

Oaths Act 1867

Statutory Declaration

QUEENSLAND
TO WIT

I, [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] Mackay, in the State of Queensland do solemnly and sincerely declare that:-

Questionnaire for SES Local Controllers

The following questionnaire is split into six sections. Each section contains a number of questions asking you to describe the nature of your SES unit/ Groups, and also the nature of response operations conducted by your SES unit/groups during the 2010/2011 floods. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to the Commission by Friday, 14 October 2011.

- 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.**

See attachment A

- 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?**

Nil

- 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.**

Yes,

The modern SES unit has become a mid size organisation.

To function effectively the MRU needs to spend approx 75hrs each week in non operational administration in support of over 250 volunteers.

- 15-25hrs on training needs analysis (TNA), instructor development and Recognised Training Organisation (RTO) compliance
- 10hrs on human resources issues and volunteer development
- 10 hrs on general administration
- 10hrs on logistics (vehicle and small plant) transfer, maintenance and compliance
- 5 hrs on procurement (local and State)
- 5 hrs general meetings
- 2-5hrs on projects

- 2-5 hrs policy and planning
- 2-5 hrs Workplace health and safety
- 2 hrs emails
- 1hr on community education

Not forgetting those many volunteers who assist in the management of the SES at group level, but without the generous support of two particular volunteers who support me at the Unit level, this unit would not enjoy its current membership, equipment readiness or training compliance. It is particularly these types of volunteer who deserve some form of financial compensation in recognition of their important work.

The current rate of compliance enforced on volunteers is rapidly exceeding what we used to consider appropriate. Many volunteers throughout the state now consider the SES their unpaid part time job. Unfortunately they do not stay in the job long once they realise what they have gotten themselves into and sometimes we lose them from the service entirely.

Either we consider part time employment options or we must increase EMQ staff administration levels and place some of the workload back onto the paid staff.

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

No, I believe the amalgamation of the Mackay, Sarina and Mirani Units into the Mackay Regional Unit (MRU) has delivered continuity, stability and cooperation above what was previously experienced. But I also recognise that amalgamation would not suit all areas.

2. Readiness for the 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 it for the 2010/2011 floods?

Yes

2.2 Did your unit have enough volunteers to cope with demand?

The MRU has grown by over 200% in the last 24 months and constantly responds to local events with sufficient numbers.

The MRU is capable of sending 30 volunteers anywhere in the State fully equipped and self directed in under 24 hrs (largely due to its central location) but at any one time this seems to be the best that we can do.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

At a local level, yes.

On the Townsville deployment there was not enough equipment to recondition stores or to replace damaged equipment.

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

Yes

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 (e.g. Requests for Assistance, rescues, evacuations).

Storm Damage Response
Deployments
Flood Boat operations
Flood evacuations
Animal Rescue
Post flood Clean Up

4. Command and Control

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

Assume command of all SES volunteers and resources within my unit and those visiting to assist and deliver a coordinated response in line with the wishes/direction of the LDCC.

- 4.2 **As a Local Controller, who do you report to during disaster response operations?**

Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) via the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC)

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

LDCC, 132500, EMQ email, SES Local HQ phone, SES Duty officer's phones

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

The Incident Management Teams (IMT) Operations Officer disseminates, prioritises and allocates tasks to SES team leaders

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

Nil

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

Trees threatening homes were not able to be removed as SES training does not provide this skill. QLD SES are only trained in level 1 (trim and cross cut felled trees) chainsaw operations. To manage a tree that has not yet settled or damaged a residence requires a higher level of training. The owner is basically told to hire a private contractor before the tree destroys their house. The situation is neither ideal for the resident or the SES volunteer that has to leave that resident in danger.

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

Rockhampton:

- The MRU deployed to Rockhampton on three occasions in January. Twice as flood boat deployments once as Flood Clean up Recovery.

Townsville:

- Deployed on two occasions both for storm damage operations

Cairns:

- Deployed once on Storm damage operations

The requests came directly from EMQ area office

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

a) Local Disaster Coordinator

Nil

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre

Nil

c) Local Disaster Management Group

Nil

On all six deployments the MRU's contact was with the local Incident Management Team's (IMT) assigned to those areas.

