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Brief resume'

1964 – 1989 South Australia Police including 4 years with Emergency Operations Group and 11 years with Special Tasks and Rescue Force,

1969 – 1970 National Services as Military Police,

1989 – 2009 Queensland Workplace Health & Safety Inspector including a number of years as an investigator)

Introduction

This submission is made in response to the Commission of Inquiry into the 'Brisbane Floods 2011' established by The Honourable Premier of Queensland Ms Anna Bligh.

This submission addresses aspects raised within the terms of reference of the enquiry, particularly where applicable to the function of rural fire brigades and more specifically to the Dayboro & District Rural Fire Brigade in this current and conceivable future other emergencies and disasters.

The terms of reference considered applicable are:

1. *The preparation and planning by federal, State and local governments; emergency services and the community for the 2010/2011 floods in Queensland*
2. *All aspects of the response to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community and measures to protect life and private and public property, including:*
 - *immediate management, response and recovery;*
 - *resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment;*
 - *adequacy of equipment and communications systems; and*
 - *the adequacy of the community's response.*

The measures to manage the supply of essential services such as power, water and communications during the 2010/2011 flood events

Summary

Dayboro & District Rural Fire Brigade, like other rural fire Brigades is a fully volunteer group that provides for fire management from Rural to I Zone areas and also to some degree assistance to Urban/Auxiliary Fire Services when called upon. Brigades can be called upon to assist in other emergencies as has been witnessed over the last few years.

These Brigades cover geographically 93% of the State of Qld.

There are some degrees of confusion that exist as to the status of a rural fire Brigade in the Emergency Services Spectrum generally and in the circumstance just witnessed with the consequence that role, activation, tasks, training, equipment are at best blurred causing varying degrees of anxiety within the Brigade community and thus affecting extent, efficiency and timeliness of any response.

This submission is made with the hope that:

- Rural fire brigades state wide will be recognized clearly and unequivocally as an integral part of the emergency service spectrum with the latitude, powers, flexibility and equipment that can be fielded equally to compliment other elements in times of emergency and disaster within their capability, equipment or levels of experience.
- Rural fire brigades can be assigned without rebuke to carry out traffic guidance duties in their community or otherwise to assist police on request (S612 PP&RA) by themselves (and/or with the use of rural fire appliances to ensure Workplace Health and Safety obligations are met).
- Also, that :
 - a. If any , legislative confusion and misinterpretation surrounding rural fire brigades is clearly and completely removed
 - b. All directives provided from QFRS reflect the provisions provided for by clarified legislation/interpretation
 - c. Queensland rural fire brigade vehicles are equipped conspicuity wise equal to other emergency service vehicles of the spectrum as observed Australia wide.
 - d. A paging conduit/system remains in place to enable brigades to operate efficiently and timely in these circumstances.

History - Course of events

The events that culminated in the flooding in southeast Queensland, subsequent to the high rainfall, were unfolding on 29/11/2010 and later on 9/1/2011 and were observed in the Dayboro area by increased levels in the North Pine River and its tributaries resulting in the isolation of properties at which point there was little concern. This phenomena is not unusual and seen from time to time during the wet periods during a year.

Land line phone and power facilities also went down in some parts. Phone, media and internet services were consequently no longer available to affected properties.

On 11/1/2011 substantially more rain fell which caused the river/creek systems in the district to quickly rise to levels not before seen in recent times, breaking their banks and water cascading down gullies affecting the town centre, many homes and properties in the area. Roadways and embankments were cut, eroded and strewn with varying sized debris including tree trunks.

Vehicular traffic was disrupted along the Mt Samson Road at the North Pine River Bridge and Kobbie Creek Bridge, the main thoroughfare between Dayboro and Samford and the city and from Dayboro to Petrie cut in the Town Centre for some period of time.

Late afternoon the 2 local police officers at the North Pine Bridge were offered assistance from 2 Brigade members to assist with traffic assistance on a portion of eroded roadway north of the North Pine bridge. This was accepted in order that they be able to undertake their many other duties in the district. Both Brigade members had a conversation which culminated in 1 attending the Brigade station to pick up an appliance as it had beacons and wait for the 2nd member to arrive. The 2nd member returned directly to the bridge with another, the Brigade's 3rd Officer, both dressed in rural fire brigade attire and undertook a traffic assistance role either end of the affected roadway. Weather at the time was overcast and raining at times.

The member at the station, who had donned his rural fire attire, made phone calls including to the undersigned (Dayboro & District Communications /Coordinator) and was given instructions which included making contact with FIRECOM for further instructions regarding the tasking before setting off, which he duly did and proceeded to the scene by which time conditions had improved where by motorists and pedestrians could see the road edges and areas of erosion and negotiate it with care.

The 2 members who attended at the bridge dressed in yellow/reflective striped rural fire attire did so with the view that they would be more visible, provide some degree of authority, comfort and reassurance to those moving on the roadway. (APPENDIX 3 (a))

The member in the appliance believed that by using a rural fire appliance with flashing red beacons it would warn motorists and pedestrians alike that an emergency and potentially dangerous situation was present and also to provide some degree of protection to the Brigade members who were assisting traffic movement on that section of roadway.

During the day other members of the Brigade made contact with the Brigade's communications/coordinator to find out what was happening and should they be prepared to respond. They could not be provided an answer at that time.

On 12/1/2011 the 1st Officer of the Brigade requested a page message be sent to brigade members, by the communications/Coordinator for the brigade, seeking attendance at the station regarding the emergency and brigade assistance to the community.

On attempting to do this, the paging company advised in a recorded message in words to the effect that the QFRS had taken it over for their traffic and to call back in a few days time.

