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To: [REDACTED] (Local Controller, Nanango, South Burnett Regional),

You have been identified as a State Emergency Service Local Controller. As such, the Commission is interested in finding out from you more about the nature, role and funding of SES units in Queensland. We are particularly interested in knowing how your SES unit and its various groups operate, and how operations were undertaken during the 2010/2011 floods. This will help us to understand better the arrangements for running the SES in Queensland.

We would appreciate your taking the time to answer the following questions. This should take about 15 minutes. Upon completion, please forward the questionnaire by mail to: Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, GPO Box 178, Brisbane QLD 4001; or by way of email to info@floodcommission.qld.gov.au by **Friday, 14 October 2011**. If you are legally represented, you should forward it to the Commission through your legal representative.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to provide a written response to the Commission, we can arrange to have a Commission investigator ask you these questions over the phone. If you would prefer to respond in this way, please contact [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

The information you provide may be used in the preparation of the Commission's final report, which will be published in February 2012.

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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. 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.

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?

Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry

1. Structure of SES units – please describe the structure of your unit, including the number and location of any constituent groups and the number of member in each group.

- 1.1 Nanango Unit
2 Groups

- Nanango Group - 6 George Street Nanango
15 – 20 members A & B Grade
- Blackbutt Group – 27 Muir Street Blackbutt
1 – 20 members A & B Grade

- 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?

NO

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

- Yes. SES local controller should be paid.
- Yes. SES members should be paid.
- However it should not be full time payment. It should be the same as QFRS Auxiliary Fire & Rescue members
- This will give better commitment by members.
- However there would be the need for attendance at Training, Activations and Deployant.
- There should be a full time Regional SES Controller/ Coordinator; this roll would support SES, Council EMQ and Community groups and other emergency providers.
- Attend community training to assist with (PPRR) Prevention, Preparedness, Response & Recover.

Structure of SES units

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.

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

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?

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

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

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

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

- Yes, there are 3 Local controllers in the South Burnett Regional Council.
- The 3 local controllers have been working as a Region for some 10 years.
- All units/groups work and support each other.
- As an employee of SBRC (Plumbing Inspector) I am used as a liaison officer across the Region.

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.

SES units/groups undertaken regular training however no 2 incidents/disasters are alike, no matter how much training you do you are never really prepared!! As such you must attend every incident with an open mind.

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

- The Nanango unit/groups undertake regular training and are very prepared for incidents. (also combined training)
- The Nanango & Blackbutt groups can average activation per week.
- A new member does tend to become emotional when they attend their first activation and observe the devastation following a server event.
- All members are assessed at the end of an activation/incident by embrace and each other.

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

- There never seems to be enough volunteers/members during an event/follow-up.
- SES was once made up of volunteers that walked in of the street following an incident with minimal qualifications thus permitting them to assist regularly trained SES members.
- Following an incident some would become SES members to lead and assist at the next situation.
- Due to constant changes in the training processes members are required to repeatedly re train.
- New procedures and manuals almost every year along with upgrades of these manuals etc. Replacing of equipment every year requires either refreshment or upgrade training of members.
- Nanango/Blackbutt groups had been on constant rolling activations from 14/10/2010 attending to but not restricted to calls for assistance, sand bagging, chain saw work, tarping, evacuations, assist QAS with creek crossings, deliver food and medical drops etc.
- The training is not the problem it is the constant changes in procedures, reprinting and equipment being replaced yearly because last year's model is not correct or has changed.
- A qualified member with certificates cannot use them because their certificate has reached its "use by date".
- Under the old system you trained and the training stayed as it was year after year and the same with equipment.
- Members are leaving due to constant changes mostly driven by a person or persons in an office.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

- The unit/groups did not have enough equipment to deal with the extended storm season that commenced on 14/10/2010.
- A percentage of our equipment was rendered unusable due to a flood event that inundated our shed in January 2011.
- The flood boat is a tinny with a 30hp outboard motor and it was noted that it was struggling to move through the creeks when assisting QAS and food / medical drops.
- Our computer system is under sized with small home printers. Radios were in short supply with no contact in some areas; even mobile phones had contact problems in the South Burnett area.
- Personal vehicles were used as required to attend incidents around the South Burnett area during the incidents/events.
- The Nanango unit also activated Rural Fire Services to assist in isolated areas where we had QRFS& SES. This gave us access to extra vehicles & personnel.

