

## 1. Structure of SES Units

- 1.1 Warwick Unit, one of three units in the Southern Downs Regional Council area. The other units are Stanthorpe and Wallangarra. Warwick unit has a Local Controller, a Deputy Controller, and one Group Leader. We have requested the appointment of a second Group Leader. We currently have 38 members, but this number varies in experience and the numbers fluctuate depending on the personal commitments of members over time.
- 1.2 No members of this unit are paid.
- 1.3 No, the workload is too irregular to warrant a full-time paid position. Also, as SES members are volunteers who regularly attend training on nights and week-ends, any full-time position would need irregular work hours based on the availability of the members. SES members could be rewarded for their time by incentives such as tax concessions/incentives, or a contribution direct into the member's superannuation, or for pensioners some concession based on their pension payments. Consideration should be given to some payment for Instructors/trainers. For SES members who are deployed out of their own area eg Cyclone Yasi, then payment should be made to supplement/replace wages. Just being given 'incidental' money is an insult.
- 1.4 There are two Local Controllers in our local government area. I am the Local Controller for Warwick unit and there is a Local Controller for the Stanthorpe and Wallangarra Units. This is a benefit as we can call the other Local Controller for support either for Controller duties, personnel, equipment etc

## 2. Readiness for the 2010/2011 floods

2.1 Yes, we had enough training, however experience in these situations can only be gained in the real event. For example, we came out of a massive drought where it was impossible to practice floodboat activities, and were hit with a massive flood. So many members had qualifications for flood boat but no experience in real flood water. Other than this floodboat issue, I believe that Warwick unit was well prepared as we trained for such an event. Prior to the floods we actually conducted briefing nights, scenarios, and our regular monthly training in all fields of SES skills.

2.2 We believe that we did have enough volunteers, however we did use the resources of Council and community members to perform tasks that did not require specific SES skills eg filling sandbags and delivering them to the locations where they were needed.

2.3 We ran out of sandbags but EMQ in Toowoomba re-supplied these on request – as soon as they were able to access Warwick.

We have identified the need for a quad bike as we can use this to get more easily around blocked traffic, manoeuvre floodboats etc, but more specifically we can load it on to our boat and use it for transport once we get across the flood water.

Flashing blue and red lights would make it easier to get through traffic for emergencies. Currently the public ignore our vehicles and this slows down our responses to emergency situation – often they are get sticky-beaking.

2.4 Yes, because of Exercise Orko and the on-going training and information sessions that we provided for members. We heeded the warnings of the Weather Bureau and local knowledge and focussed our training towards the end of the year towards a flood event.

### 3. Operations during the 2010/2011 floods

#### 3.1

- Public notification (including a notice board)
- Communications
- Welfare
- Assistance with evacuation centres
- Rescues
- Evacuation from homes
- Medivacs (in conjunction with QAS)
- Food/medical supplies
- Liaison with media
- Liaison with Disaster Committee
- Liaison with local recovery agencies
- Sandbagging
- Responding to police requests to remove swimmers/canoists etc from water
- RFAs on-line
- Flood height readings (local flood gauges failed)
- Removal of flood debris
- Doorknocking to ascertain needs of flood victims

### 4. Command and Control

#### 4.1

- Liaise with DDC
- Call-out of members
- Regular briefings to members from DDC
- Media commitments
- General over-sighting of whole SES operation
- Arrange door knocks etc
- Liaison with local recovery group
- Fatigue management
- Liaison with EMQ

4.2 I report to EMQ in Toowoomba, the local council through Directors and Mayor, DDC.

#### 4.3

- Electronically from 132500
- Mostly by direct phone calls to our SES HQ
- Walk-ins (people coming to our HQ)

- Council
- Other emergency services
- DDC

#### 4.4

- The task is prioritised primarily based on safety to people first, pets and property after
- We had established teams with members who had the range of skills required
- We had listed all teams on a whiteboard with their locations
- Assign the task to an appropriate team
- Tasks assigned to each team were re-prioritised as required

#### 4.5

- We prioritised based on the most urgent need as per previous question.

