

**NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE****STATUTORY DECLARATION**

PROMIS No.:	IJIS Case:	Date: 29-4-24
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<b>STATEMENT OF:</b>					
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:	Coronial Inquest - Walker				
<b>SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:</b>					
Additional information in regards to the TRG awards					

<b>DATES UNAVAILABLE:</b>
26 May – 1 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 have previously provided two statements to the coronial inquest dated 28 and 29 February respectively.
2. Both of these statements reflect my recollection and knowledge at the time in relation to the TRG Christmas awards, what they stand for, how they were awarded to members, the history of the awards and the links to any potentially racist content.
3. I would like to provide some perspective on my comments in these statements. Although not still attached to the TRG, I am responsible for the Bomb Response capability, partake in On-Call Tactical Commander duties and help out on courses as needed, so I still have close ties to the unit.
4. Since my statements have been submitted I have been shown other images from power points or similar dating back as far as 2006. I have been advised that they were located on a personal drive (on our work system) of a former police officer.
5. I do not recall some of the material due to the passage of time, the reason it was created, especially by the former police officer, but I am confident the material does relate to TRG awards.
6. Although to my knowledge the 'Nugeda' award has not been referred to as the 'coon of the year award' within TRG, there is a clear link between some awards that have been made and Indigenous people and their customs. I could not recall any links of this kind when I prepared my previous statements. For me and other TRG members, so far as I am concerned, the awards have always been about the recipient of the award and this goes toward the explanation I gave in paragraph 10 in my first statement (the aim being to humble a member).



7. The language used in some of these awards is racist, offensive and inexcusable. I am deeply sorry for the content and although not having a direct hand in those ones, I was present in the unit during that period. I was promoted to Sergeant in 2009 but prior to that I was a senior member of the unit and I take responsibility for being part of the awards process throughout my career in TRG.
8. I am very disappointed and upset for the harm these awards have caused / may cause, because it is not what the awards are about and it is not what the TRG represents. The unit is characterised by professionalism and that is the expectation both in relation to operations / training and administration duties.
9. The awards are meant to be poking fun at the recipient TRG member. They were never intended to become public documents for a range of reasons (including security issues) and in addition we did not want anyone knowing the types of jobs the unit was doing and the stories behind them, especially some of the mistakes we had made. It was just for us and about our members.
10. To reiterate, they were never meant to be offensive to others or perceived as targeting any particular person, sex, religion or race. It was dark humour with some elaborate storytelling and an avenue to debrief within the safety of the unit on the often confrontational jobs the unit does and in a way that provided release to assist in officers' wellbeing. This is not an excuse for the conduct in respect of the content of the awards or the documentation surrounding their presentation, because clearly there is no excuse. I am just trying to place some perspective on this issue. The members within TRG and especially myself did not intend to cause anyone harm or offence.
11. Regardless of this intent, I accept and acknowledge that the awards have caused harm and anger for Aboriginal people. The reputation of TRG and NT Police has been affected by this and as such it is the community that I feel we have let down the most.
12. The unit has changed and evolved over the years and is very conscious of the language that may cause offence along with the importance of cultural sensitivity and diversity within our community. As a result of this, the awards have changed and the TRG, NT Police and society have also changed and I think that is from there being better awareness, education and understanding of these issues now, than there was 5 years ago, let alone 18 years ago when the first awards were given.

13. Again not making any excuses or trying to justify our actions, I know we will be held to account, but I am hoping we (TRG) will not be entirely judged on mistakes and poor judgement on matters and conduct that occurred in the past.
14. To provide some history of the award process. From before I joined in 2003 until I believe around 2015 the awards used to be a certificate being an A4 piece of paper with an image / writing on it and the person issuing the award would read out a brief story about why that person won the award.

From 2015 it was changed to a p-point presentation so that the awards could include more stories of what had happened during the year. No actual certificates were issued anymore it was just a presentation with images / writing etc. I presented the 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 p-point presentations. Most of the slides within these p-points were created by myself with input from others (the stories and reason the person was nominated) with a few making a slide and then giving it to me to include.

15. I need to write about the unit and what I have seen after over 20 years of being involved in it. I have never seen a TRG member behave in a racist way when dealing with members of the community. I know there is a connotation that 'words' can become 'actions' but every time the TRG dealt with the community, whether it be in the context of a riot, search and rescue, high risk incident to providing critical / lifesaving first aid, age, sex, race, or religion did not enter the equation. It was all about doing whatever you could to help another person / group of the community. We did not care who we had to help, just that help was needed and we would do our best.
16. I have seen the members put themselves in harm's way far too many times for others. I have seen the greatest empathy, greatest caring of other humans as well as the greatest restraint from TRG members at jobs than any other person from any other organisation. In addition, none of our work is done for acknowledgment or praise. It is done because we want to help others and know it is part of the job. I really think this is important because the TRG really does so much behind the curtain / veil of secrecy from the media and public. Even higher levels of NT Police have no real understanding of just how much the unit does / has done and how many times it has saved lives and reduced harm to the community.



17. I would like to finish by again apologising for any distress this matter has caused to anyone including past and current serving police officers, the community and most of all Aboriginal people. Due to this content from previous years I feel like the unit has let the team and community down. The TRG takes great pride in its professionalism.

18. I am conscious that as a result of these matters the unit's reputation has been tarnished. That in itself has had a significant impact on me and the members of TRG. Racist behaviour / associations that are now associated with the TRG are something we will now have to accept as part of the history of the unit. It is not what 'we' are about or what we strive to achieve. The TRG will continue to do its work in a manner that is expected and I am confident the changes we have made will reflect this. I know I will work harder to rebuild the reputation of the NT Police and TRG and have no doubt the TRG members will also.

I will be available to give evidence in Darwin when required although I cannot be available between 26 May and 2 June 2024.

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 WEDNESDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF MAY 2024.

This is page 5 of the statutory declaration of MEACHAM KING.





MEACHAM KING



BEFORE ME

NAME

SQUARE EDDY

ADDRESS

Pmc - Cnr McMillans Rd / Vanderson  
Drive, Knuckey Lagoon

TELEPHONE

131444

COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS (NT)