On Thursday 13/1/2011 during the cleanup of Dayboro, a conversation with a member of the Auxiliary Brigade based in Dayboro indicated that rural fire personnel would not be called because they had no flood experience (many of the Brigade members were long standing residents who worked on or with the land in the area during which time flooding had previously occurred, including 1974.

All coordination of Brigade members then and later during the cleanup of Brisbane was undertaken via mobile phone SMS facilities of a personal mobile phone of the Communications/Coordinator.

Members of the Brigade attended dutifully at the QFRS Incident Control Centre, Kemp Place Brisbane for deployment to varying suburbs of Brisbane until released on the evening of Friday 21/2/2011.

In undertaking these latter duties, not unlike attending a rural fire situation, the appliance was driven on and positioned on the incorrect side of roadways to facilitate the use of the pumps and equipment during operation.

This was undertaken due to traffic congestion and the need to preserve hoses that were in the path of other vehicular traffic.

Legislative considerations (APPENDIX 1)

The state's rural fire brigades can be and are impacted by at least the following State Legislation

Fire and Rescue Services Act...(FRSA). (Sections 8B, 53, 82, 83, 134)

Disaster Management Act...(Sections 3, 8,13,16, 23, 24)

Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulations ... (Sections 78, 79, 306, 307, 308)

Australian Road Rules (Commonwealth)

Workplace Health and Safety Act. (Sections 28, 29 and 36)

Workplace health and Safety Regulation.

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act..(PP&RA) (Sections 59 and 612)

Public Safety Preservation Act...(Sections 5, 8)

Queensland Fire and Rescue instructions (APPENDIX 2)

Brigades are also impacted upon by

QFRS Operations Doctrine...IMS 2.1 Hierarchy of Command and Control

INCDIR 8.1 ...Driving - Emergency Response

QFRS Operational guides (Guide 10 – QFRS & Traffic Management) appears directed only to urban type operations

QFRS directives.....QFRS Incident directive 8.1, Section 3 – Subsections 3.1 and 3.2

Rural Fire Brigade ManualSection A3 .8 Brigade Roles in Disasters

Section A3.5 Compliance with Traffic Regulations

Recommendations.

Recommendation 1.

Amendments be made to the FRSA to broaden the scope of operations that can be undertaken by rural fire brigades to compliment the other arms of QFRS or other emergency services in this area (and other applicable rural areas) in times of appropriate emergency.

The legislation should also provide protection to brigade members in reasonable circumstances.

Rationale

While Dayboro has the luxury of being relatively close to the city, it is still classified as country and in fact the area of responsibility of the Dayboro and District Rural Fire Brigade is the largest in the area.

The town is served by 2 police officers and Auxillary Brigade (structural fires in the town and district). The nearest SES unit is at Petrie, 20 kilometres away. (In the situation as witnessed they would have been fully tasked in their area.)

The events of 11/1/2011 overwhelmed the local resources significantly as it also similarly affected the greater Brisbane area and beyond.

An analysis of the applicable legislature, the directives/directions from QFRS both in writing and verbally seem to be contradictory to the point where the common belief is that the only situation at which Brigade personnel can effectively operate is on rural tracts of land.

Section 82 of the FRSA seems to bear this out, which effectively precludes any assistance in other emergencies unless directed by the Commissioner. No direction had been received from the Commissioner for such an occurrence as experienced that day.

Similarly the interpretation of the 'road rules' as applicable to rural fire brigades is restrictive in that as an example a fire on farm land on the opposite side of the road way to direction of travel will not permit the appliance to travel on the incorrect side of the road to pass other vehicles or be positioned on that side of the roadway in order the hoses and equipment will not be run over by other vehicles.

Verbal advice places an emphasis on no exemption (as is available to QFRS urban/Auxillary vehicles or other emergency service vehicles) being available for the operation of rural fire appliances on a roadway.

It also has been stated that rural fire brigades only attend vegetation fires where no human life is at risk therefore there is no need for the exemptions to apply. Such an analogy is false because the cause of the fire could be manmade and they themselves could be at risk, or the fire movement threatens habitation or areas used by people, including roads. Such a premise also dismisses the value of livestock, farm properties and cultivation.

It is presumed that the reason for the restrictions placed on rural fire appliance use on roadways is due to litigation from affected parties and perceivably a lack of understanding of emergency response responsibilities by volunteers.

Improved training now undertaken by brigades from QFRS must be a move toward increased professionalism and the responsible attitude that follows.

There appears to be little scope for rural fire brigades to become involved, either off their own initiative or being tasked in the circumstances as unfolded on the day.

Recommendation 2

Amendments be made to Legislation to firstly allow emergency services personnel including rural fire brigades in the circumstances to undertake traffic control (beyond STOPPING all traffic in all directions) until the arrival of police or to continue in their absence. This is particularly appropriate in country areas where police resources are thin.

The legislation should also provide protection for rural fire members in carrying out any such operations in an appropriate manner.

Rationale

Current Queensland Legislation appears to only empower police or authorized traffic controllers to direct traffic.

On the day in question it was accepted that police relied upon Section 612 of the PP& RA to enable the brigade members to provide some assistance to traffic on the Dayboro Samford Rd to ensure orderly flow and minimising collisions or injury or loss of life due to road conditions, obstacles and flood water.

The actions by the members could be the subject of criticism owing to the instructions that Brigade members are not to do traffic control.

In this instance it had a positive effect on the motorists ensuring their safety.

Again it is presumed the reasons to exclude brigades performing such a role is twofold – Legislation and Litigation.

Recommendation 3.

QFRS undertake to upgrade rural fire appliances by fitting blue and red light bars with white side lighting inbuilt for the purpose of more clearly identifying the appliance as being an 'emergency service' vehicle in line with the other emergency vehicles within the spectrum and also to meet workplace health and safety obligations for both workers and others.

