

## **Submission to Flood Commissioners**

**11/2/2011**

Commissioners

As a rural fire volunteer I believe that more use of personnel and equipment available to the rural fire service might have well have been used to good effect in the initial clean up phase after the floods had receded.

At the time of the 1974 floods rural fire units were ill equipped, mostly farmer manned and were in reality a cooperative fire service for rural communities and with little or no ability to operate away from their own area.

Rural fire units are now well equipped and able to operate in conjunction with urban units (common communications) and whilst the level of training varies from brigade to brigade, there are many brigades that have sufficient training so that they can 'slot in' with urban brigades or operate separately but under the same command and control system through the area 'firecom'.

A group of say 6 rural medium attack units could have been given a task such as cleaning up the Brisbane produce markets and done it very efficiently with the on board equipment that is held on medium attack units.

Twice Killarney rural fire brigade was put on standby to proceed to a clean up area but then nothing more was heard. This was after we had organised volunteers to man a unit and who were prepared to be away for two days or more.

I suspect that the permanent staff had never before considered planning for any other event other than fires and also that state government liability in the event that a volunteer was injured or who contracted a sickness such as tetanus was a consideration. As at the time governments, both local and state, were calling for volunteers to assist with flood clean up, if in fact this was the case, then this consideration I find hypocritical.

Another consideration I understand was the necessity to provide accommodation and meals for rural fire crews. However this would have been no problem as there was sufficient goodwill in the community so that it would have been very easy to obtain accommodation from people who wished to help the flood recovery in some way but were not able to physically take part in clean up operations.

In the case of Killarney rural I had unofficially organised both accommodation and meals for a full crew from Killarney (3) in case of us being tasked with clean up in the Brisbane south side area and I believe that I could have quickly organised accommodation for other crews in the same area.

To conclude, I believe that faced with a new situation, the permanent staff were not able to rapidly adapt their thinking and very possibly public service culture precluded this.

Simon Bolitho