

Commissioner Justice C E Holmes
Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry
GPO Box 1738
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Commissioner Holmes

**RE: Requirement to provide information to the Flood Commission Enquiry
Your ref Doc 1735308.**

1. Structure of State Emergency Service Units

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

There are eight Groups that constitute the Bundaberg State Emergency Service Unit. Bundaberg Group which is also the Head Quarters for the eight groups is located in Bundaberg. It has approximately 100 members at June 2011.

The other seven Groups are located at:

- Yandaran, approximately 14 members.
- South Kolan, approximately 15 members.
- Moore Park Beach, approximately 19 members.
- Burnett Heads Group, approximately 40 members.
- Bargara Group, approximately 27 members.
- Elliott Heads Group, approximately 17 members and
- Innes Park Group, approximately 7 members.

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.

I am the Local Controller and I am the only member in the Bundaberg Unit paid on a full time basis.

1.3 Do you believe there is a need for State Emergency Service 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 State Emergency Service members could be rewarded for their time.

I believe there is a need for some Local Controllers to be paid on a full time basis, especially in the larger Units because the administrative workload is too great for a volunteer position. There are several other people in the Bundaberg Unit that work several full days every week. I estimate they would contribute about 20 - 30 hours each per week. Our tasks have become more complex and time consuming, this Unit is run like a professional business, it is not for profit but it still has all the requirements of any other business or emergency service. Perhaps a small annual allowance could be used to reward members.

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

There are three other Groups or Units in the Bundaberg Local Government area. Our structure has remained as it was prior to Amalgamation. It has little effect

on our operations and I believe we have good lines of communication with those Units and Groups.

2. Readiness for the 2010 / 2011 floods

2.1 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.

Yes we were well trained in most areas. RFA (Request For Assistance) Online training was incomplete at the beginning of the flood event. The training was conducted in August 2009, assessed in February, (only one was deemed competent) we were reassessed in December 2010 and I was given access to RFA Online just before Christmas and the other trainees were slowly given access during the flood period.

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

At the peak of the floods and evacuations additional volunteers were brought in from other areas. Locally our numbers were sufficient but numbers of trained personnel like flood boat operators were not sufficient. Some of our members were affected by the floods and others were away because of annual leave, school holidays and health issues.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

UHF radios were in short supply and we only have 4 radios for a large Unit, which is still the current position. Most of our radios were removed around November 2010 By the Regional Communications Unit who claimed ownership of the radios. These radios have not been returned or replaced. We did have the loan of the Regional kit which has additional radios.

Local Government kept us supplied with sand and we were able to get additional resources like sandbags overnight. Gum boots were in short supply and are not supplied by Emergency Management Queensland.

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

As prepared as we could be, not knowing how large the event was going to be. I started to prepare for this event around December 13 stocking up on gum boots, making sure supplies of sand, tarps and other equipment was available at each Group.

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).

As with any heavy rainfall we started responding to the normal requests for leaking roofs, sandbagging etc. It progressed when Pine Creek and Sandy Hook were isolated and we commenced regular flood boat resupply operations at Pine Creek and later at Sandy Hook. There were requests for sandbagging and we coped with these but it was very demanding on our manpower. Many business

and individuals collected their own sand bags and filled them from our supplies of sand and performed their own operations.

As the requests for rescue and evacuation came in these took priority over other tasks.

There were requests for medical resupply, which were out of our State Emergency Service area and we referred them through the appropriate channels e.g. The District Office.

One of our flood boat crews rescued a person from the Burnett River.

Our volunteers assisted Council with delivery of evacuation messages.

We were also a point of contact for many residents, Pine Creek, Sandy Hook and others contacted us regularly for updates and in particular information on river heights, forecasts and road closures were very important to the community.

4. Command and Control

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

My role changes during a disaster. Initially I receive the requests for assistance, prioritize them and pass them to the respective Group Leader. At the commencement of events I perform the role of the incident Controller, Planning and Logistics sections. As the event escalates more people are brought in to take over those tasks. I am relieved by my Deputy Controller as required.

I make decisions in accordance with Emergency Management Queensland or Local Government requirements.

My role is Primarily command and coordination for the eight Groups in my span of control. If there is equipment needed I obtain it from the most appropriate source.

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

I report in two distinct areas, in most operations I report to firstly to Emergency Management Queensland and then to Local Government. If the matter is about finance or Local Government assets I report to Local Government and if necessary to Emergency Management Queensland. If a Local Government Disaster Coordination Centre is operating I would report to that group as well as the Local Government Disaster Management Group.

4.3 Where does your State Emergency Service unit receive Requests for Assistance from?

We receive requests for assistance from the 132500 State Coordination Centre. We also respond to requests that come to us directly from the public. Some of these may be received by phone or people walk in off the street.