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

- Yes i feel that the unit/groups were adequately prepared to respond to the 2010/2011 flood & storm events.
- The members were placed on 12 on, 12 off rotations, with all members being stood down between 6pm & 6am.
- Due to limited numbers this was the best process to permit the work to be undertaken and also keep members in a workable state.
- By the end, the unit/groups were well and truly overworked.

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).

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.

- From the first storm on 14/10/2010 the Nanango Unit/Groups responded to such calls as rescues from bogged 4x4 vehicles in creeks and cars driving into flood waters. Flood boat delivered food and medical supplies to stranded people, assist QAS with creek crossings via flood boat, sand bagging, tarping damaged roof structures, chain saw work, height safety, evacuations of members of the public, run evacuation centres, welfare for SES and general public volunteers.
- Members of the Unit/Groups were also deployed around the state as requested by EMQ to assist other areas seeking assistance.

4 Command and control

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

- I call out/notify/activate the relevant SES groups for an incident and approve deployment to other regions.
- I work at I.C.C for relevant incidents, attend incidents and work with QP, QAS, QFRS, QRFS & Council.
- Attend regular LDMG meetings; assist the chair with LDMG arrangements etc.
- Ensure that the Groups undertake regular training thus ensuring that members are able to attend activations as and when required.
- Undertake combined training of SES, QPS, QAS, QFRS, QRFS, Council and other providers for incidents.
- Attend community groups, schools etc to undertake Community Awareness programs, training, preparedness, prevention, response and recovery.
- During an incident, I will contact Council's Works foreman if heavy machinery and or equipment is required to clear or repair Council's infrastructure.

4. Command and control

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

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

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

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

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

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

- During an incident, I report to EMQ duty Officer that the Unit/Group has been activated and then I proceed to work within the ICC at the incident or HQ dependant on the size of the incident.
- On large scale operations, the Council's Disaster Management Officer is contacted and a regular sitrep is maintained. Then a report is tabled at the LDMG meetings during the incident and a debrief is undertaken at the end of the incident.
- At the end of an incident, I will contact the Duty Officer at EMQ and sign off. If it is an extended response, regular sitreps are undertaken to ensure that EMQ is aware of the duration of the incident.
- I will contact the area director if SES support is required from other regions out of the South Burnett.

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

- R.F.A is received on the controller's mobile phone or the Group leader's phone.

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

- Following an R.F.A the relevant Group or Groups are activated.
- They are assigned an area of work, if it is building damage or trees they work in that area going door to door.
- A strike team or teams are set up for urgent response in all areas of devastation. Thus allowing non urgent R.F.A teams to continue and they are not running all over the country side. (at the Gap (Brisbane), I was in the field, within one street, 4 SES teams, all visible to each other, none of the jobs were urgent).

Command and control

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?

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

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

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre

c) Local Disaster Management Group

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

- Yes. However the units/groups have dedicated strike teams that respond to any emergencies.
- During the 2010/2011 floods we had teams that worked in dedicated areas.
- Due to flooding the region was isolated and split into numerous islands. This being the case we also requested the activation of QRFS and created a Combined SES/QRFS teams to assist in all areas of the South Burnett Regional Council.

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

- Yes. This was due to flooded creeks, the client was advised that access was not able to be achieved at this time and would have to wait until access was available. They were contacted on a regular basis to ensure that everything was OK; when possible the work was completed. No RFA was not followed up or attended to.

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

- Yes. They were deployed as requested by EMQ and taken to Kedron for deployment to relevant areas.

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:

Regular Meetings with myself for my unit/groups and liaison for region as required.

b. Local Disaster Coordination Centre

Regular attendance of the Controllers and myself as Liaison Officer.

c. Local Disaster Management Group

Regular attendance

Command and control

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

b) District Disaster Coordination Centre

c) District Disaster Management Group

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?

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

Command and control

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)?

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

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:

At the LDMG

b. District Disaster Coordination Centre:

Via the LDMG or LDC

c. District Disaster Management Group:

Via the LDMG or LDC

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?

- Regular contact via phone and email

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

- Interaction with other emergency service providers was via combined work force, united assistance and response to incidents as required, assisting all organisations.