Rationale

Rural fire Brigade appliances are fitted with red flashing lights/beacons and working lights for the rear.

Whilst red or blue lights are acknowledged in the Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulation rural fire appliances are still an emergency vehicle.

However, Queensland remains the only state not to use Red and Blue lights on rural fire appliances. The use of the 2 colours covers for varying lighting/weather conditions as it is clearly deduced by the fact that QFRS urban, auxiliary vehicles are fitted with them, along with QAS (ambulance service) and Police. (APPENDIX 4)

On the day in question it was overcast and raining inhibiting visibility to some extent. (APPENDIX 3 (b))

The core role of the rural fire appliance is to attend fires in rural tracts of land which can be shrouded in smoke which in itself can be coloured by flame which is generally red. However, as already stated, fire fighting operations in rural settings can and will involve working from the roadway at times.

Blue contrasts to this colour and may be more effective for visibility in at least those conditions and other lighting/weather conditions. It is likely that on the fire ground the position of the appliance, to fire fighters and others would more easily identified.

The combination of the lights on the 'light bar' also more clearly identifies the vehicle as 'an emergency service' vehicle while it is on the roadway, either stationary or moving. Its use on the day in question would have provided visual cues for approaching traffic and protection to brigade members undertaking their role at the time.

Similarly the 'light bars' of urban and auxiliary appliances are fitted with white lights to the side for ground illumination purposes. Rural appliances are not fitted with side lighting.

Side lighting provides illumination of ground to the sides of the appliance over which members must traverse in order to go about their work. This is an area of concern when Workplace Health and Safety considerations must be taken into account.

Recommendation 4

Paging systems used must allow for other 'arms of QFRS' to be able to be brought into action as required at the local level.

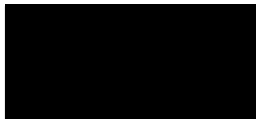
QFRS and other disaster management members undertake to explore a 'disaster paging system' that can be brought on line without affecting the normal operational paging system that is normally used by rural fire brigades.

Rationale

The brigade, like other brigades in the region rely upon a paging system to receive call outs or other information from FIRECOM or to initiate their own activities which include call outs for controlled burns or other brigade essential activities.

On the day in question and for some period of time after a paging system was not available to enable a brigade response to the flooding in Dayboro or to organise personnel for flood clean up duties as requested by QFRS.

All coordination of these events was undertaken using a personal SMS facility on a mobile phone which incurred a personal cost. It was also time consuming and at times difficult.



Signature:

1 March 2011

APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1.

Extracts from Queensland Legislation

Fire and Rescue Services Act...(FRSA). (Sections 8B, 53, 82, 83, 134)

Disaster Management Act...(Sections 3, 8,13,16, 23, 24)

Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulations ... (Sections 78, 79, 306, 307, 308)

Workplace Health and Safety Act. (Sections 28, 29 and 36)

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act..(PP&RA) (Sections 59 and 612)

Public Safety Preservation Act...(Sections 5, 8)

APPENDIX 2

QFRS INSTRUCTIONS - Extracts

QFRS Operations Doctrine...IMS 2.1 Hierarchy of Command and Control

INCDIR 8.1 ...Driving - Emergency Response

QFRS directives.....QFRS Incident directive 8.1, Section 3 – Subsections 3.1 and 3.2

Rural Fire Brigade ManualSection A3 .8 Brigade Roles in Disasters

Section A3.5 Compliance with Traffic Regulations

QFRS Operational guides (Guide 10 – QFRS & Traffic Management) appears directed only to urban type operations

APPENDIX 3

(a) Marked photo of Dayboro Samford Rd at North Pine Bridge

(b) North Pine River upstream at Lees Crossing showing reduced visibility

APPENDIX 4

Photographs of interstate rural fire appliances

APPENDIX 1.

QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES ACT - as in force 1/11/2010.

An Act to establish the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and to provide for the prevention of and response to fires and certain other incidents endangering persons, property or the environment and for related purposes

8B Functions of service

The functions of the service are—

- (b) to protect persons trapped in a vehicle or building or otherwise endangered, to the extent that the service's personnel and equipment can reasonably be deployed or used for the purpose; and

53 Powers of authorised officer in dangerous situations

- (1) An authorised fire officer may take any reasonable measure—
 - (b) to protect persons trapped in any premises or otherwise endangered.
 - (g) close any road or access, whether public or private;
 - (k) require any person not to enter or remain within a specified area around the site of the danger;

82 Functions of a rural fire brigade

- (1) The functions of a rural fire brigade are fire fighting and fire prevention and such other functions as the commissioner may direct.

83 Powers of first officer

- (1) Where, pursuant to notification given under section 82(2), a rural fire brigade is in charge of operations for controlling and extinguishing a fire, the first officer of the brigade has, for that purpose—
 - (a) the powers of an authorised fire officer, subject to any limitation imposed by the commissioner; and
- (2) Any power exercisable by the first officer of a rural fire brigade may be exercised by any person acting at the direction of the first officer.

134 Right of way to fire officers

- (1) A driver of a vehicle (other than a train) must, to the extent practicable, give clear and uninterrupted passage to any fire officer or any person acting under the direction of a fire officer who appears to be doing any act for the purpose of controlling or extinguishing a fire or dealing with any other

emergency.

Disaster Management Act 2003 as in force on 1 November 2010

An Act to provide for matters relating to disaster management in the State, and for other purposes

3 Main objects of Act

The main objects of this Act are as follows—

- (a) to help communities—
 - (i) mitigate the potential adverse effects of an event; and
 - (ii) prepare for managing the effects of an event; and
 - (iii) effectively respond to, and recover from, a disaster or an emergency situation;
- (b) to provide for effective disaster management for the State;
- (c) to establish a framework for the management of the State Emergency Service and emergency service units to ensure the effective performance of their functions.

