at all, to answer his questions. I was quite upset and asked him why I had not heard from him, he answered: 'I guess I should have phoned you but I didn't'.

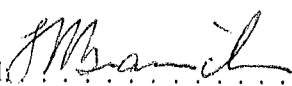
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Solicitor/Justice of the Peace

26. I have been advised by my lawyer that the State Coroner, Michael Barnes, has taken over the conduct of the matter and considers that further investigation is warranted.
27. Losing Desmond in this manner is an unforgettable horror that has happened to the family. Mark has lost a business partner as well as a father. I have lost a soul mate.           our son, has always had excellent school reports but he is not coping without his father and this shows in his reports.           our daughter, says she hopes we will die now so we can be together with Dad. We are all seeking counselling. Desmond's grandson,           said to his mum: 'I miss grandad too much. I wish I could die now so I could be with him'.
28. If I had only known that Bundaberg Hospital had an impostor for a surgeon, without other specialist doctors or specialists facilities, I would have admitted Desmond in a private hospital. I could never take the risk of taking one of my children to the Base Hospital.
29. I understand that some of the nursing staff, despite being toughened by years of experience and exposure to varied trauma, were so shocked and traumatised by Dr Patel inflicting multiple stab wounds to find the correct site at Desmond's heart to find the fluid; they had to seek counselling and stress leave. I believe this is an indication of how sick and rotten to the core the situation at Bundaberg Hospital has become. To know further that this was inflicted on my helpless husband by an arrogant amateur, unqualified to be anywhere near Desmond almost makes me lose my mind in anguish and horror.

Signed:  .....

Deponent

Taken by:  .....

Solicitor/Justice of the Peace

30. I still need answers. I want to know why Desmond was not stabilised and sent to Brisbane where there is better equipment and more experienced staff and why he was taken out of ICU.

Affidavit sworn on *12<sup>th</sup> July 2005*  
at *Bundaberg* in the presence of:

*JM Smith*  
.....  
Deponent

*[Signature]*  
.....  
Solicitor/Justice of the Peace

Signed: *JM Smith*  
.....  
Deponent

Taken by: *[Signature]*  
.....  
Solicitor/Justice of the Peace