



Questionnaire for SES Local Controllers

1. Structure of SES units

1.1 Please describe the structure of your unit, including the number and location of any constituent groups and the number of members in each group

My Unit was Dalby at Dalby with about 10 members at the time of the floods

1.2 Please indicate whether any members of your unit are employed on a paid, full-time basis. If so, how many are employed on this basis and what positions do they fill?

At the time of the flood 4 of us were employed full-time in metal fabrication workshops 3 at one place and myself at another.

1.3 Do you believe there is a need for SES members (including Local Controllers) to be employed on a paid, full-time basis? Please explain why or why not, including whether there are other ways in which SES members could be rewarded for their time.

At least the Local Controller should be employed on a paid full-time basis to keep up with all the paperwork needed to maintain a smooth running unit and so that EMQ can sort through the needs of a better, more efficient SES. In a similar way to that of a local Fire Chief.

Similar on call/training initiative/compensation to volunteers would help guarantee committed service as that of local fire brigade.

1.4 If there is more than one Local Controller in your local government area, what effect does this have on operations?

It gives reassurance that nearby there is someone to know and assist if extra help is needed

This is better than having a Controller over several towns who possibly only really cares about his/her own town more than yours, whom you may not hear from except to issue orders.

2. Readiness for 2010/2011 floods

We would like to know whether you feel that your unit was adequately prepared to cope with the demands of the 2010/2011 floods. Please provide a brief explanation in response to the following questions.

2.1 Did your unit have enough training to prepare for the 2010/2011 floods?

We had a flood boat but not one person trained in its use. As a result the boat was never used and when it was used during the floods, the boat motor failed due to lack of use. We had to call for assistance. We blocked streets but only a few had traffic control tickets. We could fill sandbags. Few of us knew how to use coms properly. We were a rookie group.

2.2 Did you have enough volunteers to cope with demand?

Three of our volunteers went back to the Philippines for Christmas. Many of our helpers were not yet officially SES members. We called for assistance of other units, some who had to go home to deal with their own floods.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

Yes, except for a viable flood boat. Sandbags were hard to come by due to the high demand across the State/east coast. Our Headquarters became inaccessible due to the road cut off by water. Had to set up elsewhere, which was lacking.

2.4 Overall, did you think your unit was adequately prepared to respond to the 2010/2011 floods?

Our Unit as a whole pulled together and made it work with the knowledge they had, plus some. It was good to be supported by Council, EMQ and other SES units.

3. Operations during the 2010/2011 floods

3.1 Please describe the activities undertaken by your unit and/or its groups during the 2010/2011 floods (eg requests for assistance, rescues, evacuations)

22/12/10 Pre-Christmas flood there were door knocks , road closures and one rescue from a tree in the creek, rescued stranded drivers caught on the highway.

27/12/10 Door knocks, road closures, evacuations, sand bagging, helicopter assistance, flood boat evacuations, flood boat food drops to rural areas. We requested for assistance to help our group to cope with the demand. House clean-ups after flood.

10/01/11 Same as above but with less people from other SES groups because of their own floods and our isolation from roads being cut off. Assistance came from local council workers and locals who wanted to help.

4. Command and Control

4.1 Generally speaking, please describe your responsibilities as Local Controller during disaster response operations

Liaise with Disaster Management Centre (DMC). Organise team to handle jobs as required according to urgency.

As the only one with local knowledge in our Unit, and a truck licence, I went out with the visiting SES volunteers in flood boat.

4.2 As a Local Controller, who do you report to during disaster response

Council and EMQ – Toowoomba region

4.3 Where does your SES unit receive Requests for Assistance from?

Through 132500 call centre and DMC

4.4 What is the process of tasking SES members when Requests for Assistance are received by your unit?

As I was a new controller, I had little to no experience in dealing with order of priority. I had on-the-job training during the January events by a Fire Opps trainer who so happened to be stuck in Dalby.

4.5 During the 2010/2011 floods, did your Unit receive any competing Requests for Assistance? If so, how were they managed or prioritised?