8 Powers under this Act and other Acts

- (1) This section applies to a person exercising declared disaster powers or rescue powers under this Act.
Examples of persons who may be exercising the powers—
 - an ambulance officer under the *Ambulance Service Act 1991*
 - a fire officer under the Fire Act (OFRSA 1990)
 - a police officer under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*
- (2) The declared disaster powers and rescue powers are in addition to and do not limit the powers the person may have under another Act.

13 Meaning of disaster

- (1) A **disaster** is a *serious disruption* in a community, caused by the impact of an event, that requires a significant coordinated response by the State and other entities to help the community recover from the disruption.
- (2) In this section—
serious disruption means—
 - (a) loss of human life, or illness or injury to humans; or
 - (b) widespread or severe property loss or damage; or
 - (c) widespread or severe damage to the environment.

16 Meaning of event

- (1) An event means any of the following—
 - (a) a cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, storm tide, tornado, tsunami, volcanic eruption or other natural happening;

Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation 2009

Reprinted as in force on 22 October 2010

78 Keeping clear of police and emergency vehicles

(1) A driver must not move into the path of an approaching police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm.

Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

(2) If a driver is in the path of an approaching police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm, the driver must move out of the path of the vehicle as soon as the driver can do so safely.

Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

(3) This section applies to the driver despite any other section of this regulation.

79 Giving way to police and emergency vehicles

(1) A driver must give way to a police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm.

Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

(2) This section applies to the driver despite any other section that would otherwise require the driver of a police or emergency vehicle to give way to the driver.

306 Exemptions for drivers of emergency vehicles

A provision of this regulation does not apply to the driver of an emergency vehicle if—

(a) in the circumstances—

- (i) the driver is taking reasonable care; and
 - (ii) it is reasonable that the provision should not apply;
- and

(b) if the vehicle is a motor vehicle that is moving—the vehicle is displaying a red flashing light or sounding an alarm.

307 Stopping and parking exemption for police and emergency vehicles

A provision of part 12 does not apply to the driver of a police vehicle or emergency vehicle if, in the circumstances—

- (a) the driver is taking reasonable care; and
- (b) it is reasonable that the provision should not apply.

308 Exemption for police officers and emergency workers on foot

A provision of part 14 does not apply to a police officer or emergency worker acting in the course of the police officer's or emergency worker's duty if, in the circumstances—

- (a) the police officer or emergency worker is taking reasonable care; and
- (b) it is reasonable that the provision should not apply.

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 as in force on 1 September 2010

28 Obligations of persons conducting business or undertaking

(1) A person (the relevant person) who conducts a business or undertaking has an obligation to ensure the workplace health and safety of the person, each of the person's workers and any other person is not affected by the conduct of the relevant person's business or undertaking.

(2) The obligation applies— ...

c. whether or not a person works on a voluntary basis.

29 What obligations under s 28 include

Without limiting section 28, discharging an obligation under

The section includes, having regard to the circumstances of any particular case, doing all of the following—

(a) providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment;

(b) providing and maintaining safe plant;...

(d) ensuring safe systems of work;

(e) providing information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure health and safety.

36 Obligations of workers and other persons at a workplace

A worker or anyone else at a workplace has the following obligations at a workplace—

(a) to comply with the instructions given for workplace health and safety at the workplace by the employer at the workplace ...

(b) for a worker—to use personal protective equipment...

(d) not to wilfully place at risk the workplace health and safety of any person at the workplace

(e) not to wilfully injure himself or herself

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000

[as amended by all amendments that commenced on or before 5 November 2010]

An Act about the powers and responsibilities of police officers, and for other purposes

59 Power for regulating vehicular and pedestrian traffic...

(1) A police officer may give to a driver of a vehicle or to a pedestrian on or about to enter a road, or to a passenger in a vehicle, any direction the police officer reasonably considers necessary for the safe and effective regulation of traffic on the road

(3) ...a police officer may act under that subsection if the police officer reasonably suspects an emergency exists or it is otherwise necessary to temporarily prohibit, divert or direct traffic and pedestrians.

612 Assistance in exercising powers

(1) It is lawful for a police officer exercising a power under this Act or any other Act—

(a) to seek the help of another person (an *assistant*) the officer reasonably requires for performing a function of the police service;

(2) The police officer may authorise the assistant—

(a) to take stated action at the place; and

(b) to exercise stated powers the police officer is authorised to exercise.

(4) The police officer must, if practicable, tell the assistant—

(a) of the action the assistant is authorised to take; and

(b) of the assistant's powers under this section.

Public Safety Preservation Act 1986

[as amended by all amendments that commenced on or before 1 November 2010]

An Act to provide protection for members of the public ...other emergencies that create or may create danger of death, injury or distress to any person, loss of or damage to any property...

Section 5 **Declaration of emergency situation...** Subject to section 6, if at any time a commissioned officer (the *emergency commander*) is satisfied on reasonable grounds that an emergency situation has arisen or is likely to arise...

8 Powers of emergency commander

(1) Where during the period of and in the area specified in respect of an emergency situation...

- (e) close or cause to be closed to traffic and pedestrians, any road,
- (i) direct any person to assist him or her in the manner specified by him or her (*help direction*).

emergency situation means— ... (f) any impact of a naturally occurring event such as a flood or a landslide;

APPENDIX 2

Extracts of QFRS materials

QFRS Operations Doctrine...IMS 2.1 Hierarchy of Command and Control

1. PURPOSE

(a) To outline the requirements for establishing command and control at an emergency response incident.