#### 4.6

Yes, we did. Dependent on the situation we referred these through the DDC for assistance from eg helicopter rescue, Rural Fires. There were places we couldn't access due to many flooded roads. Members of the community or council staff also assisted with some tasks that did not require specific skills.

4.7 Members were deployed to Dalby, St George and Goondiwindi. This was while there was no local flooding. This was managed through EMQ in Toowoomba. We already have a register of members who are qualified and prepared to deploy to other areas. EMQ advise that they are assembling a task force. Available members advise of their availability. A taskforce is selected by EMQ. EMQ make all arrangements for transport etc.

#### 4.8

- Regular meetings and ad hoc communication with Local Disaster Co-ordinator
- Regular meetings and phone calls.
- I am a member and attended all meetings

#### 4.9

The DDC was not activated.

#### 4.10

Regular phone contact. They also came to Warwick and assisted with the DDC. On request they re-supplied us with sandbags and organised repairs to our communications gear. They contacted us to help re-supply Stanthorpe. Even at the height of the

Toowoomba floods, they maintained contact with us. They supplied weather alerts etc. They monitored our on-line RFAs to make sure we didn't miss any of them.

#### 4.11

Liaison through DDC.

Direct contact depending on the situation eg police – helping to remove people from flood waters, QAS – assist with medivacs, Rural Fires – assist in areas where SES was not able to get due to flood waters.

#### 4.12

I can only comment from my own point of view.

EMQ did not make any specific demands on us at this time. They allowed us to manage our own event and were available for support as we needed it.

#### 4.13

- Provide direction to Disaster Committee re structure of meetings etc
- Help with re-supplies
- If further assistance is required, co-ordinate it for us (on request)
- Provide advice

## 5 Communications

### 5.1

- SES UHF radios
- SES repeater
- HF radio
- Mobile phones
- Landlines
- Emails

### 5.2

Yes, a vehicle UHF failed. EMQ arranged technicians to come and repair it immediately (fantastic service)

### 5.3

Yes, we can talk to the police on their UHF but we need to be invited to do so. The police are able to come onto our frequency. Phone calls are effective.

## 6 Funding

### 6.1

- A small amount from the state government, however they do provide a lot of our equipment
- Southern Downs Regional Council provide the bulk of our funding

### 6.2 No

### 6.3

The local SES Unit has total control of their budget.

### 6.4

Thanks to the local Council we are adequately funded.

### 6.5

Yes, we are satisfied with our funding allocation.

### 6.6

- a) We have applied for and received grants on an ad hoc basis.
- b) This is not a regular source of funding, so is not a specific percentage.
- c) The local (council) Corporate Governance Office assists with the grant applications.

## 7. Other

### 7.1

#### Attract

- Target recruitment works in small communities like Warwick. We approach people who may be suitable members.
- We have open nights once a year where interested people can come and see what/where we are and talk to members.
- Local newspaper supports us eg for recruitment drives and to report our activities

#### Retain

- Qualifications acquired through SES should be industry standard so will be recognised for work purposes.
- Qualifications (from outside SES) held by members should be recognised more readily by SES (from the trainer's point of view, it is easier to teach a course than to go through the RPL process). There should be a list of nationally accredited training that automatically RPLs against SES courses.
- More funding should be available (for example floodboat training in tidal rivers) so that training and exercises can be held more often
- It is hard to keep members interested in between actual operations, so more exercises are needed.

## 7.2

There seems to be a focus on identifying what went wrong in the floods without asking how these issues were successfully handled in other areas.

Again, nothing is like the real thing, so it is difficult to train for flood boat activities until you have the real thing. The closest we can do is ask for funding to get to coastal areas to train in tides.

Professional trainers should be employed to support the instructors in the units. Instructors in this unit are required to travel and assist other units who do not have suitably qualified instructors. This is a huge burden on volunteers.

SES Queensland is a poor cousin to NSW and Victoria – funding, equipment.