Independent Committee in relation to the Fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po

Witness Statement of TUNG Wing-kei

I, TUNG Wing-kei, of Breathing Apparatus Unit, LG/F, Wong Tai Sin Ambulance Depot, 5 Ying Fung Lane, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon, do say as follows:-

1. I am the Divisional Officer (Breathing Apparatus) of the Fire Services Department ("**FSD**") of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. I have joined the FSD for about 24 years since 2002 and was promoted to the present rank on 31 December 2023. My main responsibility is to oversee the daily operations of the four Breathing Apparatus ("**BA**") Rooms, which includes training, maintenance, and procurement of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus ("**SCBA**") equipment. Additionally, I am required to attend major fire incidents as part of the BA Support Team, where I manage the BA Main Control to ensure the adequate supply of BA-related resources and ensure the safety of BA operational procedures.

2. I make this Witness Statement pursuant to Request 6 of the Independent Committee ("**Committee**") in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po as set out in a letter from Messrs. Lo & Lo, Solicitors for the Committee, to the FSD dated 2 March 2026 ("**2 March Letter**") in which specific questions were raised in paragraphs 1 to 24 ("**Questions**"). Save where otherwise appears, the facts deposed hereto are within my personal knowledge or are derived from office files and records and sources to which I have access and are true to the

best of my knowledge, information and belief. Save as otherwise specified, this Witness Statement adopts the same abbreviations and nomenclature as in the 2 March Letter.

3. This Witness Statement addresses Questions 9, 10 and 22 of the 2 March Letter. Other Questions which are within the FSD's purview will be addressed in the witness statements of other relevant officers of the FSD to the Committee. I understand that the FSD has indexed all relevant documents in its possession in Lists of Documents produced on various dates (collectively "**LoD**") and a 7th List of Documents ("**7th LoD**") to be produced, a draft of which I have read. In this Witness Statement, I shall refer to these documents by their designation in the LoD (for example, [FSD/A(I)/1] means Item 1 in Part A(I) of the LoD, [FSD(2)/A(I)/1] means Item 1 in Part A(I) of the 2nd LoD, and so on) without annexing them hereto for the avoidance of duplication.

Question 9

4. Question 9 asks whether any BA Examination Report had been prepared for the No. 5 Alarm Fire at Wang Fuk Court. The Examination Report of the MSA Breathing Apparatus Set of the Late Senior Firemen (posthumous) 18469 HO Wai-ho ("**SFn HO**") ("**BA Examination Report**") is now produced at [FSD(7)/D(III)/12]. [FSD(7)/D(III)/12]

Question 10

5. Question 10 relates to the personal alarm system and the Firefighter Locator System ("**FLS**") used by SFn HO, and whether these systems were operational on the day of the fire and if so whether they could have assisted in the search for SFn Ho.

6. **Operation mechanism of the Personal Alarm System – MSA AlphaSCOUT ("SCOUT")**

6.1 The SCOUT is a personal protection and monitoring device of the MSA SCBA. It is automatically turned on when the cylinder valve of the SCBA is opened.

6.2 The personal alarm system is essential to the safety of the wearer. Under no circumstances should crew members be allowed to enter the scene if the SCOUT is found to be defective or not functioning properly.

6.3 When the full alarm is activated, the SCOUT will start to sound and flash. The full alarm could be activated in the following two situations:

(i) Motion alarm – When the motion of the wearer cannot be detected within 30 seconds, the full alarm will automatically be activated; or

(ii) Manual alarm – When assistance is required, the wearer can manually activate the alarm by press the alarm button of the SCOUT.

Examination results of the SCOUT of SFn HO

6.4 With reference to paragraphs 7.1.2 and 8.4 of the BA Examination Report, SFn HO conducted the daily test, including the testing of the personal alarm system, at 0930 hours on 26.11.2025, recording no defects in the relevant records. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the SCOUT was in good working condition during SFn HO's operation.

6.5 Even if the SCOUT had been activated, it would only emit a flash and sound signal of not less than 90 dB. Given that SFn HO's SCOUT was located on 30/F and 31/F of Wang Tai House, the nearest crews on the ground floor would not have been able to hear the signal and locate him.

6.6 With reference to paragraphs 6.2.2, 6.2.3 and 8.8 of the BA Examination Report, the SCBA set of SFn HO was subsequently found and removed from the water-covered floor on R/F of Wang Tai House at about 1733 hours on 27.11.2025. An examination conducted by an MSA technician on 1.12.2025 revealed signs of corrosion on the SCOUT consistent with water exposure. Rust accumulation was noted within the battery compartment, and water infiltration into the motherboard was identified. The device was found to be inoperable. It is believed that submersion in water for approximately 16 hours caused the damage to the SCOUT.

7. Operation mechanism of the FLS

7.1 FLS is a Personal Alert Safety System device designed to enhance the safety of firefighters. It is an electronic system comprising of two main components: a Personal Transmitter ("**PT**") and a Handheld Receiver ("**HHR**").