2. APPLICATION

(a) Applies to all fire officers responding to emergency incidents and the establishment of command and control (refer to Code of Practice 1001.0 - Powers and Responsibilities of Officers at Fires and Other Emergencies - for more detailed information).

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

(a) The Commissioner requires that all resources of the QFRS be utilised effectively, regardless of whether an emergency incident is located within an urban response boundary or a rural fire brigade boundary or otherwise.

3.1 Relationship Between Urban and Rural Services

(a) The Incident Controller will determine who is responsible for specific functional roles required in the application of the QFRS Incident Management System.

(b) The QFRS Incident Controller will have due regard and mutual respect for rank, experience, specialist expertise and other useful qualities for incident management such as local knowledge.

(c) The rural service response capability is principally based upon volunteers operating within a structured hierarchy of command. First Officers of Rural Fire Brigades and such other Officers of the Rural Fire Brigades as may be appointed under Section 81 of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*, to exercise the powers of an authorised fire officer, as specified in Section 53 of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*.

(d) The urban service response capability is based upon permanent and auxiliary fire officers operating within a structured hierarchy of command. All urban fire officers are delegated the powers of authorised officers for the purposes of being able to take control of emergency incidents.

(e) Coverage provided by the urban stations (permanent and auxiliary) is concentrated upon areas where the urban fire levy applies and where there is no urban fire levy, Rural Fire Brigades respond to incidents in declared Rural Fire districts.

(f) Section 82 of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*, defines the primary function of Rural Fire Brigades as firefighting and fire prevention. Rural Fire Brigades may perform other functions as directed by the Commissioner.

(g) In accordance with Section 82 of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*, the Commissioner directs that with respect to attendance at fires and other emergencies, **Rural Fire Brigades will have the following functions within their areas of operations:**

- Wildfire firefighting;
- Structural firefighting where all operations are to be in accordance with QFRS standards for structural firefighting (only where the rural fire brigade is appropriately equipped, inclusive of Breathing Apparatus and its members are trained for the function as referred to in the Rural Fire Brigade Manual); and
- Road Accident Rescue where:
 - the rural fire brigade seeks to have the function;
 - meets the competence requirements of the QFRS for Road Accident Rescue;
 - Approval has been given by the Commissioner;
 - The rural brigade has been authorised for the function of Road accident rescue by a Local Government Counter Disaster Committee.

4. RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES

(a) The Commissioner requires that officers of permanent urban, auxiliary urban and rural brigades are tasked to provide a timely and effective response to emergencies by:

- Having only one person in control of an incident and ensuring that control and handover of control is clearly communicated to all personnel at an emergency by the Incident Controller;
- Ensuring that decisions made in regards to incident response and management are responsible, justifiable and proportionate to the current and potential size of the incident;
- Ensuring that sufficient and appropriate resources are brought to bear on every emergency for the protection of the public, property, environment and the management of firefighter safety;
- Providing effective mutual aid arrangements that disregard urban/rural/regional/district boundaries in identifying the appropriate resources required for any existing or potential emergency situation;
- Ensuring all personnel are aware that units are not to self respond to incidents, or sites within on-going emergency incidents, without the approval/request of the Incident Controller for that incident;
- Actively being involved with cooperative planning between urban and rural operations to enhance mutual aid effectiveness, ensuring that the nearest/most timely resources are available and utilised where necessary, regardless of boundaries or whether the resources are permanent, auxiliary or volunteer;
- Conducting joint urban and rural operational exercises to test communications, Incident Management System protocols, equipment compatibility, response procedures etc, for use at emergency incidents; and
- Ensuring the skills, competencies, qualifications and experience of all personnel involved with the incident are recognised and utilised in the total management of the incident.

(b) The response by Rural Fire Brigades can extend into areas covered by urban personnel on occasions where this is deemed to be necessary to assist urban personnel on request.

(c) Urban operations can extend into areas covered by the rural fire service on occasions where this is deemed to be necessary, to:

- Provide specialist services;
- Assist rural brigades on request; and
- Respond where a rural brigade response is not possible or when a response will be delayed.

4.1 Exercising the Powers of Authorised Fire Officers

(a) The powers of authorised fire officers are specified in Part VI and Section 53 of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*. Fire officers authorised by the Commissioner as authorised "fire officers", are to exercise those powers with constraint consistent with the effective performance of their duties and subject to any directions or orders issued by the Commissioner.

5. HIERARCHY OF COMMAND AT FIRES AND EMERGENCIES

(a) Within the QFRS, both urban and rural fire officers are to observe directions given to them relating to the exercise of those powers and operate within a structured hierarchy of command set out in the table below:

QFRS COMMISSIONER

QFRS DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

URBAN OPERATIONS

Assistant Commissioner (REGION)

Chief Superintendent

Superintendent

Inspector

Station Officer

Leading Firefighter

Senior Firefighter

Firefighter First Class

Auxiliary Captain

Auxiliary Lieutenant

RURAL OPERATIONS

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations

Chief Superintendent

Superintendent

Inspector

Area Training/Support Officer

First Officer of the Host Brigade

Brigade Training/Support Officer

Note: At incidents where the Incident Controller may hold an "acting rank", substantive officers at that level may assume control and should give serious consideration to do so at each incident. Reasons not to assume control may include the supervised personnel development of individuals in an "acting" capacity.

5.1 Urban Officers Operating in Urban Levied Areas

(a) With respect to the functions of control of QFRS operations at emergency incidents involving the attendance of urban fire officers in an area covered by the urban fire levy, the hierarchy of command for urban officers applies. The 'On Call' Senior Officer is to be advised of significant emergencies according to regional response requirements.