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

a) District Disaster Coordinator

Nil

b) District Disaster Coordination Centre

Nil

c) District Disaster Management Group

Nil

4.10 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your contact (if any) with Emergency Management Queensland's Area Directors and/ or Regional Directors?

The only contact with an Area Director was with my own (Mackay) and only to organise deployment administration.

The only contact I had with a Regional Director was a casual conversation in Townsville and then a phone debrief several weeks later on issues affecting that operation.

4.11 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your interactions (if any) with other emergency service organisations?

Rockhampton

- Assist QFRS Swift water rescue personnel with rapid assessment via transportation in SES flood boats
- Transport QPS on regular patrols of government infrastructure (Schools etc) in SES flood boats
- Transport QPS to emergencies in SES Flood Boat

- Transport QPS to Flooded dwellings to advice residents of both voluntary and mandatory evacuations
- Transport QAS and patients with medical emergencies in SES Flood Boat as part of after hour's response
- Transport Ergon Energy Personnel and equipment to work sites via SES flood boat
- Doctors and Nurses from Rockhampton hospital
- Transport Hospital staff to places of work via SES flood boat

Townsville

- Nil

Cairns

- Nil

4.12 During the 2010/2011 floods, were the requirements or expectations of local disaster managers ever in conflict with those of Emergency Management Queensland? If so, how were these various demands resolved (if at all)?

In Townsville it is widely regarded that SES volunteers were used inappropriately (in operation "Restore") to carry out tasks more associated with gardening than a proper emergency response and recovery effort. That is SES volunteers felt the work was unnecessary and invaluable therefore a waste of their time. This work also placed SES volunteers at unnecessary risk.

Even though the Townsville LDMG and EMQ were the architects of this operation, if you consider SES to be a part of EMQ then there was defiantly a conflict between SES and the LDMG.

The only resolution was to wait for EMQ to surrender operational control to the LDMG (contradictory to Legislation) and then for the onsite SES leadership to alter the original plan contrary to the EMQ request in order to provide safer working environment for volunteers.

I have to date heard nothing of the outcome of an apparent investigation into these issues.

4.13 In your view, what is the role of Emergency Management Queensland's Area and Regional Directors during disasters?

To provide resources and advice only and then to allow SES controllers and Incident controllers to carry out their tasks as the officers "in command" of the operation.

5. Communications

5.1 **What type/s of communication devices were available and/or used during the 2010/2011 floods?**

- UHF Radio
- Satellite Phone
- Mobile Phones
- Computers (email)

5.2 **Did any of the communication devices your unit used fail during the 2010/2011 floods? If so, please provide details.**

No

5.3 **Generally speaking, are any of the communication methods your unit uses integrated or inter-operable with other emergency service organisations?**

Yes. SES UHF has the capacity to use common emergency channels but QFRS, QPS and QAS do not use them as it would require these agencies to turn off their parent communications (such as fiercom) in order to use it. If I were them I would not use it either.

6. Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

- Mackay Regional Council
- Emergency Management Queensland
- Grants
- Corporate donors
- Club donors
- Private donors

6.2 Has your unit applied for additional funding from the State Government in the 2009/2010 or 2010/2011 financial years? If so, what was the funding program and did you find the application process easy/ difficult?

The MRU has applied to the SES non recurring subsidy in both years for assistance with building extensions and construction.

6.3 Do you have input into how the funding received by your unit is used?

I am in full consultation with both MRC and EMQ and provide a budget for consideration each year.

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.

The funding support from the MRC is generous compared to other areas. EMQ commits considerable funding for new equipment and uniforms but struggles to supply reasonable training and non capital budgets locally.

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

Although my Area Directed does the best that he can locally I have never been consulted by EMQ prior to being allocated capital equipment (eg Flood Boats) so as to get the equipment that best suits my area and represents best value for money.

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

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

The MRU advertises itself regularly and gets substantial support from the community and business.

b) Approximately what percentage of your operating budget does this account for?

Less than 5%

c) Does fundraising present any difficulties?

Takes up more of volunteers

7. Other

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

The SES has to represent itself as a modern well equipped organisation. The upgrading of SES facilities should be of high priority.

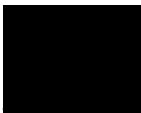
7.2 Please make any other comments you wish about SES operations generally and/or during the 2010/2011 floods.