7.2 To turn on the PT, its red magnetic key has to be removed; the key is then handed to the Entry Control Officer ("**ECO**") together with the BA Set Tally when the BA Team is passing through the Entry Control Point ("**ECP**"). Prior to entering the fire scene, the BA Team will pass through the ECP. The ECO will ensure that the BA is properly donned, that the cylinder contents are sufficient, and that the team is using the correct R/T channel. The BA Team will also hand in the BA Set Tally and the red magnetic key of the PT to the ECO. In addition, the ECO will calculate the working duration based on the air content of the member with the lowest air content and brief the BA Team on their specific assignment. [FSD/G(I)/13] Para 5.9

7.3 In the event that a BA wearer (i.e. the firefighter equipped with the BA) is motionless for 45 seconds, or the PT is manually activated by him by pressing and holding the Manual Alarm Button for 3 seconds, the PT will enter into alarm mode, emitting both audible and visual alarms. Once activated, the PT begins transmitting a radio signal with its unique ID that can be detected by the HHR. By pointing the HHR in the direction of the strongest signal and moving

accordingly, the user of HHR (i.e. the crew members responsible for the search and rescue operation of the missing firefighter) should be able to locate the activated PT.

7.4 Application of the FLS is essential for the effective search for missing firefighters but its successful operation is contingent upon two major premises:

(i) The user must have turned on the PT by removing the red magnetic key and either activate it by pressing the Manual Alarm Button or remaining motionless for 45 seconds; and

(ii) The user of HHR correctly interprets the signal strength, along with all other available information about the possible location of the activated PT, including the deployment and status of all BA wearers.

Examination results of the FLS of SFn HO

7.5 As stated in paragraph 7.1.4 of the BA Examination Report, upon the post-fire examination of the BA set of SFn HO, the PT of the FLS was found attached to the waist straps with the red magnetic key still inserted. Hence, the PT would neither emit audible and visual alarms nor transmit a radio signal of location to the HHR in either of the situations mentioned in paragraph 7.3 above.

7.6 Subsequent testing conducted by the BA unit confirmed that after removing the red magnetic key, the

PT functioned properly and the HHR could receive the signal of location.

7.7 That said, even if the SFn HO had removed the red magnetic key of the PT and activated it, and the closest team and ECO on G/F had started searching for him, the signal from SFn HO's PT on 30/F and 31/F of Wang Tai House[1] might not have been received by the HHR on G/F of either Wang Cheong House or Wang Tai House due to the long transmission distance, as well as environmental conditions and anything that might cause interference or reflection of PT signal. In fact, the FLS is just one of the tools available to support our search operations. Different methods or alternative tools should be utilised as appropriate to the circumstances.

Question 22

8. Question 22 relates to the logs recording the BA operation. When preparing the tables at [FSD(4)/G(III)/8], I had made reference to certain BA operation log sheets of the entry control points and clarification with frontline members. The BA operation log sheets are now produced at [FSD(7)/D(III)/1]. These 160 log sheets comprise original photographs taken from BA Log Clipboards kept at the ECP. While these log sheets are the sole record currently held by the [FSD(4)/G(III)/8] [FSD(7)/D(III)/1]

[1] Where his Mayday message was dispatched according to paragraph 7.2.2.6 of [FSD(4)/G(III)/3] – *Interim Investigation Report by the Inter-Departmental Fire Investigation Task Force on the No.5 Alarm Fire at Wang Fuk Court*

FSD to document the BA operation at Wang Fuk Court, it is important to acknowledge that some of the documentation generated during the incident could not be provided due to the following reasons:

8.1 **There are chances that there could be erased, omitted and inaccurate entries**. Some ECOs of the ECPs[2], having used up all available log sheets, opted to erase previous entries (i.e. of those BA wearers who had completed their task and exited safely) and overwrite them with new records. Besides, in this incident, each BA Team typically consisted of the full crew member from a single appliance, usually four to five members. As they passed through ECP simultaneously and in rapid succession, the ECO was required to record multiple entries within a short span of time, which imposed a heavy transcription workload. This, combined with multitasking and the dim, noisy environment, significantly increased the risk of human error.

8.2 **In numerous instances where the BA operation log records were found to be incomplete and inaccurate,** the discrepancy stemmed from the field practice of firefighter to effect air conservation. To maximise operational duration, several teams deferred connecting their BA Demand Valves until they had reached untenable or hazardous floors, of which part of the above operational details were not reflected in the BA operational log sheets.

[2] On arrival at the entry control point, BA wearers will report to the ECO at ECP, informing him/her of their assigned duties or to standby for further instructions.

8.3 **In several instances, certain entries were not recorded in the BA operation log sheets due to the exigencies of emergency deployment by the ECO.** While all members passing through the ECP would submit their BA Set Tallies and red magnetic keys of PT to the ECO, who would place them on the Entry Control Board for monitoring working duration and identification, there were extenuating circumstances under which this procedure might not have been fully observed. Consequently, although this has resulted in the omission of written records, the fundamental principle of ensuring the operational safety of BA Teams remained effectively upheld. [FSD/G(I)/13] Para 5.9

9. This case is unprecedented in scale, involving a significant number of fire appliances and crew members, and thus, maintaining accurate records is challenging and may result in loss of some records. Even so, maintaining the BA operational log is only one of the many components of the BA procedures. The primary objective of the BA operational log is to serve as a pre-entry checklist to safeguard the safety of the BA wearers. According to my observation at scene, the ECOs managed to ensure the safety of the BA wearers by verifying donning procedures, confirming radio functionality, monitoring cylinder pressures, and conducting tactical briefings and often did so under urgent conditions which might have taken away time available for manual logging.

10. I confirm that the contents of this Witness Statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated this 17th day of March 2026.

TUNG Wing-kei
Divisional Officer
(Breathing Apparatus)
Fire Services Department