5.2 Rural Officers Operating in Rural Brigade Areas

(a) With respect to the functions of control of QFRS operations at emergency incidents involving the attendance of rural fire officers in a rural area, the hierarchy of command for rural officers applies. Once notified of the incident, the 'On-Call' Rural District Officer or District Inspector will monitor the incident and attend as required as defined in the RFS Manual or District rosters.

5.3 Joint Service Operations - the Interface Zone (iZone) (Urban, Rural, Other Agencies)

(a) IMT in an iZone should comprise a balance of rural and urban skilled personnel wherever possible, and will incorporate appropriately skilled personnel from other agencies and community sectors as necessary. State, Regional and Local IMT 'Qualifications Registers' are to be referenced for this purpose with personnel to be appointed on the predominant risk,

i.e. Rural Officer (for wildfires - where no structures are threatened) or Urban Officer (for wildfires - possibility that structures will be threatened).

(b) The following principles apply:

- The first attending and most senior officer present at the emergency incident, being an urban officer for emergencies in an urban area, or a rural officer for emergencies in a rural area, will assume the role of Incident Controller and all the functions that it entails;
- In such cases the officer to be appointed or assuming control will be the most senior unless that authority has been delegated to another person who can appropriately manage the incident;
- This person will clearly assume and announce control ensuring that it is clearly logged with the respective Fire Communications Centre; and
- Should the incident escalate, an Incident Management Team (IMT), at the appropriate level, may be established to assist with the management of the incident.

5.4 General

(a) Notwithstanding any other directions contained in this document, the Commissioner and/or Deputy Commissioner may direct any QFRS Officer, Local, Regional or State IMT to assume control of a fire or emergency in any part of Queensland for which the Commissioner is responsible, to ensure the requirements of Section 8 D of the Act, with respect to the 'Functions of the Service' are met.

(b) Local and Regional pre-planning should identify appropriate persons to assume the function of Incident Controller in designated iZones and it is highly desirable for one of these persons to take control of the initial run of any escalating fire. However in the absence of one of these persons, the most senior urban officer in attendance will assume control of the

incident, advise the respective Firecom and assign resources to priority tasks. The role may progress to Sector or Division Command Point as the IMT is established.

INCDIR 8.1 ...Driving - Emergency Response

1. PURPOSE

(a) To outline the requirements for safe driving of vehicles when responding to an emergency incident.

2. APPLICATION

(a) Applies to fire officers and volunteers.

3. DIRECTIVE

3.1 Road Rules

(a) Drivers of QFRS vehicles, or other vehicles, responding to an emergency will obey the Queensland and Australian road rules as prescribed in the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management - Road Rules) Regulation 1999* and the *Australian Road Rules 1999*.

(b) Compliance with either the Queensland or the Australian road rules by an emergency service's vehicle means that it may legally operate under the same requirements in any state in Australia.

(c) Some limited exemptions do apply for drivers of emergency vehicles. Also included are requirements upon civilian drivers that are designed to assist in the safe passage of emergency vehicles when proceeding in turnout mode (refer to section 5).

3.2 Exemption for Emergency Vehicles

(a) The *Australian Road Rules 1999* and the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 1999* contains exemptions for emergency vehicles when responding to an emergency.

(b) A provision of the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 1999* does not apply to the driver of an emergency vehicle if, in the circumstances that:

- ☐ the driver is taking reasonable care; and
- ☐ it is reasonable that the rule should not apply; and
- ☐ if the vehicle is a motor vehicle that is moving - the vehicle is displaying a red flashing light or sounding an alarm.

Note: that is turnout mode of response (refer to Incident Directive 9.3)

(c) These exemptions do not override the road rules or the criminal code in respect to safe driving behaviors.

(d) Drivers of Rural Fire Service vehicles or drivers of private vehicles responding to an emergency will obey the road rules.

3.3 Safe Driving

(a) Fire officers and volunteers that operate QFRS vehicles or vehicles that are involved in response to any emergency will do so in a manner that will not cause harm, injury or death to themselves, other personnel or members of the public.

(b) Furthermore personnel that operate QFRS vehicles or vehicles that are involved in response to any emergency will do so in a manner that will not damage the responding vehicle, other mobile property or any structure.

A3.8 Brigade Role in Disasters - Brigade

District Disaster Management Groups (DDMG)

Queensland is divided into Disaster Districts for the purposes of disaster management.

The *Disaster Management Act 2003 s.23 and s.24* outlines functions and membership of the DDMG.

QFRS Rural Operations, as the primary authority on wildfire mitigation and management, should be represented on the DDMG. This would normally be the Area Director Rural Operations.

Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG)

A Local Government is required to establish a LDMG under the *Disaster Management Act 2003 Section 29*. This may be done in combination with other Local Governments.

QFRS Rural Operations, as the primary authority for wildfire mitigation and management should be represented on the LDMG. This would normally be the Area Director Rural Operations, although in many cases an Area Training and Support Officer or an appropriate Brigade officer or Fire Warden should attend given the requirement for local knowledge.

Preparing for bushfires and other emergencies or disasters is a responsibility shared between QFRS, other agencies, Local Government, and the community.

A3.5 Compliance with Traffic Regulations - Brigade Manual

What I need to know

- Drivers Rural Fire Service vehicles or drives of private vehicles responding to an emergency **must** obey the road rules

How do I do it....

- Drive in compliance with the Australian road rules and other applicable legislation at all times.

QFRS Operational Guides

Guide 10 Working in or near traffic

Operational Guides have been developed to provide staff with further information and clarification on operational systems and processes. They are designed to “bridge” the information gap between training documentation and the QFRS Operations Doctrine.

