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IN DRM

To: [REDACTED] (Local Controller, Eidsvold, North 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 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 Eidsvold unit is based in the Eidsvold township with the located in Hodgkinson St. The unit has 15 members incl myself, although two members have not regularly attended training in the last 12 mths. Eidsvold is one of six communities within the North Burnett Regional Council area. All six communities have an active SES unit albeit with various numbers.

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?

Six of the 15 are full time employed in daytime employment, two have retired but contribute to the community in a volunteer capacity. The other 7 are either unemployed or on some form of pension. The SES does not discriminate on members with disability but considers the nature of the disability in respect to training activities and operations. The only position held in this unit is myself as local Controller and I ^{2/13} am employed full time at the Eidsvold State School.

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.

My members have stated that payment is not why they are volunteers in the SES. An attendance allowance similar to what the auxiliary fire service receives would help to defray personal costs and compensate for being available for call out at any time.

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

Prior to council amalgamation, there was only one SES unit in each community (shires) of the six communities that make up the North Burnett Regional Council. Each SES unit has retained their autonomous relationship and each unit has maintained their area of operation based on the old shire boundaries. Each unit contributes to training activities and operations in other SES unit area of operations on request or as the situation determines. For example, if an SES unit is unable to activate/respond to a situation because of flooded roads, then the neighbouring unit is requested to attend by the unit that receives the request for assistance.

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?

In retrospect, no. A number of my members were located away on leave and the small number that I had available were at various stages of the training program. Most tasks were floodboat related and I only had one floodboat trained member. 10 months on and I am still waiting to get additional floodboat operators trained.

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

No. I relied on the ~~same~~ 3 or 4 members to respond to the requests for assistance. I was fortunate that each operation was not for a protracted period, so fatigue was not an issue for the same work crew.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

No. I am still waiting for additional traffic control, safety at heights equipment. One of my safety at heights kits was not returned after cyclone Larry and I still wait for the replacement.

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

No. We have had no experience of flooding ~~to~~ like the 2010/11 floods. Our perceptions of capability and readiness have been severely tested. We are better prepared now, based on the experience but remain frustrated by the lack of training opportunities. We are essentially training ourselves but miss some training opportunities because of lack of trainers and assessors active in the unit or region.

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).

- My unit established an evacuation centre in the town hall for the temporary accommodation of travellers stranded in town by flooded roads and bridges. The centre remained activated for about 48 hours.
 - one medical evac across flooded bridge on Burnett River 30 Dec 10.
 - 4 x floodboat resupply operations across flooded Burnett River on 29 Dec 10, 10 Jan, 13 Jan & 14 Jan 11.
- Some of the resupply ops meant multiple crossings to move resupplies and people to and fro at flooded bridges. Resupply included food, medical supplies, prescription medication, fuel, gen sets and stock food.

4. Command and control

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

Overall responsible for safe conduct of all operations, team and task allocations, maintaining a communication net on site. Documenting activities and producing activation reports for EMO. Identifying and making most of training value for less experienced members.

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

My report chain is to EMO area office. During the period of the floods, I was not asked to or required to report to Local authorities.

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

Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance, Local Govt. 132500 Call centre in Brisbane. Local residents who know how to contact local SES may call me direct and request assistance.

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

Depends on the nature of the request and the likely response required would determine who is requested to respond. The level of training received and ~~type~~ experience level of members is also a factor. All requests for assistance come via me and I phone or SMS the members as the situation demands.

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

Requests for resupply assistance were channelled to a nominated coordinator who volunteered to assist. They produced a coordinated shopping list for resuppliers and pick up and delivery was assisted by a council employee who is also a SES member.

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?

There were no RFA's that went without response.

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

2 members went to Brisbane to assist the clean up effort. This deployment was arranged by EMD/area office

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

No contact by or to any council or Local Disaster Group rep. To my knowledge, there was no Local Disaster Coordination Group until after the 2010/11 floods.

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre My unit was essentially on its own.

As above 4.8(a)

c) Local Disaster Management Group

As above 4.8(a)

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

Refer comments 4.8(a)
All efforts to establish a counter disaster response in the North Burnett Regional Area has occurred after the 2010/2011 floods.

b) District Disaster Coordination Centre

As above

c) District Disaster Management Group

As above.

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?

I had contact with Rae Whiffen (EMA Area Director) by phone over concern with viability of Kirrar Weir wall and ~~concern~~ likely impact downstream if weir wall gave way.

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

No contact made with any other agencies.

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)?

I had no contact with either, so not in a position to comment on any conflict or if there was any conflict.

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

Supporting SES volunteer activities before, during and after disasters.
Coordinating additional resources and resupply as required.

5. Communications

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

- UHF hand held and UHF base/mobile radios
- Mobile phones in areas where coverage available
- Home land line
- Fax at home
- Home computer communication by email

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

UHF repeater does not work anywhere west of Eidsvold. Local talk around town only available
Mobile phones have limited value as coverage basically cuts out \approx 5km out of town in any direction

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?

NSRE - but I have no idea how much funding
There is no reporting system of finances in place.
If purchase is required, I request order number
from Eidsvold office staff. I have not been refused
finance through this system.

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 funding submissions have been originated by me since assuming Local Controllers responsibilities.

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

How funds are spent and administered within the unit are determined by me.

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.

Eidsvold SES accommodation is in an old council works shed that does not meet basic OHS standards and should have been replaced years ago. If additional funds were available, I could get accommodation suitable for our purpose. This could also assist with member recruitment and retention. Additional funds could also provide additional resources and provide much needed capability training courses.

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?

Visibility of finances and inclusion in a budget planning process would be considered a good starting point.

I have no idea what funds have been allocated. How much has been spent or how much is available or what funds can be spent on. I request an order number, make the purchase and sign the paperwork. I have not been refused finance.

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

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

Nil. I actively discourage my members using volunteer time in this way. They are asked to do enough through training, exercises and operations.

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

< 10%

c) does fundraising present any difficulties?

No, because it is not a unit priority. We do community support tasks where possible. If those organisations choose to donate to the unit for those services, the donations are banked into the unit's support group bank acct. This account is used for the benefit of members and the purchase of equipment not avail through other sources.

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?

To attract and retain SES members, the potential member needs to feel that their time and contribution is appreciated and valued, and that they will receive quality preparation to do SES tasks.

There needs to be more active encouragement for police to use the SES in support of policing, for tasks such as traffic control.

Nothing puts volunteers off more than continuously training for tasks and not being requested to activate. This situation is heightened when local

7.2 Please make any other comments you wish about SES operations generally and/or during the 2010/2011 floods. ^{Knowledge suggests there are opportunities but police fail to call.}

We survived and we did good work that was appreciated by flood affected locals. Our capacity to respond was tested, we endured and met the challenges.

My unit is better prepared from the experience.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