In the case of Jan 10 and 12 etc Dalby was cut from all sides so that nobody could come except Jandowae when they weren't dealing with their own flood and 2 from Chinchilla who could not make it home to assist with their own flood.

We at first, had to compete for radio air space with Nanango at Christmas time.

4.6 During the 2010/2011 floods, did your unit receive any Requests for Assistance for Assistance that it was unable to respond to? If so, how were these requests managed?

Yes. We returned the request back to either the DMC who organised alternate means eg. Helicopter.

4.7 Were there any members of your unit deployed to any other region during the 2010/2011 floods? If so, how was this managed?

No – due to lack of training. One member went to assist clean-up in Cairns after Cyclone Yassi.

4.8 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your unit's contact and co-ordination (if any) with the following:

a) Local Disaster Coordinator
Discussed strategies to ease the situation.

b) Local Disaster Coordinator

received jobs to assist

b) Local Disaster Management Group

Discussed strategies to ease the situation. Supported each other.

4.9 a) Came to help local DMC and to see for themselves the support we needed

b) Sometimes rang us directly but we tried to direct them to local DMC to avoid double-ups.

c) as with (a)

4.10 They gave us a lot of support and even sent some of their own to manage where I had no experience.

4.11 Most of my contact was via EMQ, but I rang nearby Jandowae and Cecil Plains if I needed assistance or received information for them or vice versa.

4.12 Sometimes we found jobs were completed by Local Council that we were also sent too which wasted time and resources (double-ups)

4.13 To provide their expertise/knowledge on how to handle disaster situations and to provide resources necessary to achieve a good outcome.

5. Communications

5.1 SES programmed radios and mobile phones

5.2 Same radio bands were being used by other towns on the other side of Bunya Mountains ie. Nanango. Being that the Repeater is on the Bunya Mountains. We had to find another band that was more local but was not our usual frequency.

5.3 Yes

Funding

6.1 State (EMQ) – equipment, donations, grants, local council – equipment /consumables

6.2 State Government subsidy grant

I presented some of our needs to the Council who organised the paperwork and sent it.

6.3 It is usually a decision and vote within our unit as to our needs.

6.4 In your view, is the total amount of funding currently received by your unit adequate? If not, please describe how your unit would benefit from additional funding.

Currently, it is up to the unit to make grants work for themselves. If you don't apply, you don't receive. Better funding could provide for a more workable set up including a much needed shower block. A better location in a non-flood zone would help too.

6.5 Do you think that the way in which funding is allocated and distributed to your unit is adequate? If not, how could it be improved?

Generally speaking, equipment through EMQ and local council is mostly sufficient. Anything else is a bonus and keeps costs low for an already tight budget by the abovementioned.

6.6 Does your unit undertake additional fundraising activities? If so:

a) what types of fundraising activities does your unit undertake?

During our recruitment campaigns, we put out a donations bucket

b) See Question 6.5

c) Does fundraising present any difficulties?

Up until very recently we have not been allowed to fundraise and have not made any great attempts yet, aside from the donations bucket.

7. Other

7.1 Do you have any suggestions as to how the SES can attract and return members, either for your particular unit or at a state-wide level?

As far as State Government relieving employers of payroll tax during a callout – this has no impact on small business because they do not have to pay it anyway. This is not enough incentive to release a volunteer on a callout. There needs to be some kind of incentive for loss of pay to volunteers who work. I asked a passerby at a recruitment drive to join once and his answer was – “No, you don't get paid.”

7.2 Locals in Dalby think only unemployed/unemployable people volunteer in the SES and snobbishly decide it is not worth joining. If you are employed it is hard to get away from work due to lack of compensation for loss of income, not to mention an employers loss of time/jobs not getting done. There also needs to be training available sooner to new recruits so that they can get into the more urgently needed training like flood boat, height safety and land search.

People are more self centred these days, unless there's an urgent disaster. Even then it's hard to get decent help, where people want something in return. (Even if they take it for themselves when nobody's watching).