Key Points

- Firefighter safety is the paramount consideration in all operations.
- **The QFRS does not manage or control traffic at emergencies.**
- **Closing the road is choice of the Officer-in-charge to ensure safety.**
- **Traffic flow to be maintained near operations only if it is safe to do so.**
- Traffic safety assessment to reduce the occurrence of secondary incidents.
- Re-establishing traffic flow where possible.

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QFRS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The QFRS is not legislatively responsible for traffic control and traffic management at emergency incidents as this responsibility during emergency response lies with the Queensland Police Service.

The *Queensland Fire and Rescue Act 1990* provides the QFRS with the legislative authority to close roadways during emergencies. The QFRS does this to ensure safety for firefighters, other emergency workers and members of the public at incidents where the movement of vehicular traffic has been identified as a hazard and has the potential to present a risk to those present.

Safety is the responsibility of all personnel and is established by the relevant training, the correct use of PPE, maintaining situational awareness, effective positioning of QFRS vehicles and the establishment of safety zones with use of lustre cones or other demarcation devices.

It is during the time of responding, proceeding and initial action where there maybe no Queensland Police Service (QPS) resources on scene, that QFRS is responsible to ensure the safety of personnel and all others working in or near traffic. The Officer-in-Charge will conduct an assessment of the situation and if required will completely close the roadway to allow personnel to work from a defensive position. QFRS Incident Controllers (or QFRS Commanders) will advise Firecom of the requirement for traffic management to be relayed to the QPS communication centre. Firecom are required to advise Police Communications of the situation and if a total road closure has been established

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Vehicles

It is the safe practice of the QFRS to position vehicles at the scene of emergencies in a manner that best protects the work area and personnel from vehicle traffic and other hazards. Vehicles used to protect the work area will operate its beacons, but generally not its headlights. It is imperative that the vehicles reflective markings are kept clean and in good condition to present the best visual indication of the vehicle's location. The vehicles warning lights and beacons are to be regularly checked when appropriate to ensure that they are working with all bulbs in good order.

Safety Lights

QFRS appliances currently carry a range of portable safety illumination devices. QFRS staff are to apply individual assessment on the use and placement of such devices. The following are guidelines for the use of such equipment.

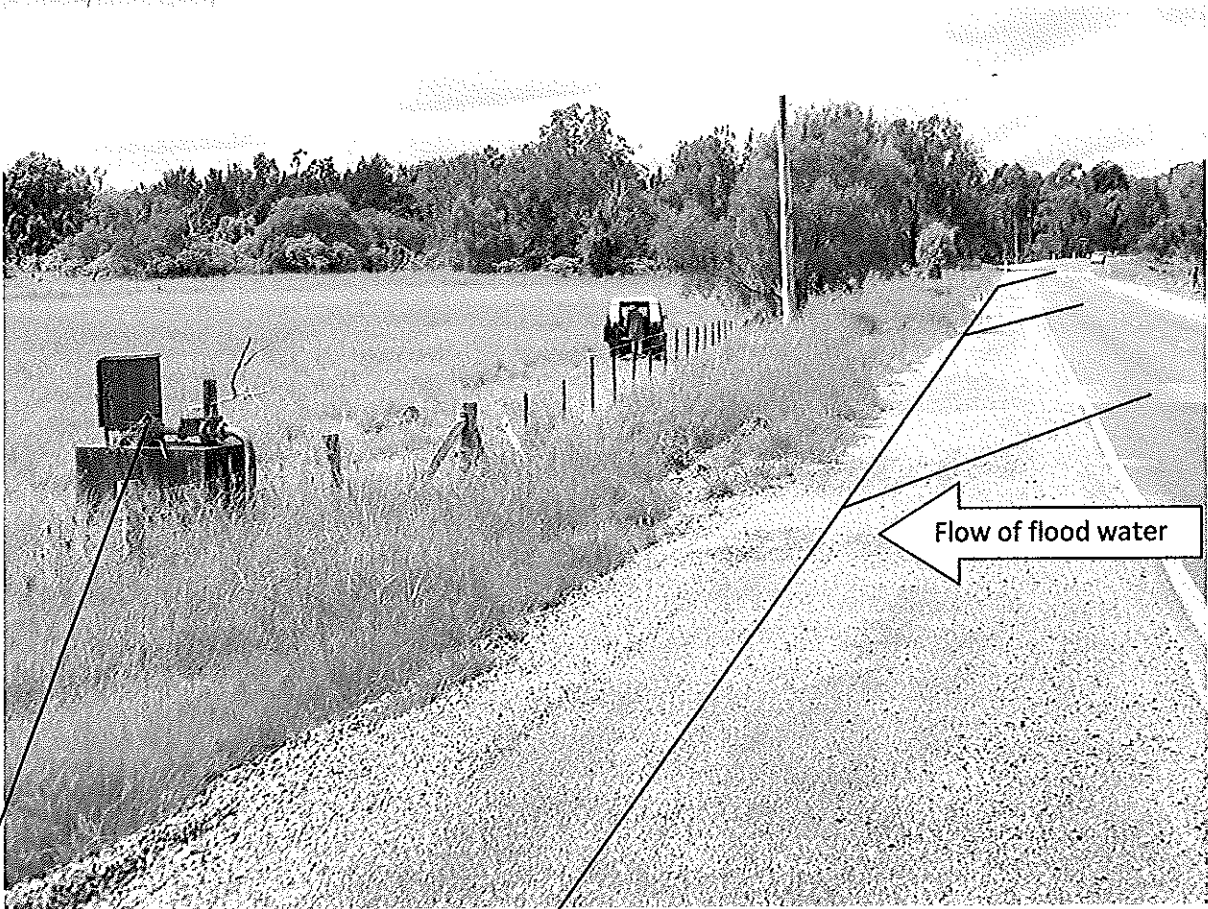
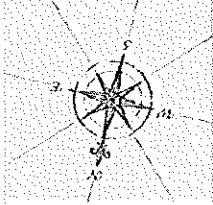
- **E-flares/Turbo Flares** – These types of safety lamp can be utilized to accentuate the line of travel past an incident and should be placed at regular intervals along the line of cones to assist in this purpose.
- **Battery Operated Flashing Lamps** – These may be used at incidents to draw attention to signage placed in the advanced warning area (AS1742.3), typically to enhance the "Emergency Vehicles Ahead" sign.
- **Hand Held Wands**– Although these devices are normally hand held some types can be placed in the top of a cone and used as a supplementary flashing lamp.