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)?

- NO

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

- Render assistance as required during an event.

5. Communications

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

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

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

5 Communications

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

- 2 way radios,
- mobile phones,
- emails
- land lines
- sometimes messages taken by car

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

- Yes
- The 2 way radio system has limited coverage in the area and you could not always talk to members in the field.
- Mobile phones also had the same problems. (Optus has better area coverage for the South Burnett than Telstra).

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

- NO
- In a response vehicle we have dedicated radios for SES, QRFS or CB radios.

6. Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

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?

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

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.

6 Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

- Council
- EMQ
- Local fund raising that has to be undertaken on a regular basis by assisting community groups/events and
- Grants

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?

- No
- Have applied for funding via local provider.

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

- Yes

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.

- No
- All older equipment could be replaced on a regular basis. Most of our vehicles are 10 plus year old.
- The shed requires to be shifted to above the flood plan or the HQ and shed be relocated to a new area.

Funding

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?

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

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

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

c) does fundraising present any difficulties?

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?

- No
- Each Regional Council should have in their stores a supply of the necessary Rescue /safety equipment that is not used on a regular basis, but access to this equipment is available to all group/units as required.
- Equipment used on a regular basis should be maintained at each unit/groups storage sheds.
- When an incident occurs, that incident/recovery does not follow a budget. When you attend an incident you have your own safety to consider followed by other emergency providers, the injured person/s, public health and well being and the environment.

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

- a. What types of fundraising activities does your unit undertake?
Community Support by receiving donations from these groups.
Applications to Jupiter's Fund – gaming etc.
- b. Approximately what percentage of your operating budget does this account for?
30% - this is used to purchase equipment that EMQ and Council does /will not supply.
- c. Does fundraising present any difficulties?
Yes
It ties up members and equipment as far as emergency response goes.
Members do get sick and tired of fundraising

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?

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

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

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?

- If a person attends an SES unit/group to join, they should be assessed on relevant qualifications or RPL accordingly.
- Constant yearly changes of requirements and equipment needs to be addressed.
- Why are a large percentage of current ranking EMQ leaders (ex ADF) not duly trained in SES, yet qualified SES members, that have come up through the ranks, are not used?
- Each time we get a new director for SES, all training and accreditations are changed, WHY?
- SES has earned its place since the floods of 1974. Regular members should be trained to lead members of the general public during a large scale event. This would give an ordered control of mass volunteers that turn out following a massive disaster.
- When there is an event that can be undertaken by the regular members from a unit/group or combination of several units/groups, they maintain their competencies by attending these activities and by regular training nights.
- There should be a restriction of weekends that are taken up with training as this also turns volunteers away.
- There is a restriction on the number of qualified members for each discipline in a group/unit (agreement between EMQ & Council). This means that a group/unit can have a maximum of 5 members as per agreement and have other members that cannot become qualified in a said discipline until one of the others either leaves, retires or all groups have achieved their agreed numbers in that said discipline.
- The old training manual kept SES in good stead from 1974. Now we are changing the training almost yearly but between changes we revert back to the old manual.

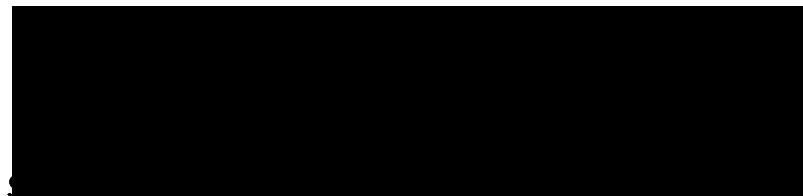
7.2 Please make any other comments you wish about SES operations generally and/or during the 2010/2011 floods.

- If there is an incident of any sort there should only be one incident Control Centre, one incident Controller at the incident ICC or field. With ICC deciding the requirements of the incident.

I have attended several large scale incidents (Larry). There were 6 ICC running this event, (The Gap) also had several ICC running the event. That is why jobs were being doubled up. Crews' going out finding jobs has already been completed.

During the storm flood events SBRC had one Command point, one DDC and one liaison officer for each emergency provider group.

There was no double up of any RFA in the SBRC area.



Signed..... Dated: 10 October 2011



SES Controller
South Burnett Regional Council