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IN THE MATTER OF THE INQUIRIES ACT 2014

**AND IN THE MATTER OF A BOARD OF INQUIRY
INTO THE MCCRAE LANDSLIDE**

**ENTITY: SOUTH EAST WATER
CORPORATION**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JASON MARSH

I, **JASON MARSH**, retired, of 29 Atunga Terrace, Dromana, in the State of Victoria say:

1. I am a former employee of South East Water Corporation (**SEW**), where I was previously employed in a leak detection role from 5 May 2020 to 25 January 2025.
2. I qualified as a boilermaker in or around 1980.
3. Over the course of my career, I worked for approximately 20 to 30 years in the oil and gas piping industry both in Australia and overseas. Over this period, I performed various duties in oil and gas projects such as working on high pressure piping, hydrotesting (i.e. what amount of pressure can a pipe withstand), testing pressure valves in pipes, repairing broken pipes and performing leak detection work. Many of the positions I held were fly-in-fly-out, and I held titles such as Piping Supervisor and Piping Superintendent.
4. On 5 May 2020 I commenced employment at SEW in leak detection. My primary role was to undertake leak detection at SEW when our subcontractors could not find a suspected leak. When a leak was found, I would put a job on SEW's Montage system for maintenance subcontractors to repair the leak.
5. My leak detection expertise was mainly derived from on-the-job training. For the first 6 months of my employment with SEW, I was paired and travelled on site exclusively with my colleague, Stewart Carey-Anderson, Operations Analyst. Stewart was very experienced in leak detection and had previously worked for a SEW subcontractor doing fieldwork in leak detection before his formal employment with SEW. I knew more about pipes than he did, so our skills complemented each other. My SEW leak detection colleagues were also very good at sharing their knowledge. I found my background in working with pipes to be useful and, in a short time, I developed expertise in the leak detection work. The equipment SEW uses for leak detection, such as EC testing pens, also come with detailed manuals that contained user instructions. I recall SEW also had documents and displays in the office. For example, there was a meter display set up in the office, which I found useful to

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examine when I started work. Leak detection is not a science. Rather, there may be a bunch of clues you have to interpret. So leak detection is not easily taught.

6. On 23 May 2025 the Board of Inquiry into the McCrae Landslide served upon SEW's lawyers a Request to Produce Witness Statement, which required me to provide a Statement in response to the questions set out in that document.
7. The information in this Statement is based upon my personal reflections, or information I have obtained from the business records SEW has provided to me or other employees / contractors where necessary. I believe the information to be true.
8. This Statement is structured in the order of questions set out in the List of Questions for Mr Jason Marsh, Formerly of South East Water Corporation (SEW).

Question 1 – Describe the observations made by Mr Marsh during his inspection on 27 December 2024 of the site in the vicinity of the burst water main located near the corner of Bayview Road and Outlook Road, McCrae (Burst Water Main Site). As part of your answer, exhibit any photographs, videos or records taken by Mr Marsh at the Burst Water Main Site on or around 27 December 2024.

9. Although the Inquiry's Question 1 does not specifically ask for details of my inspections on days other than 27 December 2024, I believe it is important to outline some of these activities so the context of my inspection on 27 December 2024 can be fully understood.
10. On 24 December 2024 I attended 4 Waller Place together with Simon Gabriel of Detection Services due to reports of water bubbling up from the road. I observed water raging inside a stormwater drain. Although I wanted to sample this water, it was intermittently raining heavily on this day and any sample I could have taken would have been diluted and inappropriate for chemical analysis. At this time, I met Mr Brett Cooper, who I understand to be the owner of 5 Waller Place. Mr Cooper allowed me into the back of his property so I could gain access to his access pit for leak detection. I sounded a mains elbow which I estimated to be 14-inches and no leaks were found. I followed the water main around Mr Cooper's yard and into the street. I surveyed around SEW's water tank WR174 and pump station WP208. We also surveyed Bayview Road above the Mornington Peninsula Freeway with no leak noises detected. A copy of this leak detection report is **Exhibit 1: "Detection Services_Leak Detection Report_McCrae_24 Dec 24"** to this Statement.
11. I also sent an email to various SEW colleagues following the visit setting out my observations. A copy of this leak detection report is **Exhibit 2: "4 Waller Place McCrae 1295094"** to this Statement. *Email*
12. I then attended on and sounded the valves and hydrant about 30 metres away from the Burst Water Main Site and did not hear anything indicating a potential leak in SEW's

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network. The valves and hydrant were difficult to get to, as although the valves themselves are in a clearing of vegetation, the only way I could gain access to the valves was to walk along an old overgrown walking track that I was informed by locals was not frequently walked on. It is necessary to locate and sound valves, as the pipe itself is too deep to conduct acoustic leak detection upon.