Traffic Cones

A standard QFRS appliance carries a minimum of 6 traffic cones however some appliances can carry up to 12 traffic cones. Two sizes of traffic cones are used which are the 450mm and 700 mm fluorescent orange types with reflective tape. Specialist's vehicles may carry delineators which consist of a 600 mm bollard with separate base plate. Traffic cones are to be cleaned and damaged reflective tape is to be replaced when required.

APPENDIX 3

Dayboro - Samford Rd, North Pine Bridge



Flood debris
on pump

Areas of repair – roadway
and eastern
embankment/verge



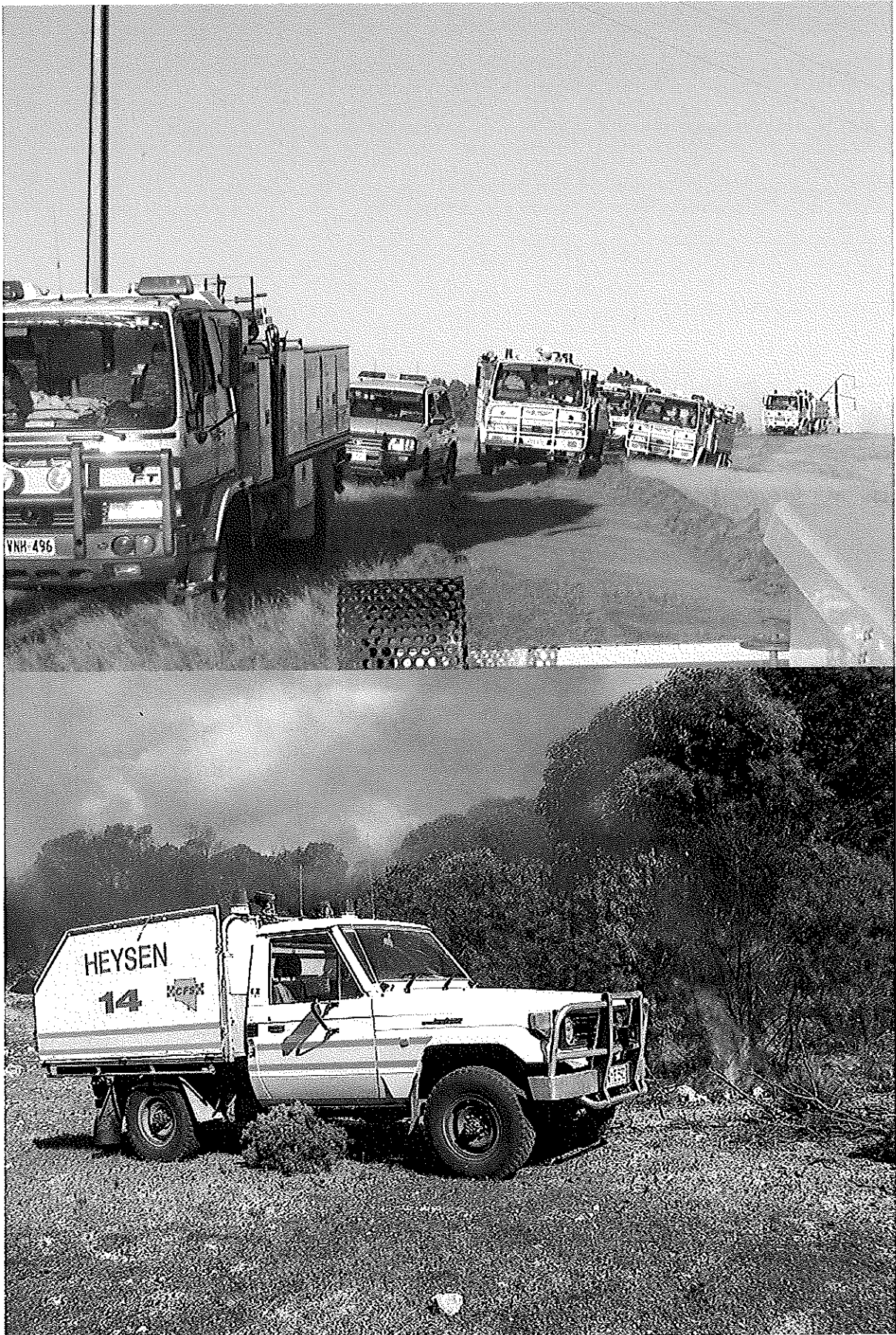
North Pine River at Lees Crossing (in the distant tree line), about 1 kilometre upstream from the North Pine Bridge on the Dayboro Samford Road. Diminished visibility is clearly apparent. Photo taken at 1240 hrs 11/1/2011.

APPENDIX 4

Interstate Rural fire brigade appliances -

In support of recommendation 3

South Australian Country Fire Service vehicles



NSW Rural Fire vehicles



CFA Rural Fire Vehicles



WA Rural Fire



Quinns Rocks Bush Fire Brigade



WA Green Head Bush Fire appliance

Wayatinah TAS



ACT Rural Fire appliances



NT Rural Fire appliance (presumably historical)

