



NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE

STATUTORY DECLARATION



PROMIS No.:	IJIS Case:	Date: 28 February 2024
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STATEMENT OF:					
Name of Witness:	MEACHAM KING				
Date of birth:	OVER 18 YRS	Place of birth:	AUSTRALIA	Age:	
Occupation:	POLICE OFFICER				
Home address:	PETER MCAULAY CENTRE				
	Phone:		Mobile:	Fax:	
	Email:				
Postal address:					
Work address:					
	Phone:	██████████	Mobile:	Fax:	
	Email:				
Subject of statement:	Comments made in Kumanjayi Walker coronial inquest				
SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:					
TRG Xmas party explanation					

DATES UNAVAILABLE:
2-21 April, 23 May to 3 June

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

OATHS, AFFIDAVITS AND DECLARATIONS ACT

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I, MEACHAM KING, of an address known to police, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I write this statement in relation to comments made by former police officer Mr Zach Rolfe in the Northern Territory (NT) Coroners Court on Monday 26 February 2024 in the inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker. The comments in question were made in relation to the annual TRG Christmas party that is held at the end of each year.
2. I have previously given evidence in this inquest.
3. My service in the Northern Territory Police Force is as follows. I graduated from the Police College in 2000 and was posted to Alice Springs. I passed the TRG selection course and joined the TRG in 2003. In 2021 I left the TRG and undertook supervising at Casuarina Police Station and then Watch Commanding for Greater Darwin Command. I returned to the TRG in 2023 for six months to help run some courses and at the completion I was promoted to Senior Sergeant and I am now the Officer in Charge of the Dogs and Mounted Unit.

My remote service experience consists of relieving at the Yulara Police Station, the Harts Range Police Station. I have also conducted a number of patrols to Yuendumu, Papunya, Kulgera and Ti Tree (2-3 days in duration on each occasion). During my time in the TRG I have travelled to nearly every remote community in the Northern Territory for searches, riots, community engagement and close protection duties. In addition, as an army reservist with NORFORCE (since 2002), I have had significant exposure and experience with remote communities and Indigenous Australians.

4. At the end of each year the Territory Response Group holds three functions. They are:
 - a. The kids Christmas party: a party for all of the members' children where Santa attends, presents are given and activities are provided to parents and kids. We have done it at the Peter McAulay Centre at the pool with jumping castles; other years it has been at an avenue in town where catering and activities are provided as part of a package deal. It serves as a 'thank you' to the children who have missed their dads who have been away for training and operations and have not been present for family functions such as birthdays and school events etc. throughout the year.

This is page 1 of the statutory declaration of MEACHAM KING.

Declarant

Commissioner for Oaths (NT)

- b. The wives function: where the wives/girlfriends get a chance to dress up for dinner with their partners at a nice restaurant in thanks for all of the support they have provided to their partners throughout the year.
 - c. The TRG Christmas party: for the members of the TRG to get together and celebrate the end of a year, talk about, reflect and recognise the operations and training that they had been involved in over the last 12 months. It is about the unit, what they have been through, camaraderie and a chance to have a few beers with mates.
5. Mr Rolfe gave evidence at the Inquest that there is an award given at a Christmas party called the 'coon' of the year award.
 6. There is no such award and never has been.
 7. The TRG Christmas parties are sometimes 'fancy-dress' themed. One year we dressed up as fictional characters (elf, Friar Tuck, Bat man, Superman, rabbit, animals/creatures etc.), another year we dressed up as tennis players in all white and wigs from spotlight, and another year we dressed in sports wear two sizes too small.
 8. We do have awards at the end of year TRG Christmas party for members. They have been in place for as long as I can remember and they continue. The awards are designed to highlight the biggest stuff-ups by members throughout the last 12 months over a number of categories.
 9. The recipient of each award is given a trophy. A brief commentary is provided at the time of presentation explaining why the recipient has won.
 10. The awards are there to highlight a number of key aspects, with the aim to humble a member in that:
 - No matter how good you are, how trained, experienced and professional, people still make mistakes. We are all human.
 - When you make mistakes, they are there to learn from, laugh about and move on from them. The unit will be there to support you and help pick you up when mistakes are made.
 - It provides closure of the stuff-ups and allows the unit to move forward. Of note, after every training / operation a de-brief is conducted. Identified issues are dealt with and recommendations are implemented.
 - It brings everyone together, enhances camaraderie and also highlights the very important memories from the year.

11. Examples of the awards are set out below:

- a. Sooty award: Biggest stuff-up of the year by a member.

This award is named after an ex-TRG member after he was doing training in four wheel drive recovery equipment. He was using an exhaust jack and over-inflated it resulting the end to come off the Toyota Troop Carrier exhaust pipe and covered him in diesel 'soot'. His nickname became 'Sooty'.

The reason for the award is that the same individual some time later was helping dismantle a structure and his self-proclaimed confidence that the

power was off was wrong. The result was that he touched a live wire and electrocuted himself (luckily with minimal injury).

The trophy for the Sooty award is a piece of wood on it with some electrical wiring.

- b. Ayrton award: Incident involving a motor vehicle by a member.

This award is named after Ayrton Senna, the famous Formula One driver. This award was founded after a TRG Sergeant decided to come into the back parking area of the TRG office too fast after the floors had been washed and failed to appreciate his speed and collided with a bunch of old lockers.

The trophy for this award is the front of a locker with tyre tracks painted on it.

- c. Bismark award: Incident involving a boat by a member.

This award was founded after two TRG members who were conducting searches in the Katherine River got stuck on a log which resulted in their boat capsizing and sinking.