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

Initially I determine the Group best suited to respond to the request and then contact the Group Leader, with the task, usually by phone. If that Group is not available I pass the job to the next Group, we have agreed support arrangement in place for each group.

Apart from members availability we look at fatigue management, the members skills and ability to form a team. e.g. we need 2 trained coxswains to form a flood boat rescue team. There are 4 trained Height Safety members required for a Roof task.

The team or members are briefed on the task they are undertaking using the SMEAC (Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration, command and communications) method.

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

If by competing, meaning competing for time. The tasks were prioritised according to the nature of the threat. i.e.

- Life before property.

E.g. sandbagging operations were stopped completely when people needed evacuation. Although we still maintained supplies of sand and bags, people could still help them selves to these resources.

At times we were receiving requests from the 132500 call centre by phone and Emergency Management Queensland was entering the same request into RFA Online from locations at the Sunshine Coast or Maryborough. Emergency Management Queensland tried to have the calls stopped from the 132500 centre because they were causing duplication. The calls did not stop at that time and I received the RFA via email and manually matched it to the calls I received by phone to eliminate the duplicated requests.

These arrangements have been rectified and the calls are now handled by the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

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

We try to find an alternative way to assist or refer it to a different agency if appropriate. There was one request for evacuation that we could not perform because we could not access the area by road or water. The task was referred to the AGL Helicopter via the Queensland Ambulance Service.

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

Our members were deployed to the Lockyer Valley and Brisbane floods and a short time later our members were deployed to assist with Cyclone Yasi.

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
We were in contact with the LDC daily.
- b) Local Disaster Coordination centre.

Our Emergency Operations Centre was in contact several times a day. Communication was excellent and as required.

c) Local Disaster Coordination Group.

I was in contact with the Local Disaster Coordinator at least daily. When meetings were held I attended the majority of meetings, when I could not the LDC advised me of relevant State Emergency Service matters.

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

Inspector [REDACTED] representing the DDC and I were in contact almost daily during the floods. Until the evacuations were well under way and I was relieved by Emergency Management Queensland staff. I understand that Emergency Management Queensland Staff instructed our members that they would communicate with the DDC.

b) District Disaster Coordination Centre

As above. Also relevant information was conveyed by the LGDMG and LDC to the DDC..

c) District Disaster Management Group.

The DDMG held combined meetings with the LGDM Group and I attended those as advised.

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

Our contact was mostly by telephone or email at least up until the evacuations started and Emergency Management Queensland personnel arrived in Bundaberg.

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

We provided support to other services as requested. I am aware that there may have been some communication issues when Emergency Management Queensland took over our communications.

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

I'm not aware of conflict between local government disaster managers. When I was on a break and Emergency Management Queensland staff were in Bundaberg I believe the process was poorly handled and some communication was lost. To date these matters have not been resolved.

4.13 In your view, what is the role of Emergency Management Queensland Area and Regional Directors.

- Support and coordination to State Emergency Service Units and Groups.
- Supply and resupply coordination.
- Operational advice.
- Liaison with other groups to coordinate support requests.
- Administrative support.

5. Communications

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

- UHF radio
- Mobile phones
- Email
- Fax
- Satellite phone was available if required
- UHF Channel 34 was available if required

5.2 Did any devices fail during the 2010/2011 floods

Not to my knowledge.

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

Yes, Disaster managers in Bundaberg have Channel 34. In addition our radios are able to communicate with Police and QFRS. Our radios cannot communicate with the QAS.

6. Funding.

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

The Bundaberg Regional Council provides about 97% of our operational funding. We also receive some grants and donations.

6.2 Has the 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.

We did not apply for any additional funding.

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

Yes, I have financial responsibility for expending the funds in consultation with my supervisor. I have regular meetings with my employer to determine our future 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.

Generally our budget is sufficient for our operational and day to day needs. Due to budgetary restraints caused by the formation of Bundaberg Regional Council some of our capital works projects have been delayed.

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.

As previously stated due to restraints from BRC some of our capital works have been delayed to later years.

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

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

The unit receives donations for parking management at community events like Bundy Thunder.

b) What percentage of your operating budget this account for?

Nil, these funds are not used for operational purposes.

c) Does fundraising present any difficulties?

We do perform some of these fundraising activities as public relations and promotion. An issue we have discovered is that some existing and potential new members are of the view that they joined to assist the community and fund raising should not be a function of the State Emergency Service.

7. Other

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

- Changes occur and we have to move with them, but members need to be valued, not discarded to make room for change.
- Promote professionalism and encourage existing members, word of mouth is our biggest asset.
- Support the executive and members generally.
- Redevelop the partnership with Emergency Management Queensland, Local Government and the local community.

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

Nil comment.



Local Controller
Bundaberg State Emergency Service