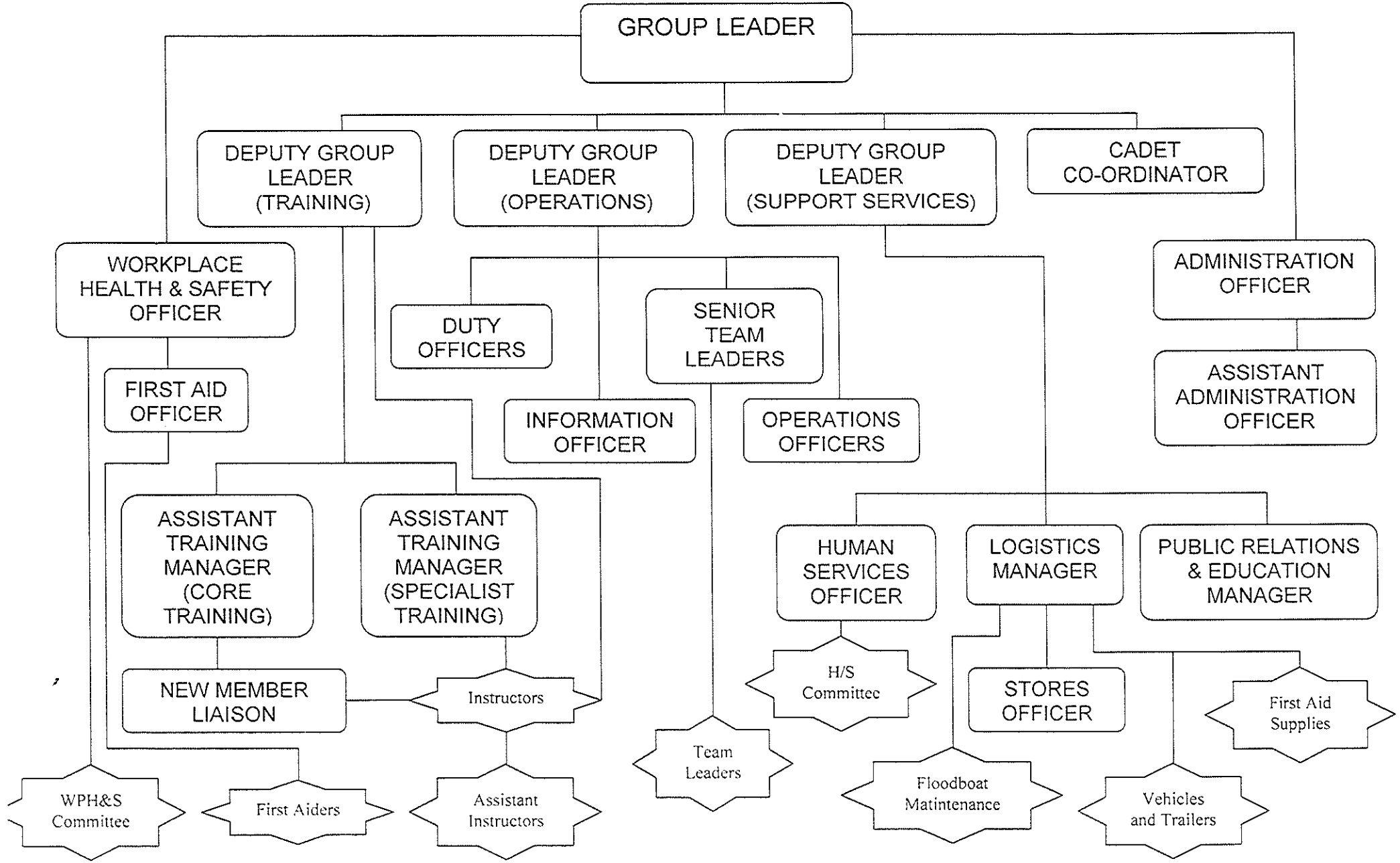
The greatest conflicts in my region and in others during disaster response are the issues regarding some EMQ staff not recognising the role of the Local Controller and the Local Controllers obligations and responsibility to "Command".

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1867.