The trophy is a piece of wood with one of the damaged props from that boat.

- d. Nugeda award: Incident involving a member expressing their outstanding lack of excellence in either hygiene and or behaviour.

This award was established after a TRG member on a remote search and rescue operation failed to shower for over a week (due to a lack of facilities) He ended up getting sick from working 20 hour days.

The trophy for this award is a piece of wood from a Bombax tree. The Bombax tree has a number of sharp points on it so the award is a length of wood with the sharp points still on it. It looks like a club.

My understanding is that it was seized after TRG members went to a riot at the community in the West Daly region. It was taken during the seizure of weapons from rival clans and it was kept because it looked cool.

- e. Top Shot award: Incident involving a firearm.

I am not aware how this award was founded. The trophy is a piece of wood with an old de-serviced revolver on it.

- f. MVP (Most Valuable Player).

This is awarded to the member who is the most supportive of others, works hardest and displays the greatest commitment to the team and unit.

This award started in 2022. It was created to acknowledge a member who goes above and beyond what already is an above and beyond unit.

The trophy is a steel chair made from old TRG-issued knives like the one on the television show - Game of Thrones.

12. The comments made by Mr Rolfe I believe are possibly in relation to the Nugeda award.

13. The word 'Nugeda', as far as I am aware, is a made-up name. It bears no reference to any person or thing. From my understanding it is linked to 'Neanderthal'. This reference is to a 'cave man'. TRG members have often been made fun of, on the basis that we are thought not to have any intelligence and that we are just good at lifting heavy things - if there is a job to do that requires lifting or moving something, give TRG a call as they are good at moving stuff with weight but don't ask them to do anything that requires using a brain so to speak.

We were also called 'knuckle draggers', again just names in jest. This is just general banter between units making fun of one another. The cave man also references to a man from the 'cave'. The TRG office is referred to as the 'cave'. So cave man -- man from the TRG.

14. The award is about a member who in any circumstance, behaves in a way or does an act that shows limited intelligence and compromises their own or others' hygiene by creating a biohazard.

15. For example:

- a. There was a member who had to keep his stool sample cool before providing it at a specialist appointment later that morning. Although the sample was fully sealed, he placed it in the work fridge next to members' lunches;
- b. Members doing PT but not having a shower before changing into uniform; and
- c. Members leaving food in a fridge or vehicle that goes off / mouldy and stinks the place out etc.

16. Basically the award is given for incidents that just show poor form, a little bit of laziness and not thinking where with a bit of effort better choices could have been made to avoid the outcome.

17. As mentioned above, the trophy for this award is a piece of wood from a Bombax tree. It looks like a club. It ended up being the trophy because a cave man has a club as one of the most primitive tools.

18. In 2022, the Nugeda award changed into the Voldermort award after the fictional villain in the Harry Potter series. In 2022, a decision was made to conduct a thorough review of all TRG practices, facilities, equipment and documentation. The name of the Nugeda award was changed as there was a concern that some people may take the word/meaning out of context. By then the unit was a lot better educated and more sensitive to the impact of perceptions and misunderstandings from the Walker Coronial Inquest.

19. None of the awards have any connotation to race. The awards are not meant to be offensive.

20. The awards are done in jest and in good humour for the reasons mentioned above.

21. Notwithstanding this, I can understand how some people may be upset and confused by the awards. If it all it has offended anyone I offer this opportunity to apologise.

22. In closing, I offer the following:

- TRG does a whole range of operations and the toll of these operations place considerable psychological, physical and emotional stresses upon a member. No matter what wellbeing support is available / provided, nothing will help a person more than the ability to talk to people (mates) who have been through the same issue as them.
- Going to an incident where you have to collect body parts, especially from children, is a traumatic experience. You can't go home and talk to your family about that. You can't talk to other members of the police force. You talk to the people you trust and who have experienced that job or jobs very similar. They understand every aspect of what you went through. TRG members have a high level of trust in one another for a range of reasons.
- But most of all, it's about trusting that you can talk about issues. The Christmas parties are just that. They bring the whole section together to celebrate family and partners and to celebrate the critical jobs we do to service the community of the Northern Territory. We talk about the jobs we did: the good the bad and the ugly.
- The parties don't have any agendas and the awards are not meant to cause harm or offend or be derogatory to anyone.
- They provide a humorous experience where the unit acknowledges the work we have done, the experiences we had and we laugh at each other but most of all they are about laughing at ourselves.

I will be available to give evidence if required. I will be unavailable for 2-21 April, 23 May to 3 June. I understand that the contents of this statement may be disclosed for defence purposes.

and I further declare that:


(a) (i) I have attained the age of 18 years;

AND

(b) (i) I have read this statement before signing it;

and I make this solemn declaration by virtue of the OATHS, AFFIDAVITS AND DECLARATIONS ACT, conscientiously believing the statements contained in this declaration to be true in every particular. I acknowledge that a person who wilfully makes a false statement in any material particular is guilty of a crime and liable to imprisonment for 3 years, (*section 119 Criminal Code*). Furthermore, a person who does anything to a Statutory Declaration that results in it becoming false or misleading, is liable to a penalty of a fine or imprisonment, or both (*section 27 Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act*).
Maximum penalty: 400 penalty units or imprisonment for 4 years.

DECLARED AT DARWIN THIS TUESDAY 28TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2024.



MEACHAM KING

BEFORE ME  _____

NAME S/C ERIN SIMONATO 2794

ADDRESS Pme

TELEPHONE _____

COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS (NT)