



Paul Cripps Statement of events 2nd September 2011 – Tier Range Medivac

Background information

On Monday 15th August I was contacted by Beyond Action who required a helicopter to film an Ultra Marathon event on the 2nd September 2011. I booked a Bell LongRanger for Beyond Action for the day.

On Thursday 1st September I was contacted by the event organiser, Sam Fanshawe, who was enquiring about helicopter availability in the event of an emergency. I informed Sam that a helicopter had been booked for filming the event and it may be possible for this helicopter to be used in the event of an emergency. I also stated Heliwork WA did have another helicopter in Kununurra that may be used however it could be chartered by another company unless they wanted to put it on standby. Sam thanked me for the information and I have had no further contact with her.

Friday 2nd September

Nathan Summers was tasked to conduct the filming of Racing The Planet in VH – CKL.

I received a phone call from FESA around 1330 – 1400 on Friday afternoon regarding a broken conversation they had received via satellite phone from Sam, the event organiser, stating that people had been burnt and they needed help somewhere between Kununurra and Wyndham. He told me that he knew nothing about the event and there was no emergency plan in place. He also said at this point in time he did not have enough information to request our services. I confirmed the emergency phone number Sam had passed on to me and he said he had been continually trying to reach her on that number unsuccessfully.

I tried to contact Nathan Summers in VH – CKL via Satellite phone #5 (0404 000 409) and VHF 127.0, 127.3 and 126.7 with no response. I decided to sit tight until I received further information from FESA or the event organiser.

Between 1550 and 1600 I received 2 broken phone calls from Nathan Summers via satellite phone stating he needed assistance as there were 5 people with serious burns and they needed to be transported to hospital ASAP. Nathan gave me GPS coordinates of his location and stated it was a very difficult location to access and we would not be able to land as there was only enough room to place one skid on the top of a rock cliff face. After receiving the second phone call I discussed the situation with Bryn Watson, Heliwork WA Senior Base Pilot (Bungles), who was currently in Kununurra. Bryn Watson is also a Queensland Paramedic. I would be pilot in command and Bryn would accompany me as crew member to assist onsite. Bryn made a phone call to 000 and requested a stretcher be brought to the Heliwork WA hangar ASAP and any other equipment we may require.

At 1630 I decided we could not wait any longer as we would be pushing last light. We departed Kununurra at 1635 in VH – KSV for position S15 52 44.4 E128 17 19.6 (Tier Range). I declared the flight a "Mercy Flight" as we would not have a "Standard HLS" available at the casualties location.

Whilst on route to Tier Range Bryn Watson phoned 000 to request an ambulance be waiting at Heliwork Kununurra at 1720. Bryn made a second phone call to the emergency department at Kununurra hospital to inform them we would be bringing back up to 5 seriously burnt casualties however no further information was available at this time.

We observed a large amount of smoke to the west as we departed Kununurra.

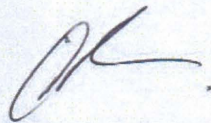
We arrived at Tier Range at approximately 1650 where we located the position of VH – CKL landed in the bottom of a valley in a small unburnt area, most of the range was burnt at this time. I conducted an orbit of the area where we located the group on top of a cliff face. We proceeded to this location with caution. As we approached the cliff face Nathan Summers guided us into the small area on top of the cliff face, I asked Bryn to assist me by keeping an eye on the main rotor and watch for people approaching. Nathan Summers and Nathan Tomlinson had cleared the small area of some trees and loose rocks on the top of the cliff face. I placed the right skid on the rock ledge keeping the tail rotor as protected as possible. Nathan Summers and other people at the scene loaded the first critical casualty and a doctor onto the aircraft. Once everyone else was clear we departed the cliff face and landed on lower ground where the casualty and doctor disembarked the aircraft so we could return to the cliff face for the second critical casualty. We approached the cliff face for the second time with Bryn now located in the back while Nathan Tomlinson was guiding me from the top of the cliff. We successfully extracted the second critical casualty and a paramedic and proceeded to the location of the first casualty and doctor. Nathan Summers made his way back down the steep terrain to VH – CKL with 3 walking wounded. Once the first casualty and doctor were loaded by Bryn we departed Tier Range for Kununurra. Bryn discussed the condition of casualties with the doctor and paramedic onboard and this information was relayed to Kununurra Hospital via telephone with an ETA. Bryn made a second call to 000 and advised an ETA in Kununurra to ensure there would be an ambulance waiting on arrival.

On final approach at Kununurra Airport we observed there was no ambulance waiting at the Heliwork WA hangar so we proceeded to the St.John Ambulance building at the airport. Again no ambulance was observed, the paramedic stated "we cannot wait for an ambulance these casualties are in a critical condition, we need to get to the hospital immediately". I decided as pilot in command to fly to the vicinity of Kununurra hospital and look for a suitable landing site in close proximity to the hospital. I observed a small grassed area beside Argyle House on the corner of Coolibah Drive and Raintree Street, at this location there would be sufficient area to land the helicopter off the road however it would be likely that the main rotors would extend over the road. I flew over the St.John Ambulance Building in Kununurra and approached to land asking Bryn to also keep watch for wires and other obstacles. Whilst on approach an ambulance came out of the St.John building and positioned at the intersection blocking off traffic. Once landed Bryn along with the doctor and paramedic on board exited the aircraft to ensure no traffic would approach from behind the aircraft and to assist the casualties onto a stretcher from the waiting ambulance.

Prior to take off it was decided Bryn would remain on ground to ensure no one approached the aircraft. With all passengers now clear of the helicopter I departed for Kununurra Airport. I landed at 1738 and

shutdown the aircraft. By this time Nathan had landed at the airport and his 3 casualties were awaiting an ambulance.

I believe the evacuation of the 5 casualties went as smooth as possible with the limited information we were given. I commend the actions of Bryn Watson, Nathan Summers and Nathan Tomlinson. They demonstrated professionalism at all times with safety as the main priority throughout the operation.



Paul Cripps

10th April 2012