13. On 27 December 2024 I re-attended Charlesworth Street, McCrae to continue ~~investigations~~ ^{investigations} into the water bubbling up and out from a hole in the road. I took photographs during my attendance at 1:30pm that day; including one that depicts the water emerging from the road and my surroundings, and two that depict my surroundings as a reference point to my location. Copies of these photographs are **Exhibit 3: "pro-IgtWNOe9"**, **Exhibit 4: "pro-G0CVQI3O"** and **Exhibit 5: "pro-BPbgSglx"** to this Statement.
14. Following this, I returned to the stormwater drain outside 4 Waller Place and observed water to be still raging within. The nature strip at 3 Waller Place was saturated. I again wanted to take a water sample of the raging water, but did not want to do so alone as access to the water was prevented by a heavy steel grate. I made a request to my colleagues for assistance in dealing with the grate, but none was available.
15. After attending Waller Place on 27 December 2024, I then attended Boulevard Reserve, which is across the road from the Burst Water Main Site, to have a look. I remember doing this after I had attended Waller Place that day. I did not notice anything unusual at the Boulevard Reserve.
16. I again sounded the valves and hydrant about 30 metres away from the Burst Water Main Site and did not hear anything indicating a potential leak in SEW's network. The area surrounding the valves was not noticeably wet. I did not hear any water running. I did not observe any noticeable damage to the surrounding vegetation. I did not take any photographs of the valves or that area.
17. Although I would generally write in Montage after attending a site, from time to time I did not. Having looked at the Montage record for 4 Waller Place, I can see I did not make an entry on 27 December 2024. That may be because there was no update to make insofar as my observations on 27 December 2024 were the same as my observations on 24 December 2024, and I had already recorded my observations on 24 December 2024. A copy of this Montage record is **Exhibit 6: "1295094"** to this Statement.
18. Having reviewed the Montage records, I now see that one of SEW's maintenance contractors, Service Stream attended ^{Sounded} the fireplugs, valves and services in the Boulevard and along Bayview Road on 21 December 2024 at approximately 2:54pm and were unable to pick up any sounds. I refer to and repeat **Exhibit 6** to this Statement.



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19. I did not upload the photographs I took on 27 December 2024 to Montage until 30 December 2024, as it is difficult to upload onto Montage or make entries on Montage in the field so I often do not do that until I am in front of the computer in my home office.
20. The day the Burst Water Main was found, being 30 December 2024, I telephoned an SEW Senior Operations Technician and requested assistance to determine the source of the surfacing water. I then lifted the lid of the storm water drain in front of 4 Waller Place and took a sample of the water inside. Following this, I drove the water sample to an ALS laboratory for analysis. On the way back from the ALS laboratory, I received a telephone call from the SEW Senior Operations Technician I had spoken to earlier who told me "I have found your problem". I understand that specialist had gone to sound the same valves I had sounded on 27 December 2024, and this time could hear running water falling into a stormwater drain in the bush near the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. I understand after hearing the water, he walked uphill locating the Burst Water Main Site. It does not surprise me that he could hear running water on 30 December 2024 when I could not hear running water on 27 December 2024 because the leak was likely growing in size day by day. What might not have sounded on a check of the value 30 meters from the leak one day might have sounded on a subsequent check three days later. As previously stated, leak detection is not a science. It can be a bit of a mystery. Hence the need to check and recheck the same valves and pipes. A copy of this Montage record is **Exhibit 7: "1298016"** to this Statement.
21. I attended the Burst Water Main Site myself on 30 December 2024. I recall the leak was isolated for repairs.
22. After the landslide on 5 January 2025 I was one of a number of SEW leak detection specialists who undertook a number of leak detection tests in the area. I walked the streets in the area listening to meters, including in Waller Place, Charlesworth Street and Coburn Avenue, and the only houses that I noticed to have wet nature strips were 34 Coburn Avenue and 1 Waller Place.

Dated: 4 June 2025

Personal Information

Signature: _____

23/6/25

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