

To: [REDACTED] (Local Controller, Bauhinia, Central Highlands 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](mailto: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]@floodcommission.qld.gov.au.

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.

#### Executive positions

- Central Highlands Regional Local Controller (Position filled)
- Central/Northern Region Deputy Local Controller (position filled)
- Eastern Region Deputy Local Controller (position filled)
- Southern Region Deputy Local Controller (position vacant)
- Group leader Blackwater (acting position)
- Group Leader Capella (acting position)
- Group Leader Duringa (position vacant)
- Group Leader Emerald (position filled)
- Group Leader Gemfields (position filled)
- Group Leader Springsure (position filled)
- SES Coordinator Rolleston ESU (position filled)

#### SES volunteer numbers as at 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011

- Blackwater - 45
- Capella – 7
- Duringa - 8
- Emerald - 52

- Gemfields - 18
- Springsure - 9
- Rolleston – 21

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 paid staff.

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, due the size of the area now covered in the new amalgamated structure over 60.000 square kilometers and the demands on accurate records, asset, fleet and facilities management , plus the management of training, operations and WH&S issues.

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

A new structure was implemented in November 2010 just prior to the 2010/11 flood events. This was a positive move, although there are some teething problems with a new structure formed and then extensive operations within days of it's implementation.

## 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?

Training is always an issue, although SES in the Central Highlands has had some training, how much is enough, EMQ provide some training, the Local Groups fund much of the localised training out of fundraising and supported with funding from Central Highlands Regional Council.

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

No, volunteers for throughout Queensland and NSW where deployed in to assist.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

No,

- Easy use sandbagging equipment is needed with over 25.000 sandbags filled by hand.
- Vehicles are an issue, with the current fleet of vehicles 50% are over 7 years with three 10+ years, CHRC applied for funding to replace one vehicle last year through the SES non recurrent subsidy scheme but unsuccessful with only 1/3 requested from State and CHRC budgeting for the remainder. Also under the new structure the Local Controller has no allocated vehicle and the 4WD Emerald SES vehicle 15years +.
- Also Central Highlands needs a low draft smaller flood operations Floodboat such as a Aurora IRB inflatable rescue boat for town operations as the current Floodboat's are not suitable.
- There is also a need to have appropriate washing/drying facilities situated at the SES facility to wash/dry SES uniforms as members are issued with two uniforms but worked in flood waters for many days, in many cases having to put on soiled damp uniforms.

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

Yes, as best a unit of this size can be but appropriate equipment and enhanced training would have certainly placed the Central highlands SES in a better position.

### **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).

1. Floodboat operations
2. General Rescue/Recovery operations
3. Rescue helicopter refueling
4. Incident management teams (SES HQ and Local Disaster Coordination Centre)
5. Communications
6. Resupply
7. Agency assistance (QPS with evacuations)
8. Traffic Control

## Command and control

### 4. Command and control

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

The Local Controller was positioned in the Local Disaster Coordination Centre providing a critical link from the centre to the SES and providing advice on prioritising request for assistance. The local Controller was also a critical link to the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and the LDMG attending all LDMG meetings and providing updates.

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

The Local Disaster Coordinator

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

Through SES 132 500 referrals into the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and then from the Local Disaster Coordination Centre through Guardian software to the SES liaison officer and then either emailed, faxed or hand delivered.

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

When a request comes in it is put into the Guardian System and prioritized then the jobs given to SES members.

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

Yes,

The jobs were prioritised by what was most 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?

No

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, Members with flood boat experience were asked to Volunteer to be deployed to Rolleston.

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

Continuous

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre

Continuous

c) Local Disaster Management Group

Continuous

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



**Command and control**

**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?

Very limited, most contact was through the EMQ Central Region Disaster Management Officer.

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

Strong links were established through the Local Disaster Coordination Centre and on the ground with all responding agencies, in particular the QPS.

**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)?

Yes, but I am unable to provide information on how solutions were achieved.

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

This event very limited, advice was through the EMQ Central Region Disaster Management Officer, SES did not have any contact with either the Area Director or the Regional Director

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

- Radios,
- Mobile Phones,
- Land Lines,
- Fax,
- Email through data cards (Mobile)
- Satellite phones – very limited (Not working at the time, new phone ordered by CHRC for Emerald SES).

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

Some issues with Land lines and Mobile devices.

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

No,

## 6. Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

### Operational Funding

- Operational funding is allocated through Central Highlands Regional Council, for the year 2010/11 council provided operations funds of \$73.124.00

- Council has also waved over \$100.000 in rates and charges for the period 2010/11

### Capital Works:

- Rolleston Emergency Services Unit (ESU) new facility \$468,529.76 to date 20/09/2011, project near completion. \$270,000 State funded, remainder by Central Highlands Regional Council.
- Gemfields SES new facility \$65,801.72 expended to date 20/09/2011, project due for completion end 2011. Total estimated cost \$172,700. \$20,605 SES non recurrent funding, \$152,095 funded by Central Highlands Regional Council.
- Upgrade to Emerald SES facility (Sewerage system) \$26,500 funded by Central Highlands Regional Council.
- Blackwater design work and soil tests for proposed new SES facility, \$70,000 funded by Central Highlands Regional Council.

### **SES Unit/Group Fundraising**

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?

Yes, SES/CHRC have applied a number of times for grants/subsidies with very limited success.

- Vehicles – need access to upgrade fleet,
- Facilities upgrades some success in Capella, Springsure and Gemfields, no success in works required for the Emerald facility, kitchen upgrade, toilet/shower facility upgrade both unsuccessful, with the SES Group paying for the kitchen upgrade \$15,000 and CHRC funding the sewerage upgrade \$26,500

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.

- Appropriate funding levels will allow for facilities that meet current

WH&S standards, and the volunteers can be proud to work out of.

- This is also the case with particularly fleet, many of the vehicles have significant age and condition, this is of considerable concern to us with regards reliability in emergency situations.
- By funding levels being at a level to meet current and future needs this would reduce the time currently spent fundraising and allow for volunteers to concentrate on essential training.

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 CHRC provide substantial budget allocation for operational expenses, fleet management, equipment and facilities management, the council struggles to adequately fund fleet upgrades and facilities upgrades. There needs to be an increased funding allocation from State for fleet and capital works, that's if you can get it at all. Currently \$50,000 max for facilities is unrealistic with appropriate new facilities costing from \$250,000 upwards, this leaves an unrealistic residual for council to meet. This also applies to the current vehicle subsidy at \$15,000 if you can get it.

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

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

The CHRC SES holds Auction nights, also do car parking & help out at different community events. We have also raised \$10,000 towards a new Flood Boat Rib for use in restricted areas around town.

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

- \$15,000 Upgrading Emerald Units kitchen,
- \$5,000 Shed extension Emerald

- \$5,000 Training

c) does fundraising present any difficulties?

Yes, the time spent fundraising would be better utilised for training.

## 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?

- Better modern facilities
- Up to date equipment
- Enhanced training opportunities locally
- Possibly things like private vehicle registration discounts as an incentive to attract and retain members, or similar.

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*