.....
Declare

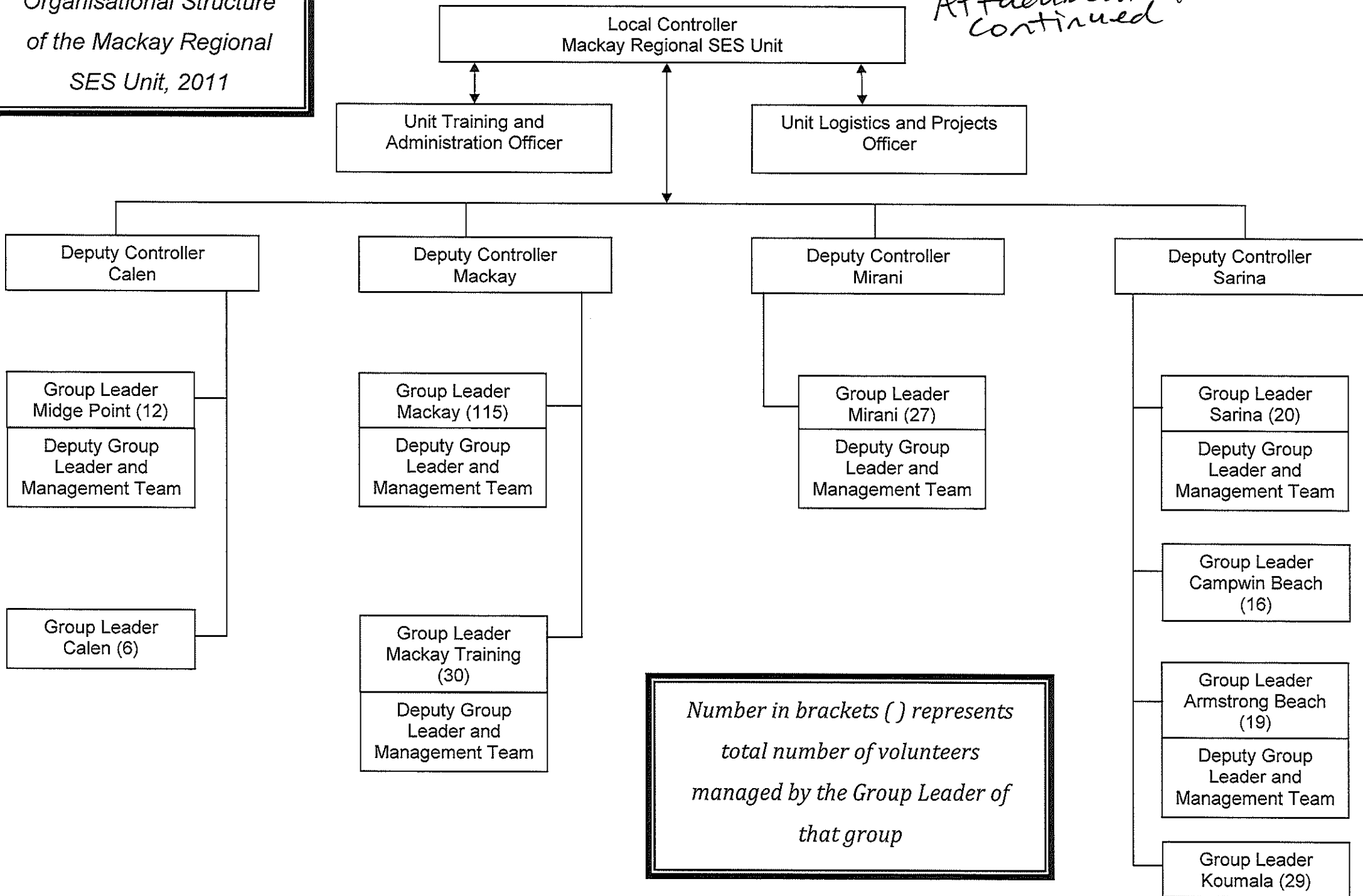
Taken and declared before me at Mackay this fourteenth day of October 2011,
before me.

 J.P. (C. doc.)
.....
Lawyer/Justice of the Peace/
Commissioner for Declarations



*Organisational Structure
of the Mackay Regional
SES Unit, 2011*

*Attachment A
Continued*



*Number in brackets () represents
total number of volunteers
managed by the Group Leader of
that group*