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To: [REDACTED] (Local Controller, Hervey Bay, Fraser Coast 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 Conor McGarrity 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.

The Hervey Bay Unit comprises of 3 groups

Hervey Bay - Howard & Burrum Heads.

We also cover Fraser Island.

At the beginning of the year -

Hervey Bay had approx - 40 active members

Howard - 16 active members

Burrum Heads - 6 active members

Not all of these people were available for call outs. A large number were away on holidays

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? Not sure if you mean with EMQ or work in general.

No one is employed by EMQ or local Govt  
Hervey Bay

27 members - retired or unemployed.

9 members work full time

4 members work part time

Howard

12 members work full time

4 members - retired or unemployed

Burrum Heads

3 members work full time

3 members - retired

## 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.

Absolutely - the number of hours that are required to run the unit successfully far exceeds the expectations a volunteer should be asked to do.

Plus the hours of work done at home & being on call 24/7 puts a lot of strain on other members of the family. If the LC was paid the long hours might be acceptable by the spouses. The LC would then feel appreciated & not used. (Payment could be in proportion to the size of the unit.

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

None

I have a good working relationship with the LC of Maryborough.

## 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?

No - local Govt & EMQ have an agreement of how many members we should have trained in each function & it is grossly under numbered, so that EMQ don't have to provide us with essential training - thus saving them money. This in turn, turns volunteers away.

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

No. A number of members were away on holidays & because we are only allowed a certain number of trained personnel in each function, those with the qualifications had to work long hours - instead of doing it in shifts eg (Floodboat operators).

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

Generally yes. except we need more vehicles to put more teams in the field & more radios for communications.  
A sandbag filter would have been handy.  
+ A couple of pumps.

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

As we were not in the front line of the disaster and our assistance was mainly after the event. We only had minor flooding.  
However if a cyclone were to hit this area then we would not be adequately prepared.  
Especially if we had to evacuate the city.

### 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). Our area only had minor flooding. When the roads were open we assisted Maryborough SES with our flood boats on the Mary R. Later we sent members to Grantham for handsearch & teams went up to north of rd for clean up duties
- Task completed by our members were -
- Request for Assistance - Work in EOC
  - Comms
  - Welfare
  - Sand bagging
  - Roof tarping
  - hand search
  - Chainsaw operators
  - Flood boat operators

#### 4. Command and control

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

Receive the notice from the Area Director to be put on Standby. Open HQ & set up Operation Center & put teams in place to receive RFAs & organise crews & welfare.

Usually I have already received several RFA's before reaching HQ - then oversee the entire operation & delegate.

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

At the beginning of the year it was the North Coast Region Duty officer.

Now it is the 'watch desk'

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

132 500

Police

local calls

Neighbours from jobs that we are attending

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

If it has been pre arranged then multi texting instead of a pager is used.

If not pre arranged then members are phoned by myself or the deputy to see who is available for callouts. When they arrive at HQ they are put into teams & allocated tasks as per suburb.

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

Not sure what you mean by this ?

## 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?

We were asked many times for pumps. As we do not have any we referred these callers to the Rural Fire 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?

Yes - 16 Members - 5 members were deployed twice. Those who went south - travelled by bus & those who went north, flew. Early deployments were not organised all that well. Once a system was in place the teams reported better structure in the deployment.

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

Ph call if I needed anything

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre

Nil

c) Local Disaster Management Group

Nil

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

*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?

*EMQ - AD - Notified me that teams were required for deployments - & arrangements made.*

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

*NIL*



## 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)?

There was a lack of 'road closed' signs for flooded roads in our area and Not enough info regarding flooded roads provided for emergency services. I was not aware of any conflict.

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

Provide updated information to all the units in their area & make sure they have all of the resources they require. Be there to advise guide & support the local controllers.

## 5. Communications

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

Telephones  
Computers  
Radios  
TV

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

Yes - our radios are old & don't hold their charge & we don't have enough of them. Private mobile phones were often used. Some got wet & were no longer usable. It was very time consuming trying to get them replaced.

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

No & we should have the GRTN system that South Australia SES has so that if needed we could communicate with other services & them with us if needed.

The State Gov need to spend more money on the SES & bring them into line with the rest of Aus

## 6. Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

Local Govt - Minimal  
SES Support Group has to fund raise to provide food & purchase the equipment that EMQ & local Govt won't provide.

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?

I believe that the local Govt tried for funding for extra vehicles for us.

I personally find the application process very difficult - I don't believe we are here to do this. Everything we need to do our job should just be provided.

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

Yes - if funds are raised by our support group local Govt budget never meets our running costs & I have no say in the matter.

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 - there is no room for improvement or preparation for the future - To upgrade or even maintain a high standard of resources & equipment. Our tiny budget is usually consumed by February each <sup>year</sup> ~~year~~. I sometimes use my own money for essentials.

11/13

THIS SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK !

## 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?

The SES should be run by the SOS as it is in other states. It should be run like a business & not like a small child receiving pocket money.

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

YES

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

Mainly community support for  
Retail & Mens & FCR  
(Parking Cars - Delivering Xmas cakes etc)

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

20%

c) does fundraising present any difficulties?

Yes - Volunteers get burnt out as it is just before our busy season (Storm damage) Xmas that we are required to

It's always the same few people.  
A lot of people who join SES want to serve the community - not fundraise

## 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?

Don't restrict the number of people able to hold qualifications. If they want to volunteer their time they should be able to be trained in what ever their interests are & not held back. A member who is multi-skilled is very valuable when being deployed.

A SES with modern vehicles and HQ buildings that don't look rundown would attract members & make the volunteers proud to go there.

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

The State Gov needs to take over running the SES the same as in other states. Units to be responsible for their own budgets & funds (within limits) - monthly reports sent off to AD to keep it all accountable. Do away with local Govt involvement as some councils look after their units better than others & some not at all (this avoids the problem of personal conflicts).

The State Gov to inject more funds to upgrade all of the agency fleet of vehicles & make more available as per the No of members per unit.  
INTRODUCE a SES Levy !!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire