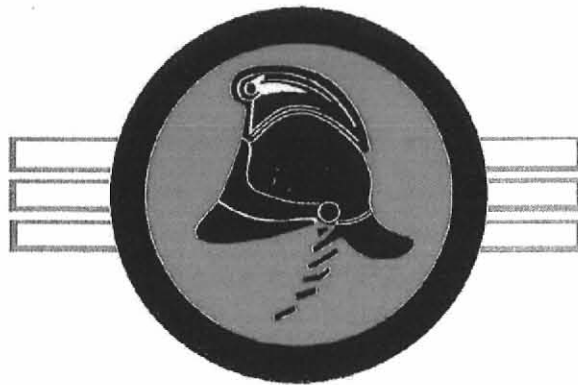


United Firefighters Union QLD
Level 1, 286 Montague Road,
West End, 4101, QLD
Ph: 07 3844 0366
ufu@ufuq.com.au

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY



**UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA
UNION OF EMPLOYEES QUEENSLAND**

SUBMISSION BY THE UNITED FIREFIGHTERS' UNION QUEENSLAND

10th MARCH 2011

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1 Introduction..... | 4 |
| 2 Training and Resourcing..... | 6 |
| 3 Equipment and Communication Systems..... | 8 |
| 4 Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Procedures..... | 9 |
| 5 Safe Systems of Work..... | 10 |
| 6 Terms of Reference..... | 12 |
| 7 Summaries of Transcripts | |
| a) Firefighter One..... | 13 |
| b) Firefighter Two..... | 15 |
| c) Firefighter Three..... | 16 |
| d) Firefighter Four..... | 18 |
| e) Firefighter Five..... | 19 |
| f) Firefighter Six..... | 20 |
| g) Firefighter Seven..... | 21 |
| h) Firefighter Eight..... | 23 |
| i) Communications Officer One..... | 24 |

United Firefighters Union QLD
Level 1, 286 Montague Road,
West End, 4101, QLD
Ph: 07 3844 0366
ufu@ufuq.com.au

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| 8 Recommendations..... | 25 |
|------------------------|----|

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| 9 Glossary of Terms..... | 26 |
|--------------------------|----|

10 Appendixes

a) Original Transcripts

Introduction

1. The United Firefighters' Union of Australia union of Employees Queensland is the representative body for career and auxiliary firefighters in Queensland.
2. The Union provides industrial representation to its members however, due to the uniquely hazardous nature of the work performed by firefighters such representation extends further than the usual industrial concerns of wages and working conditions. In particular, physical working conditions, staffing levels, safety equipment and training are of particular concern to the Union.
3. Well in excess of 95% of career firefighters and a significant proportion of auxiliary firefighters employed by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) are members of the Union. This means that the Union has a very substantial accumulation of firsthand experience of not only fighting fires but also all aspects of technical rescue, which includes swift water rescues, but also significant experience in the safety requirements and organisation of firefighting and rescue in Queensland.
4. The Union is affiliated to the United Firefighters' Union of Australia and through that body to international organisations of firefighters. These national and international networks give the Union further access to shared information and add to its depth of knowledge of the demanding industrial and safety environment in which firefighters have to operate.
5. It is the Union's experience over many years that the industrial and safety interests of career and auxiliary firefighters are inherently intermingled with

large areas of overlap. The safety interests of firefighters and the community as a whole are similarly aligned since the preservation of lives and the operational ability of firefighters is the preservation of a highly valuable community resource.

6. The Union submissions at this stage are confined to the statements provided by member officers who were directly involved with the events. Their statements give a high understanding of what was and is technical experts in the field which align with the Unions concerns about levels of training and consequent safety of its members.
7. In respect to the Terms of Reference which deal with response and planning and adequate forecasts and warning systems those officers directly involved are positioned to provide the commission with the best assistance in terms of these points through their statements.

Training and Resourcing

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is the lead agency for the rescue service as per the departments State Rescue Policy. QFRS has three levels of swift water rescue, which includes working within flooded environments.

- a) Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Awareness – provides awareness about personal safety, size up, resource requirements.
- b) Level one Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technician – provides hazard awareness, personal safety and shore-based rescue.
- c) Level two Swiftwater Floodwater Technician – incorporating level one and further techniques, awareness and advanced techniques that enable in-water rescues, all full time permanent urban firefighters are trained to level one with limited numbers of permanent full time permanent urban firefighters trained to level two.

Auxiliary firefighters and volunteer firefighters may or may not receive awareness training, but are **not trained** to the lowest level, level one in swift water rescue. (Incident Directive 24.1.5 Swiftwater Rescue attached to this section.)

Statements from the officers involved substantiate the Unions concerns that the QFRS is inadequately funded and resourced to provide adequate crews and crewing levels for swift water rescue and flood rescue as occurred in January.

Currently, all urban firefighters (full time officers) are trained to level one in swift water rescue; at this level officers are only equipped to deal with shore-based rescues.

United Firefighters Union QLD
Level 1, 286 Montague Road,
West End, 4101, QLD
Ph: 07 3844 0366
ufu@ufuq.com.au

Training in level two is restricted to the QFRS' perception of required numbers. It is the Unions view that the experiences of the officers involved in Toowoomba, Grantham, Lockyer and Brisbane Valley floods demonstrate the severe flaws in the management in this area.

It is interesting to note that the Regional Functional Plan 2010/2011 for the South Western Region of the QFRS cites the rostering of up to 20 level two technicians in Toowoomba by June 2010. The latest information available indicates there are 10 level two swiftwater technicians in South Western region. The statements of the officers involved confirmed this was a serious impediment to the safe and efficient operations in Toowoomba (Page 4, Regional Functional Plan 2010, 2011, South Western Region attached to this section).

In the statements of officers directly involved, it has been reported that due to a shortage of appropriately trained personnel, auxiliary and rural officers were performing tasks and undertaking roles beyond the level of their skill and training. It has been reported in one instance a ROCC was staffed by rural officers who would most likely not be trained to deal with swift water or flood events.

Please refer to Recommendation one.



INCIDENT DIRECTIVE

Swiftwater

Version: 1.0
Valid from: 01/05/2009

INCDIR 24.1.5

1. PURPOSE

- (a) To provide the requirements for swiftwater rescue operations.

2. APPLICATION

- (a) Applies to fire officers who may attend swiftwater rescue incidents.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION

- (a) The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) is the lead agency for swiftwater rescue incidents as per the Department's State Rescue Policy.
- (b) QFRS often performs swiftwater rescues within floodwater environments. In Queensland, floodwater will nearly always involve swiftwater situations.
- (c) The following definitions apply:
- *Swiftwater* can be defined as any water moving down a gradient and flowing at a speed in excess of 2km/h.
 - *Floodwater* can be defined as water that overflows and inundates an area.
- (d) QFRS has three (3) levels for swiftwater rescue, which includes working within flooded environments:
- Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Awareness - personal safety, size-up, resource requirements.
 - Level 1 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technician - hazard awareness, personal safety and shore-based rescue.
 - Level 2 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technician - incorporates level 1 and further techniques, awareness and advanced techniques that enable in-water rescues.

4. DIRECTIVE

4.1 Operations

- (a) QFRS fire officers who have received the awareness package in swiftwater rescue have basic skills and specialised support and resources must always be requested.
- (b) These fire officers will:
- dress appropriately and be mindful of personal safety at all times.
 - carry out incident size-up and isolate the area.
 - not undertake in-water rescues.

- request specialised and sufficient resources as assessed.
- not work within three (3) metres of a watercourse unless wearing appropriate PPE.
- perform passive bank searches as necessary (ensuring that accountability is maintained and the buddy system adopted).
- perform a support role on the arrival of specialised support.

(c) QFRS Level 1 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technicians will:

- carry out shore based rescues only.
- not undertake in-water rescues.
- not work within three (3) metres of a watercourse unless wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- request suitable resources if in-water rescue is required.

(d) QFRS Level 2 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technicians will:

- be responded to manage operations at swiftwater rescue incidents.
- assist the Incident Controller (or QFRS Commander) as a specialist to develop and/or revise the Incident Action Plan.
- conduct incident risk assessment.
- develop and manage the implementation of operation plans.
- undertake shore-based, and/or in-water swiftwater rescue as required.

(a) The Incident Controller (or QFRS Commander) and the operational crews need to be aware of each other's levels of competency in order to allocate personnel effectively and in the most appropriate manner at swiftwater incidents.

4.2 Mobilisation and Deployment

- (a) Mobilisation to an identified swiftwater rescue incident will occur as per the Fire Communication Centre Directives (FCCD) and the regionally agreed mobilisation arrangements.
- (b) When regional resources are exhausted, assistance from other regions and/or the Special Operations Unit may be requested. All requests for assistance are to be made to the State Operations Coordination Centre and coordinated with the Special Operations Duty Officer (refer Incident Directive 25.1).
- (c) Under deployment conditions, a minimum of two (2) Level 2 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technicians are to be mobilised with Level 1 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Technicians (for support) to all swiftwater rescue incidents; or to standby at areas identified as a risk.

5. QFRS RELEVANCY

| INCDIR 24.1.5 | URBAN | | RURAL OPERATIONS | RURAL FIRE BRIGADES | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------------|
| | Full time | Part time | Full time | Special | iZone | Village | Rural | Primary Producer |
| Applicable | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Not Applicable | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| May Apply * | | | | | | | | |

* This document may apply to some Rural brigades. Check with your Senior Officer for additional information.

REFERENCES

The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
 Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990
 QFRS Training Material
 QFRS Operational Guides
 State Rescue Policy

Lee A Johnson AFSM MIFireE
 Commissioner



OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

OPERATIONS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT



Statewide Integrated Operational Planning Process

Regional Functional Plan 2010 – 2011

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SOUTH WESTERN REGION

*Operations
Management*

Technical Rescue

COMMUNITY SAFETY OPERATIONS

community and the safety of firefighters cannot be allowed to be compromised by underfunding of the fire service and its ability to fulfill its statutory obligations.

The Union believes it is unconscionable to respond firefighters to incidents not knowing if there are going to be sufficient numbers of adequately trained crew. While there are written procedures and training that provide officers should not attempt a rescue without adequate crew strength, no amount of policy and procedures will over-ride human instinct and nature when it comes to rescuing another human in distress and danger of dying.

To assist the commission with these issues, attached to this section are:

- a) Incident Action Guide 3.5 Swiftwater;
- b) SO-Q-PD-1.2 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Training Level one;
- c) FCCD-Q-3.13 Fire Communications Centre Directive. Water Rescue all types.

These documents highlight the particular hazards and risks associated with carrying out a swift water rescue and highlight the need for a minimum level of response that for the safety of firefighters should be adhered to in all instances. In particular FCCD-Q-3.13 indicates that the initial assignment for any water rescue is one pumper (four personnel) and one specialist rescue/rescue appliance (two – four personnel) giving a minimum 6-8 personnel for an initial response. The experience of officers on the ground was that in most if not all instances this minimum response could not be provided let alone maintained.

See Recommendation four.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1.0 INTRODUCTION: | 3 |
| 2.0 OBJECTIVES: | 3 |
| 3.0 LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN: | 4 |
| 4.0 LINKAGE TO STATION TOTAL WORKLOAD: | 4 |
| 5.0 REGIONAL ACTION PLANS: | 5 |
| Appendix A: South Western Region Technical Rescue Policy | 8 |
| Philosophy | 8 |
| 1. Introduction | 8 |
| 2. Operations | 9 |
| 3. Training | 11 |
| 4. Definitions | 13 |
| 5. Duties | 14 |
| 6. Reporting Relationships | 18 |
| 7. Conflict Resolution | 19 |
| Attachment "1" | 20 |
| Appendix B: South Western Region Pandemic Plan | 21 |
| 1. Aim and Objectives | 21 |
| 2. Introduction | 21 |
| 3. Implementation | 22 |
| Attachment "1" | 25 |
| Attachment "2" | 28 |

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

South Western Region covers a large section to the South Western area of Queensland and at present location known as the Surat Basin is experiencing increased oil and gas exploration activities soon to be followed by extensive industrial activities

This **South Western Region Special Operations Plan** is designed to complement the operational plans, policies and procedures developed by the Special Operations Unit at Cannon Hill.

The SOU provides links to other Queensland government agencies to support operational deployment and to integrate policy development.

This Regional Plan has three sections, being:

- Technical Rescue
- Safety Equipment
- Major Events

1.1 Scope

This Regional Plan will operate from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 and incorporates the response and training capabilities provided by the Special Operations Unit at Cannon Hill.

South Western Region Standard Mobilising Procedures include the capability to access and respond all available resources from the Special Operations Unit at Cannon Hill, in addition to special operations' resources within South Western Region.

1.2 Associated Documents

| Doc Ref | Title |
|---------|---|
| 1 | Operations Doctrine Manual |
| 2 | State Rescue Policy Statement 1999 |
| 3 | State Rescue Policy Guidelines 2000 |
| 4 | State Rescue Policy Guidelines - Functions and Responsibilities for provision of Rescue Services within Queensland 2000 |
| 5 | QFRS Pandemic Response State Plan |

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

To maximise the effectiveness of technical rescue and safety equipment within South Western Region through the efficient use of all associated resources (both human and material) in the delivery of all aspects of special operations.

2.1 Regional Goals

- Compliance with the relevant requirements as described in Operations Doctrine
- Required number of Technical Rescue and Safety Equipment staff trained, resourced and appropriately located to maximise service delivery
- All regional staff receiving the minimum required standard of competency maintenance training in technical rescue and safety equipment skills.

2.2 Measures

Technical Rescue:

- 12 staff (preferred breakdown of 1 x Station Officers and 2 x Firefighters) trained as Level 2 technicians and rostered to selected technical rescue stations
- Technical Rescue appliances 311L (TR11) at Kitchener St Station Toowoomba continuously staffed by Level 2 technicians.

Safety Equipment:

- 1 staff (1 x Station Officers) trained as Safety Equipment operator.
- Safety Equipment Vehicle (WS1(QGG081)) Day manned, and staffed by an appropriately trained officer
- Hazmat detection kits operating on the Emergency Tenders at Toowoomba, staffed by crews trained to operate this equipment.

3.0 LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This South Western Region Special Operations Plan contributes towards the requirement and achievement of:

- Key Community Outcomes (Safe and secure communities)
- Whole-of-Government Priorities (strengthening services to the community)
- Department of Emergency Service Corporate Plan 2004-2008 (enhancing operational service delivery)
- QFRS Strategic Plan 2004-2008.

QFRS Strategic Plan 2004-2008

- **Goal 2 – Enhance operational service delivery**
Effective and efficient operational service delivery
 - Strategies:
 - 2.1 – Use appropriate resources and a flexible approach service delivery that matches community needs
 - 2.3 – Provide operational best practice equipment, communications and technology to support service delivery.

| KPM | Target |
|--|--------|
| <u>Customer satisfaction</u> Percentage of stakeholders involved in emergency incidents that indicate satisfaction with the service provided. | 95% |
| <u>Brigades/Stations</u> Percentage of Brigades/Stations resourced in accordance with the standard set for their Brigade/Station. | 90% |

4.0 LINKAGE TO STATION TOTAL WORKLOAD:

A - Operations Management:

A.2.1 Monitor Appliance Inventory
A.2.3 Manage Operational Consumables
A.2.4 Manage Equipment movement
A.2.6 Coordinate Standard Test of Operational Equipment
A 3.1 Respond to Incidents as per Operations Doctrine

5.0 REGIONAL ACTION PLANS:

| OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT | Technical Rescue | | PREPAREDNESS | |
|---|------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| General Description: | | | | |
| South Western Region has technical rescue capability in Two areas, being: | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response• Training• Provision of equipment | | | | |
| Outcomes: | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction in loss of life due to regional technical rescue capability. | | | | |
| Measure | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities implemented and in accordance with due dates. | | | | |
| Activities | Target | Due date | Action Officer | Standards |
| Maintain and implement South Western Region Technical Rescue Policy | | Annually | | Refer Appendix A |
| Increase number of L2 technicians | | Ongoing | Special Ops, TR Coordinator | |
| Continuous staffing of (TR11)311L with L2 technicians | | Ongoing | Roster Officer | |
| Roster up to 20 x L2 technicians equally between a Northside and a Southside station and across all shifts to support 850L and 502L | | June 2010 | Roster Officer | |
| All L2 technicians complete their annual competency maintenance requirements | | August 2010 | TR Coordinator | Regional Professional Dev. Plan |
| L2 technicians support training of L1 skills maintenance program | | | MRT, ATO (TR portfolio) | Regional Professional Dev. Plan |
| Technical rescue equipment purchases to be in accordance with approved standards | | | MOS, TR Coordinator | |
| Technical rescue equipment maintained in accordance with required standards | | | AD's, TR Coordinator, L2 Technicians | SO-5-OM-3.4 Operational Equipment - Testing |

| OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT | Safety Equipment | | PREPAREDNESS | |
|---|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|--|
| General Description: | | | | |
| It is critical that a strategic approach be taken with Safety Equipment and hazmat resources, both equipment and personnel. | | | | |
| Outcomes: | | | | |
| • Reduction in loss of life due to Special Operations response capability. | | | | |
| Measure | | | | |
| • Activities are implemented in accordance with due dates. | | | | |
| Activities | Target | Due date | Action Officer | Standards |
| BA Hazmat incidents supported by (TR11)311L and Special Operations Unit at Cannon Hill | All incidents | Ongoing | COS, Mgr Safety Equip. Firecom | Regional Std Mobilising Procedures |
| All Safety Equipment (BA Sets, detection equipment, PPE) maintained | All Safety Equipment | Ongoing | Safety Equip. | Manufacturers Specifications & Aust. Standards |
| Develop Regional Decontamination Response Plan | | | SOC | Operations Doctrine |
| BA Rooms installed in all fire stations | All fire stations | Ongoing | DRD | Regional Capital Works Plan |
| BA's and Oxy-Vivas serviced by appropriate resource | | Ongoing | Safety Equip Station Officers | SO-5-OM-4.8 CABA & Oxy-Viva Use & Maint. |
| BA Hazmat Module on TR11(311L) operating to support Safety Equipment Units | | Ongoing | Crews of TR at Toowoomba | |
| Detection kits installed on Warwick Pumper. | | June 2010 | Safety Equip Officer | |
| All Safety Equipment maintained in accordance with associated standards. Maintenance records up to date | | Ongoing | Safety Equipment Unit Toowoomba | |
| Skills maintenance program implemented | | Ongoing | Manager Regional Training | |

**OPERATIONS
MANAGEMENT****Major Events****PREPAREDNESS****General Description:**

Regions have the responsibility for planning and providing emergency services that are commensurate with the size of the event and the level of risk. The Risk Management Matrix provides regions with a planning guide for events that occur in their region. This process will ensure that the planning for regional events is systematic and comprehensive.

- Advice on the development of the risk management process;
- Technical advice in relation to chemical, biological or radiological incidents;
- Specialist advice in relation to hazardous materials;
- Technical rescue advice; and
- Provision of additional human or equipment resources.

Whilst planning for these types of events is conducted at a regional level, it is important from a coordination perspective that the Special Operations Unit is advised of the occurrence of the event in the region. This advice is not required for regular events where QFRS is involved, but rather for large scale events in the region that present some significant level of risk (e.g. events that may attract political interest).

Outcomes:

- Emergency services provided for Major Events are commensurate with the size of the event and the level of risk.

Measure

- All contingencies are provided for in Major event planning and implementation.

| Activities | Target | Due date | Action Officer | Standards |
|--|--------|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| Conduct risk assessments for major events using the Risk Management Matrix | | As required | AD's | |
| Prepare event operational plans | | As required | SRO | |
| Implement South Western Region Pandemic Plan | | As required | AC, DRO,DRD | Refer Appendix B |
| Advise Special Operations of planned major events | | As required | | |

Appendix A: South Western Region Technical Rescue Policy

Philosophy

To provide an immediate, 24-hour Technical Rescue response to the community within South Western Region, through the effective implementation of procedures and the efficient utilisation and mobilisation of highly trained staff using appropriate equipment.

1. Introduction

As part of Technical Rescue Operations within South Western Region, it is necessary to standardise operational response, training and equipment throughout the region.

1.1 Aim

The aim is to provide a policy that clearly defines the requirements of Technical Rescue. The policy will provide for the delivery of a minimum standard of training, equipment and response from all nominated stations and personnel within South Western Region.

1.2 Limitations

Where a conflict arises between QFRS and/or DES Rescue Policies and QFRS South Western Region Technical Rescue Policy, then the former shall have overarching precedence.

1.3 Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee

The QFRS South Western Region will establish and maintain an advisory committee for Technical Rescue matters within South Western Region. The Committee will comprise:

- Director Regional development. DRD(Chairperson)
- Manager Regional Training/Regional Training Officer
- Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator
- Regional Technical Rescue Portfolio Officer – (Area Training Officer)
- 2 x Level 2 Rescue Technicians - (Advisors)
- Brisbane Region representatives (guests).

1.4 Frequency of meetings

The Technical Rescue Committee will meet quarterly. The Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator will arrange the meetings and ensure Minutes are kept.

2. Operations

2.1 Response – primary & secondary rescue stations

Designated Rescue Stations will provide a 24-hour, Level 2 response to Technical Rescue incidents within South Western Region and provide operational support/response to neighbouring Regions as directed/requested.

This will include response to:

- High Angle Rescue
- Confined Space Rescue
- Trench Rescue
- Swift Water Rescue
- Urban Search and Rescue

Primary rescue stations are:

- Kitchener Street (311L).
- Support or secondary rescue station Special Operations Unit at Cannon Hill (850L)

For further clarification refer to the following documentation:

- Department of Emergency Services State Rescue Policy Statement, dated 7 December 1999
- Department of Emergency Services State Rescue Policy Guidelines, dated 3 and 4 March 2000
- Department of Emergency Services State Rescue Policy Guidelines - Functions and Responsibilities for provision of Rescue Services within Queensland, dated 3 and 4 March 2000
- Department of Emergency Services State Rescue Policy - Register of Rescue Units, dated 10 December 2000.

2.2 Start of Shift Procedures

The OIC of the designated technical rescue vehicle will complete a 'Start of Shift' proforma (**Attachment 1**) which will identify the location and skill set of Level 2 Rescue personnel.

This will then be communicated to the:

- FireCom.

2.3 Rescue Operator (L1)

All operational staff, within South Western Region, in permanently crewed stations shall provide Level 1 (Rescue Operator) first responder capabilities.

Auxiliary Stations will be supported by the nearest Level 1 crewed appliance.

2.4 Rescue Technician (L2)

Qualified Level 2 Rescue personnel within South Western Region will provide a specialist

response to Technical Rescue incidents as directed. This will include all disciplines of Technical Rescue as per the Department of Emergency Services State Rescue Policy.

2.5 Specialist Technical Rescue Staffing

Other than for short-term situations, crews of 311L will possess Level 2 skills in all technical rescue disciplines.

Level 2 Rescue technicians who do not possess all disciplines will be rostered to locations that utilise the existing skills as appropriate.

Additional Level 2 Rescue Technicians will be mobilised from adjoining regions and call back staff as required.

2.6 Equipment

Rescue Operator (L1)

All permanently staffed and selected auxiliary pump appliances will be fitted with a Technical Rescue Operator (L1) High Angle Rescue cordage pack. The equipment will meet standards as per the QFRS Technical Rescue State Policy, Section 3.12.

Rescue Technician (L2)

All designated South Western Region Technical Rescue stations will have an extensive complement of specialist Technical Rescue equipment available and stowed on an appropriate appliance and available for immediate response.

Pumpers at the designated Technical rescue support stations () will have a reduced cache of technical rescue equipment.

All equipment will meet standards as per the State Rescue Policy.

Equipment Purchases

Replacement equipment purchases will be funded at Command level and are the organisational responsibility of the Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator and Area Directors in accordance with QFRS Standard Purchasing Policies and Procedures. All technical rescue purchases will be through the State Technical Rescue department.

All additional equipment purchases over and above the standard issue will be ratified by the Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee in consultation with the QFRS State Technical Rescue Committee prior to purchase.

2.7 Appliances

A Technical Rescue appliance will, whenever possible, be provided at designated Technical Rescue stations to enable specialist Technical Rescue operations to be conducted within the region.

2.8 Operational Policy

The Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee will be responsible for the formulation and implementation of this policy. This policy will be reviewed at 12 monthly intervals and will have a forward planning cycle of not less than two (2) years.

3. Training

3.1 Training Responsibilities

South Western Region will provide training and training resources to ensure a minimum standard of training competency is maintained, as per the QFRS State Rescue Policy. **(See State Rescue Policy 1.18 and 1.21.)**

3.2 Conduct of Training

During any practical training course, the ratio of instructors to participants must be no more than 1:6, but if possible two (2) instructors are preferred. **(See State Rescue Policy 3.14.)** Using a qualified Level 1 operator as an assistant instructor may offset this ratio.

3.3 Rescue Operator Training (L1)

All permanent QFRS operational staff are required to qualify as rescue operators using QFRS Technical Rescue instruction and manuals. QFRS qualified Rescue Technicians (L2) will conduct and deliver all initial theory and practical rescue instruction. Responsibility for course content and delivery remains with the QFRS.

3.4 Courses of Instruction

Courses of instruction must be conducted in the sequence of sections using the QFRS training syllabus. Assessment must be conducted, as a minimum, at the completion of each two (2) week period of instruction.

3.5 Selection of Rescue Technicians (L2)

Expressions of interest may be called by the Manager Regional Training. Eligible personnel may apply in writing. The selection process and subsequent selection of personnel will be determined by the Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee in consultation with the Manager Regional Training and Rosters.

All personnel selected to progress to Rescue Technician (L2) must be willing/able to perform all the duties at this level across all Technical Rescue disciplines.

While every endeavour will be made to roster Technical Rescue Staff to their closest rescue station, staff should be aware that they may need to serve at any Brisbane designated Rescue Station.

Preference on training courses will be given to staff at those ranks where the preferred numbers are short. It is preferable for staff to only possess one specialist skill set (i.e. safety equipment, aerial driver and rescue technician) at any one time. Preference will also be given to those staff who do not have other specialist skills.

3.6 Training Standards

All Rescue Operators are required to achieve a competent grading of assessment in each area of the syllabus.

3.7 First Aid

Current First Aid and CPR/Advanced Resuscitation Competencies are required as a prerequisite for all personnel undertaking training in all disciplines of Technical Rescue.

3.8 Training Syllabus

The QFRS Technical Rescue training syllabus is the only recognised training syllabus approved for use within the QFRS, except where external syllabus or training providers

have been approved for use by the QFRS State Technical Rescue Committee. Any RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) application will be forwarded to the Manager Regional Training as per the current RPL Policy.

3.9 Continuance of Training

Each rescue operator must maintain competencies in accordance with State and Regional requirements.

3.10 Certification

Each (L1, L2) rescue operator must be certified as being competent at least once in each 3-year period. To meet this requirement rescue operators must satisfy the rescue instructors that skills have been maintained (**See State Policy 1.21.**)

The Manager Regional Training must note the re-certification and forward a copy of the list to the State Rescue Committee.

3.11 Accidents

Standard QFRS reporting procedures will apply. In addition the Manager Technical Rescue and the Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator will be notified.

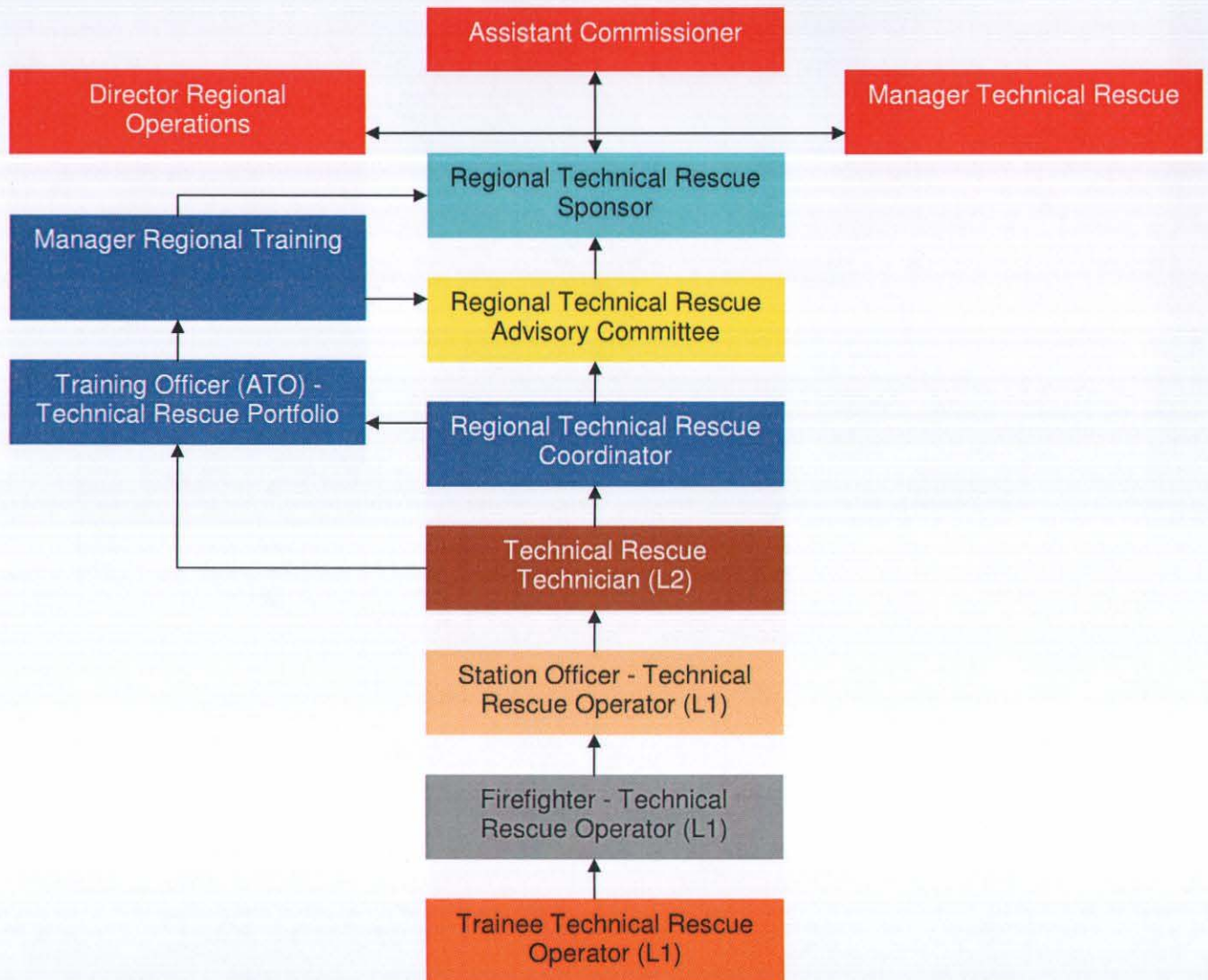
3.12 Training Reporting Relationships

Training reporting relationships will be in accordance with the training reporting relationship flow chart.

3.13 Conclusion

The provision of effective training to personnel is a high priority. The success or failure of training will depend upon the instructional abilities of Rescue Instructors and a demonstrated cooperation between the Regional Technical Rescue Committee and Rescue Instructors. The committee will provide assistance to any instructional staff through the appropriate means at regional level.

South Western Region Technical Rescue Training Reporting Relationships Flow Chart



4. Definitions

4.1 Technical Rescue Operators (L1)

All permanent QFRS operational staff are required to qualify as Rescue Operators using the QFRS Rescue manuals. This specifically includes Vertical Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, Swift Water Rescue and Urban Search and Rescue disciplines. **This qualification may only be to an awareness level in some instances.**

4.2 Technical Rescue Technicians (L2)

Selected QFRS operational staff are required to qualify as Rescue Technicians using the QFRS Rescue manuals. This specifically includes Vertical Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, Swift Water Rescue and Urban Search and Rescue.

4.3 Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator

One selected staff member within the South Western Region, of a skill level not less than

Rescue Technician in all Technical rescue fields, will perform the duties and functions as expected of the Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator.

4.4 Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee

An advisory and decision making committee consisting of those positions described in Clause 1.3 of this policy will be maintained.

4.5 Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor

One selected Area Director of substantive rank, not less than FPO4, will perform the functions and duties of the South Western Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor.

4.6 Vertical Rescue

The employment of specialist skills, techniques and equipment required to locate, access, stabilise, extricate and evacuate persons and/or property from heights and depths in situations involving injury/illness, entrapment, stranding and/or isolation.

4.7 Confined Space Rescue

The employment of specialist skills, techniques and equipment required to locate, access, stabilise, extricate and evacuate persons and/or property from areas classified as confined spaces in situations involving injury/illness, entrapment, stranding or isolation. May include specific situations unbreathable atmospheres requiring the use of breathing apparatus.

4.8 Trench Rescue

The employment of specialist skills, techniques and equipment required to locate, access, stabilise, extricate and evacuate persons and/or property from collapsed or partially collapsed trenches and collapses in other unstable materials such as grains or sands.

4.9 Swift Water Rescue

The employment of specialist skills, techniques and equipment required to locate, access, stabilise, extricate, evacuate and/or transport persons from swift running waters in situations requiring rapid intervention techniques.

4.10 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)

USAR is a specialised technical rescue capability for the location and rescue of entrapped people following a structural collapse (National Definition). Commonly incorporates specialist skills, techniques and equipment associated with a number of other rescue areas.

5. Duties

5.1 Technical Rescue Operator (L1)

Perform Technical Rescue operations and assist Level 2 Rescue Technicians with training and operations as directed. Rescue Operators remain subordinate to Rescue Technicians in all areas of training and operations. A current First Aid certificate is a prerequisite for trainees to undertake initial Rescue Operator training and re-certification.

5.2 Technical Rescue Technicians (L2)

Rescue Technicians are responsible for the following duties within South Western Region:

- Serve in this role for a minimum of 5 years.
 - Successfully complete the annual requirements as prescribed in the Annual Competency Maintenance Log Book.
 - Perform Technical Rescue operations and training, as directed.
 - Assist the Manager Operational Support (Chairperson).
 - Conduct theory and practical skill maintenance, competency maintenance instruction/assessment and re-certification training in all areas of Technical Rescue that they are certified in, as directed.
 - Organise and conduct exercises and competency maintenance on shift.
 - Assist in the updating of reference material, modules and manuals, as directed.
 - Complete and/or assist in projects, which will assist in the implementation of Technical Rescue within South Western Region and State.
-
- Ensure that training programs and assessments set down are adhered to.
 - Monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of accredited personnel.
 - Participate in multi-service training, as directed.
 - Report to ATO for Technical Rescue on all training matters within their operational Command.
 - Report to Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator on all operational matters within the Region.
 - All USAR CAT 2 personnel will be provided with a pager, to maintain national and international response requirements. Whilst on duty they will be required to wear their pager. An on-call rate will apply, if off duty personnel are paged and placed on stand-by.
 - For all other Technical Rescue fields, personnel will be accessed through normal channels.

5.3 Senior Rescue Technicians

Technical Rescue Technicians remain subordinate to Senior Rescue Technicians in all areas of training and operations. (Senior Rescue Technicians, are appointed by the State Technical Rescue Committee, to maintain a high standard of training at Technical Rescue Instructor Level.)

A current First Aid certificate and Workplace Trainer & Assessment qualifications are prerequisites for trainees to undertake initial Technical Rescue Technician training and re-certification.

Tenure: Technical Rescue Technicians shall be appointed by the QFRS for such a period of time as the QFRS determines. Appointments shall be reviewed at regular intervals and the designation shall cease to be effective when the person no longer performs the operational and training functions as directed which have been approved. Technical Rescue Technicians must hold current operational certification as Technical Rescue Technicians (See QFRS Technical Rescue State Policy 1.25).

5.4 Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator

Training

Provide advice on Technical Rescue training issues to the MRT and the ATO responsible for the Technical Rescue Portfolio. This will include advice on:

- New training courses for Technical Rescue Technicians (L2) in all areas of Technical Rescue.
- Technical Rescue Operator (L1) training for all areas of Technical Rescue.
- Competency maintenance training for Technical Rescue Operators (L1) and Technical Rescue Technicians (L2).

Equipment

- Coordinate and ensure equipment repairs are conducted in a timely and approved manner.
- Coordinate and liaise with the State Technical Rescue Coordinator for equipment purchases for South Western Region and Commands.
- Manage maintenance records on equipment: location, inspections, use and use by date.

Response

Respond to Technical Rescue Operations within South Western Region, as directed.

Liaise

- Internal

- Regional Technical Rescue Committee.
- Regional training exercises.
- Undertake special projects as directed.
- State Technical Rescue Coordinator.
- Area Training/Support Officers.
- Manager Regional Training.
- Area Directors.
- To provide a mechanism for and participate in conflict resolution as required.

- External

- Provide advice in 'on-site' rescue procedures for industry.
- Provide advice on the development of external training for industry.

Tenure: Technical Rescue Technicians shall be appointed to the position of Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator only by the QFRS South Western Region Technical Rescue Advisory Committee for such a period of time as the QFRS South Western Region Technical Rescue Advisory Committee determines. The Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator must hold current operational certification as Technical Rescue Technicians (See QFRS Technical Rescue State Policy 1.25).

5.5 Training Officer (ATO) - Technical Rescue Portfolio

To assist the South Western Region to maintain competencies in the Technical Rescue areas an Area Training Officer will be designated to manage the Technical Rescue Portfolio. A Rescue Technician (L2) will preferably hold this position.

Training

- Provide advice on Technical Rescue training issues to the MRT and the Technical Rescue Coordinator.
- Manage Rescue Operator (L1) training for all areas of Technical Rescue for the South Western Region.
- Oversee Core maintenance training for Rescue Operators (L1).

In all areas of Technical Rescue:

- Assist and provide support to Station staff when required or requested.
- Undertake special projects as directed.

Response

Respond to Technical Rescue operations within South Western Region, as directed.

Liaise

- Internal

- Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee.
- Regional training exercises.
- State Technical Rescue Coordinator.
- Area Training/Support Officers.
- Manager Regional Training.
- Area Directors.

- External

- Provide advice in 'on-site' rescue procedures for industry.
- Provide advice on the development of external training for industry.

Tenure: Technical Rescue Training Officer (ATO - preferably Rescue Technician) shall be appointed by the MRT, for a time as determined by the MRT and will work with the QFRS South Western Region Technical Rescue Advisory Committee.

5.6 Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee

- Advise on all aspects of Technical Rescue operations and training within the South Western Region as requested by the QFRS.
- Monitor all aspects of Technical Rescue operations and training throughout South Western Region.
- Advise and select staff as Technical Rescue Technicians (L2).
- Advise on QFRS Training Manuals, Syllabi and Training Packages.
- Advise on Technical Rescue Technician training programs.
- Advise or make submissions to QFRS State Technical Rescue Committee in relation to enquiries or complaints of a skill nature.
- Advise on the conduct and frequency of Technical Rescue training exercises and programs.
- Advise and submit requests for rescue equipment to the QFRS State Technical Rescue Committee.
- Provide future direction for all aspects of Technical Rescue operations and training throughout South Western Region.
- Plan and provide future financial direction for Technical Rescue within South Western Region.
- Provide a mechanism for and participate in conflict resolution as required.
- Keep the Assistant Commissioner fully informed on all matters relating to Technical Rescue within South Western Region.

5.6.1 Regional Sponsor

Provide guidance, planning, and decision making for the effective delivery and future direction of Technical Rescue at regional level via the Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee. Provide a mechanism for and participate in conflict resolution as required.

5.6.2 Tenure

The Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor shall be appointed to the position of Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor by the QFRS South Western Region Assistant Commissioner for such a period of time as the QFRS South Western Region Assistant Commissioner determines. The Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor must hold substantive rank of not less than FPO4.

5.6.3 Regional Assistant Commissioner

Provide guidance, planning, infrastructure and decision making for the effective delivery and future delivery of Technical Rescue at regional level, in consultation with the Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor and Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee.

6. Reporting Relationships

Reporting relationships will be in accordance with the Technical Rescue Reporting Relationships operational and training flow charts. This does not alter existing QFRS Command & Control procedures with the designated Incident Controller having overall incident management responsibility.

6.1 Technical Rescue Operator Trainees (L1)

Technical Rescue Operator Trainees under the control of Station Officers report to and remain subordinate to Technical Rescue Operators during the conduct of theory training and any operational incident they may attend whilst undergoing training.

6.2 L1 Operators

Technical Rescue Operators report to and remain subordinate to Technical Rescue Technicians during the conduct of theory and practical training and any operational incident they may attend where there is a Technical Rescue Technician in attendance.

6.3 L2 Technicians

Technical Rescue Technicians report to and remain subordinate to Senior Technical Rescue Technicians during the conduct of theory and practical training where there is a Senior Technical Rescue Technician in attendance.

At incidents, Technical Rescue Technicians will provide specialist advice and/or be assigned control of the direct Technical Rescue operation/s by the Incident Controller.

6.4 Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator

Regional Technical Rescue Coordinator reports to and remains subordinate to:

Manager Regional Training in relation to regional training matters.

Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor in all matters relating to Technical Rescue within the region.

6.5 Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee

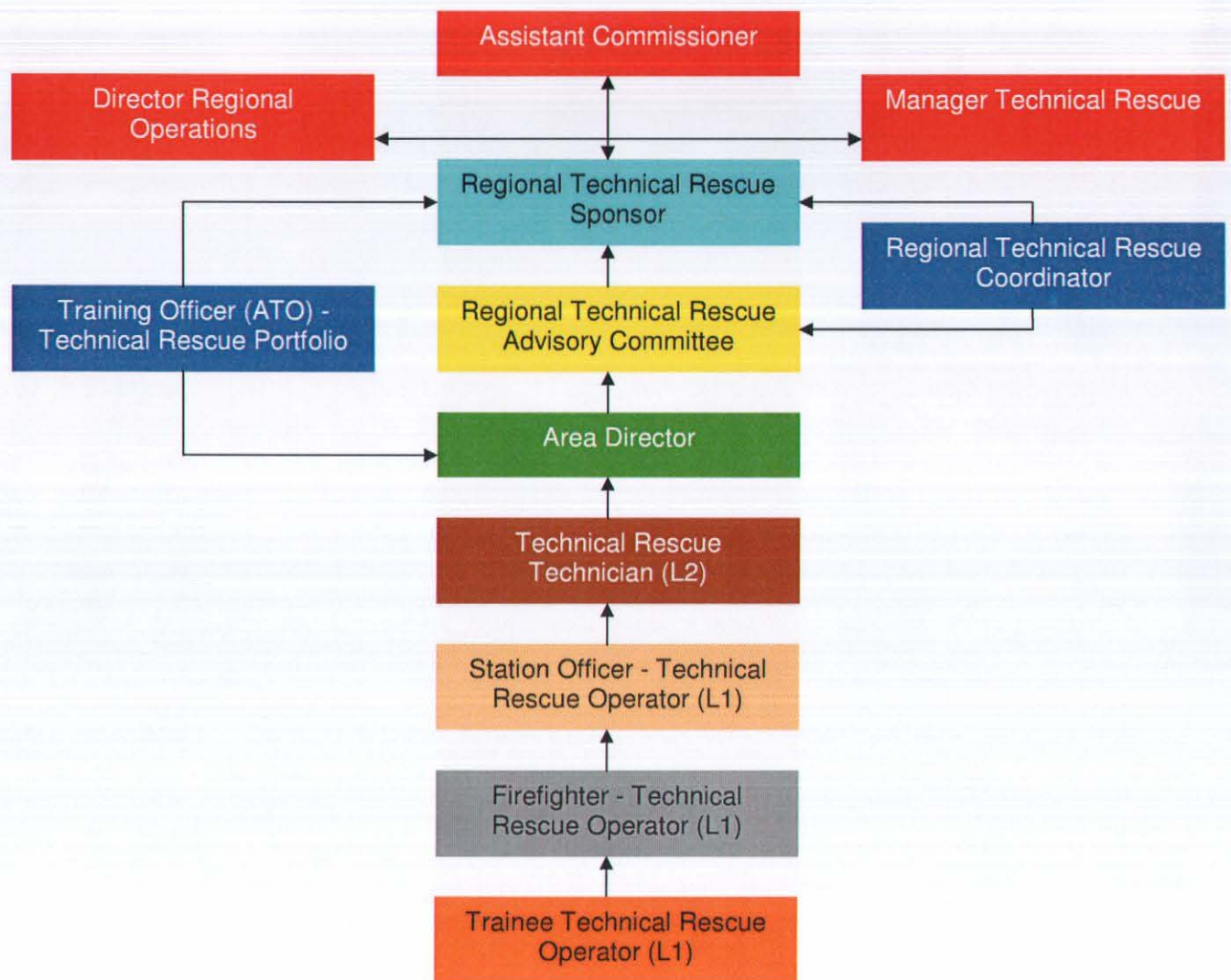
Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee shall report to the Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor and Manager Technical Rescue on all Regional Technical Rescue matters.

Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor

Regional Technical Rescue Sponsor reports to Assistant Commissioner in all matters relating to Technical Rescue within the region.

South Western Region Technical Rescue Operational Reporting Relationships (Non Incident)

Flow Chart



7. Conflict Resolution

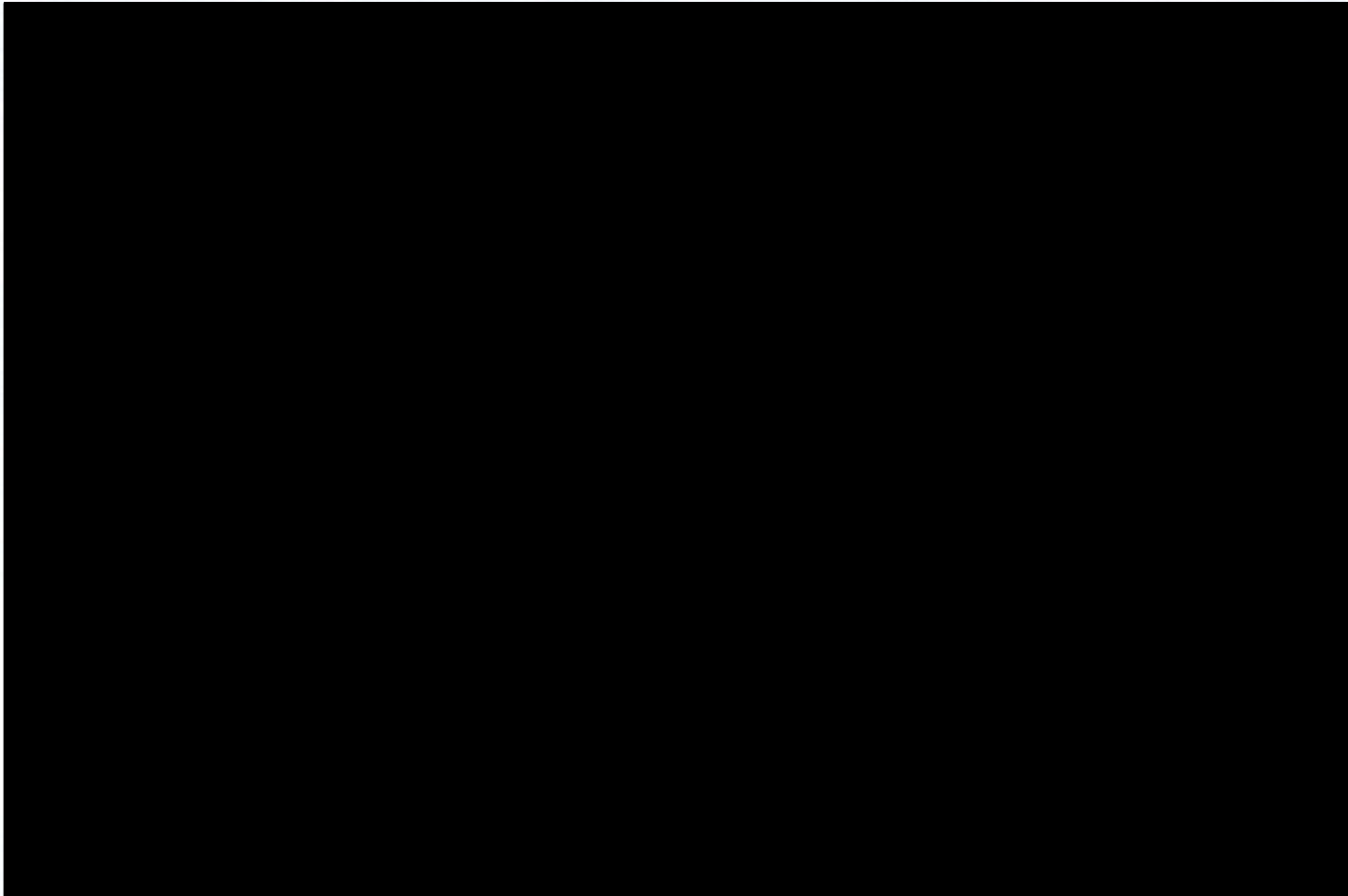
Any issue or conflict arising from operations, training or training course selection requiring resolution will be resolved via the appropriate chain of command as defined in the Operational and/or Training Reporting Relationship commencing at immediate supervisor level and if necessary progressing through to the Regional Technical Rescue Advisory Committee.

Conflict Resolution Management

Conflict resolution will be managed in accordance with the provisions of the QFRS Interim Award – State 2003.

Attachment "1"

South Western Region "Start of Shift"- Proforma
TECHNICAL RESCUE (LEVEL 2) LOCATIONS



Appendix B: South Western Region Pandemic Plan

1. Aim and Objectives

The **aim** of this plan is to manage the threat posed to Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) South Western Region personnel during a pandemic outbreak and to ensure maintenance of an acceptable level of essential services.

The **objective** of this plan is to provide a strategic level framework for the QFRS South Western Region to plan for staff safety and maintaining an acceptable level of emergency response and essential community services during a pandemic.

2. Introduction

All indications are that the world is overdue for a major influenza pandemic. With the current prevalence of avian influenza (H5N1) in wild and domestic bird populations in South East Asia and Eastern Europe, experts are predicting that the next human pandemic will be associated with this strain of the virus and will hit within the next few years.

Given that the influenza is highly infectious and that its effects can cause individuals to be ill for weeks, it is essential that emergency services such as the QFRS plan to continue to provide essential services to the community.

This plan will be invoked as the pandemic phases change under the authority of the Commissioner of the QFRS.

On being notified of a change in the level of alert, this plan will be a guide to maintain effective and efficient operational services in the QFRS South Western Region.

2.1 Pandemic Phases

Queensland Health's *Queensland Pandemic Plan* details the six phases of a pandemic. The groupings of these phases differ slightly from the Australian Government Plan by nominating a preparedness, alert and pandemic period. The groupings and determinants of the phases are listed in the table below.

| Phase | Description and Situation |
|---------|--|
| 0 to 3 | Pandemic Preparedness period. At 0 there were no cases or novel influenza. At phase 1 a novel influenza appears in animals with the risk to humans considered low. At phase 2 the risk to humans has elevated to high. At phase 3 there is human infection from contact with animals but no confirmed cases of human to human spread. |
| 4 and 5 | Pandemic Alert period. At Phase 4 human to human transmission is confirmed but contained to small clusters either overseas or in Australia. At Phase 5 the extent of human to human transmission is greater (higher in volume) but still in identifiable clusters. |
| 6 | Pandemic Period. At Phase 6 regional or multi-regional epidemics have been confirmed. This is an impact minimisation and sustainability management phase |

2.2 Likely Impacts

The effect of an influenza pandemic on the health system will be overwhelming and felt universally by all emergency services.

The impact of this level of infection will be felt by the QFRS in a number of ways but most notably:

- An increase in the request for assistance by Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and a possible increase in emergency medical responses;
- Assisting in the management of influenza related hazardous material issues at hospitals;
- Possible requests for assistance in disposing of infected bird populations (as per previous NSW assistance)
- An increase in emergency response calls (i.e. Intentional fire setting as a result of civil disorder)
- A reduction of the available workforce through illness or caring for ill family.

2.3 Personal Protection Equipment

The Queensland Pandemic Plan states that the minimum level of respiratory protection for Avian Influenza is the P2 (95 equivalent) disposable particulate filter respirator (mask). The '95' refers to a 95% filter efficiency and the comparative Australian Standard is AS/NZS 1715 – 1994 & 1716 – 1994 – Respiratory Protective Devices (P2).

Medical or surgical facemasks will only provide a barrier against large droplets and are most effective if worn by a patient. The filter material of a medical or surgical facemask may not prevent penetration of sub micron materials and should only be considered as a last resort if a P2 (95) respirator mask is not immediately available. QFRS South Western Region will purchase sufficient P2 (95) respiratory masks as supplies become available

3. Implementation

3.1 General Outline

This plan is designed to ensure that a pandemic outbreak will be managed by QFRS South Western Region in a controlled fashion. As pandemic alert levels change, QFRS South Western Region's operations will be scaled according to the following:

- Q-Health advice as to the location of the outbreak, and the degree of assurance offered regarding their capacity to isolate cases;
- Exposure of QFRS South Western Region staff and potential for further infection;
- Capacity to maintain normal response operations in the face of possible escalating demand for service and potential reduction in numbers of staff available to provide emergency response.

This QFRS South Western Region Pandemic Response Plan is consistent with the State and Federal Government Plans and ensures that the QFRS South Western Region is prepared to maintain the safety of their staff as well as maintaining an acceptable level of emergency response capability.

3.2 Strategies

QFRS South Western Region will take a proactive approach in ensuring the health and welfare of its staff. Whilst the various strategies in this plan make mention of anti-viral medication and the targeting of critical stations and staff, QFRS South Western Region will not assume guaranteed access to this type of medication. In fact, there is a distinct possibility that access to additional Personnel Protection Equipment and respiratory protection will be in short supply due to the overwhelming demand worldwide. The

following sections outline the strategies to be considered by the QFRS South Western Region for the various phases of a pandemic.

3.3 Staff Management

The management of staff shortages will be a key component in dealing with a disaster of this kind. The distribution of disease is likely to involve clusters of cases in regional as well as metropolitan centres which will add a further layer of complexity in the management of the situation.

South Western Region has developed rostering models that reflect a diminishing staff force (90%, 80%, 70%, 60% staffing levels – see **Attachment “1”**). These models will include identification of strategic stations that the South Western Region will endeavour to remain operating. As staff numbers diminish it may be necessary to implement a workforce management strategy that includes:

- Recall of additional staff from leave;
- Cancellation of all forms of leave (other than sick and special leave);
- Recall of casual staff or volunteers.

These plans will not include additional assistance from other regions or interstate. During such times management will be reluctant to move staff from Region to Region or from interstate, particularly when it is likely that these areas will also be feeling the effects of staff absenteeism.

South Western Region will identify Welfare Officers (e.g. ROHA Officers) to assist families of employees who are undergoing hardship as a result of the pandemic. This may encourage staff to attend work knowing that their families are being assisted by welfare officers.

Staff management processes will be prepared to ensure that the system for recall is feasible and the process is planned.

3.4 Education

Staff Education will be critical in ensuring that staff are aware of the threat of the illness as well as practices to mitigate the threat of spread. The QFRS Operations Directorate will play an important role in distributing timely information to staff both before and during an outbreak. Data and safety bulletins from Queensland Health will also be a valuable source of information for staff education.

During a pandemic phase in the event of staff absenteeism and a reduction of services this education campaign may have to include a public campaign detailing the importance of “life threatening emergency calls” only. It is envisaged that this would be a whole of department campaign.

3.5 Inter-Agency Planning

The cooperation of stakeholders will be central to the effective management of a outbreak of an influenza pandemic. Therefore, QFRS South Western Region will liaise with other agencies to ensure a consistent approach is followed. The plans will be developed with other corresponding government agencies for example Queensland Health – Health Services Zone and their Health Services District.

To ensure a collaborative multi agency approach, the QFRS South Western Region will consider the use of the District Disaster Management Group to provide an appropriate forum for joint planning.

3.6 Social Distancing

The term “social distancing” is often mentioned in pandemic influenza plans and refers to practices put in place to reduce the contact with members of the public. Such practices

can include allowing staff to work from home, abstaining from shopping centres and suspension of mass gathering sites such as sporting events and schools. These types of strategies will be considered by the QFRS South Western Region for maintaining essential services in the event of anti-viral medications and vaccines not being available.

3.7 Risk Assessment

QFRS South Western Region has completed a risk assessment matrix for staff in their areas (**see Attachment "2"**). This assessment identifies staff in the region that are essential to maintain an **acceptable** level of emergency response capability. Due to the demand for respiratory protection (PPE) and anti-virals, this risk assessment is not designed to identify services and the number of staff that provide the normal levels of response in the region, but rather the level of regional response which is deemed **acceptable**. This document will contribute in planning for PPE supply and distribution.

Due to the nature of an influenza pandemic, this risk management matrix differs slightly from normal processes. The Risk Matrix includes the normal areas of risk (personal exposure at work) and criticality, but in addition, assesses the working environment relating to "dealing with the public." For example communication staff is rated high in criticality and lower in exposure at work, but the additional field of environment (dealing with the public) will be rated as low/rare.

3.8 Review

The nature of influenza pandemics are constantly changing and in line with these changes, this plan will be reviewed annually unless there is no significant change either overseas or in Australia.

Attachment "1"

Regional staffing models

Regional staffing models to cater for 100%, 90%, 80%, 70% and 60% staff availability are as follows:

| 100% staff availability | |
|--|--|
| <u>permanent staff</u> operating on each of four shifts | <u>auxiliary staff</u> required to crew all auxiliary fire appliances |
| 2 permanent fire stations, with multiple fire appliances | 40 auxiliary fire stations, some with multiple Pumper capacity |
| Stations with multiple fire appliances are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchener St (2 fire appliances) • Anzac Av (2 fire appliances) | Stations with multiple pumpers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warwick, Stanthorpe, Inglewood. • Dalby, Jandowae, Chinchilla, Miles, • Goondiwindi, St George • Roma • Charleville |

| 90% staff availability | |
|--|--|
| <u>permanent staff</u> operating on each of four shifts. | <u>auxiliary staff</u> required to crew available auxiliary fire appliances. |
| Fire appliances to be removed from duty are as follows: | Fire appliances to be removed from duty are as follows: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aerial appliance from Kitchener St • Second Pumper appliance from Anzac Av • Control Vehicle from Kitchener St | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auxiliary Pumper |

| 80% staff availability | |
|---|--|
| <u>permanent staff</u> operating on each of four shifts. | <u>auxiliary staff</u> required to crew available auxiliary fire appliances. |
| In addition to the above, the following fire appliances to be removed from duty/or have reduced crew levels are: | In addition to the above, the following fire appliances to be removed from duty are: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Tender from Kitchener St • Technical Rescue Tender from Kitchener St | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auxiliary Pumper at |

| 70% staff availability | |
|---|--|
| <u>permanent staff</u> operating on each of four shifts. | <u>auxiliary staff</u> required to crew available auxiliary fire appliances. |
| In addition to the above, the following stations to have reduced crew levels: | In addition to the above, the following fire appliances to be removed from duty are: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate 1+2 crews at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchener St • Anzac Av | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auxiliary Pumper |

| 60% staff availability | |
|--|--|
| <u>permanent staff</u> operating on each of four shifts. | <u>auxiliary staff</u> required to crew available auxiliary fire appliances. |

In addition to the above, the following stations to have reduced crew levels:

- Operate 1+2 crews at:
- Kitchener St
- Close Anzac Av Fire Stations

In addition to the above, the following fire appliances to be removed from duty are:

- Auxiliary Pumper

QFRS South Western Region Response Plans Checklist

| Phases 0 to 3 Plan and Prepare | |
|---|--|
| <u>Strategy</u> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop staffing models on differing absentee rates (90%, 80%,70%,60%) ▪ Undertake Regional/District Risk Assessment on staff for access to anti-viral /vaccinations (Identification of key staff and response to maintain acceptable levels | |
| Phase 4 & 5 Human to Human confirmed: small clusters or localised larger regions | |
| <u>Strategy</u> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor absenteeism spikes in the QFRS South Western Region. ▪ ****Consider activations of RFCC (Limited staffing) ▪ Consider ceasing all overseas business travel and domestic travel. ▪ *****Ceasing all QAS assistance and medical responses to respiratory complaints ▪ *****Consider partial closedown of Community Safety Offices and all other non-essential service areas.(Phone call monitoring Only) ▪ Limit staff transfers where possible. ▪ Consider arrangements for office staff to work from home. ▪ *****Consider limiting/suspending training activities (including auxiliary and volunteer staff) and community activities (school visits etc.). ▪ Activate self monitoring of staff and notification of suspected cases to Queensland Health. ▪ Operational staff to adhere to infection control measures in identified at risk areas (P2 masks, gloves etc.). | |
| Phase 6 Regional and Multi Regional Epidemics | |
| <u>Strategy</u> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cease all community engagement and community education activities. ▪ RFCC to provide daily reports to SOCC re staffing levels. ▪ Cease all intra-state business travel and conduct meetings via teleconference or video conference facilities. ▪ Consider ceasing all QAS assistance calls. ▪ All staff to refrain from attending mass gathering sites (shopping centres etc.) during work hours. ▪ Closing down Community Safety Offices and all other non-essential service areas. ▪ Staff support plan activated (Welfare Officer). ▪ Arrangements for office staff to work from home. ▪ Operational personnel confined to stations during shifts other than fire-calls. ▪ Maintain a register of those who were sick and recovered as they will be immune. ▪ Ensure Peer support measures are in place. ▪ Suspend all training activities (including auxiliary and volunteer staff). | |

Attachment "2"

Risk matrix

| Personal Exposure at Work | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 5 - Extreme | Almost certain exposure to infective agent during normal operation of the industry |
| 4 - High | Probable exposure through the course of normal operations |
| 3 - Medium | Possible exposure through the course of normal operations |
| 2 - Low | Unlikely exposure through the course of normal operations |
| 1 - Rare | Risk is no greater than the general community |

| Environment - Dealing with General Public | |
|---|--|
| 5 | Uncontrolled environment or where the integrity of PPE <u>can not</u> be assured |
| 3 | Adequate precautions are available or where the integrity of PPE can be assured |
| 1 | Risk is no greater than normal community exposure |

| Criticality of Industry to the Community | |
|--|--|
| 5 | Critical to public order & health |
| 4 | Essential to the safe functioning of society |
| 3 | Loss of industry would cause disruption to normal functioning of society |
| 2 | Loss of industry would cause minimal disruption |
| 1 | non-essential industry: loss would not cause disruption |

| Decision Matrix | | | |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Likelihood | Exposure | Environment | Criticality |
| Extreme | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| High | 4 | | 4 |
| Medium | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Low | 2 | | 2 |
| Rare | 1 | 1 | 1 |

| Personal Exposure at Work | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|--|--|-------|
| Agency | Essential Service Activity | Number of Staff | Personal Exposure at Work 5 – Extreme 4 – High 3 – Medium 2 – Low 1 – Rare | Environment – Dealing with General Public 5 3 1 | Criticality of Industry 5 to 1 (5 = highest with no redundancy) | Score |
| QFRS | First responders Permanent | | 4 | 5 | 4 | |
| | First Responders Auxiliary | | 4 | 5 | 4 | |
| | Management | | 4 | 3 | 4 | |
| | Senior Executive Management | | 3 | 3 | 4 | |
| | Communications Centre | | 2 | 2 | 5 | |
| | Administrative Staff | | 2 | 2 | 4 | |

Equipment and Communication Systems

Integral to the safety of QFRS officers at any emergency incident and the efficiency of operations is communication equipment and systems. Statements of officers involved in the flood events highlights deficiencies in this area.

Of particular concern was the failure of portable radios due to the weather conditions as they are not water resistant and this resulted in officers resorting to the use of mobile phones. Other significant issues with the failure and shortage of radios are described in the statements provided by officers directly involved.

Please refer to Recommendation two.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Procedures

A particular point of concern for the Union, from the perspective of preparation and planning, were statements by officers that they had difficulty in convincing more senior officers of the necessity for early recall of officers for additional crewing.

Officers involved believe that decisions such as an early recall of off duty officers would be assisted by the placement of more senior officers on the ground and close to events at a much earlier stage rather than making decisions from remote locations without proper situational awareness.

In the weeks leading up to the 10th of January, the incidence of swift water rescues had increased and with weather reports on the 10th of January, officers on the ground were concerned that there were insufficient resources available should the worst happen. Consequently, there was frustration with an initial lack of response to requests for additional staffing and resourcing.

Statements provided by those officers directly involved again emphasise the concerns of the Union and its members.

Please see Recommendation three.

Safe Systems of Work

This issue of safe systems of work is linked to preparation and planning by emergency services, immediate management response and recovery, resourcing, overall co-ordination and deployment of personnel and adequacy of equipment contained in the commissions Terms of Reference. The Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, Section 28 provides that, persons conducting a business or undertaking have an obligation to ensure the workplace health and safety of the person and each of the person's workers. Section 29 provides among other things, the obligation of those conducting business or undertaking includes ensuring safe systems of work. Directly relevant to assisting safe systems of work is the provision and maintenance of minimum safe crewing levels for emergency incidents.

The experiences of officers directly involved in the flood events subject to this inquiry, highlight the extreme difficulty or impossibility of maintaining safe systems of work in the recent flood events due to an extreme lack of trained and equipped personnel.

The experience of the officers on the ground was that the current arrangements of only providing level one training to full time permanent urban officers is inadequate as auxiliary crews without training and equipment were involved in assisting in swift water rescue. This was not only dangerous to themselves but also potentially dangerous for the rescue technicians they were assisting. There is a view amongst these officers that auxiliary crews need to be trained and equipped to properly respond to and assist at swift water rescues.

As been previously stated, the capping of the numbers of level two rescue technicians, and the level of training for swift water rescues for all urban firefighters both permanent and auxiliary needs to be reviewed as a matter of priority. The service delivery to the

community and the safety of firefighters cannot be allowed to be compromised by underfunding of the fire service and its ability to fulfill its statutory obligations.

The Union believes it is unconscionable to respond firefighters to incidents not knowing if there are going to be sufficient numbers of adequately trained crew. While there are written procedures and training that provide officers should not attempt a rescue without adequate crew strength, no amount of policy and procedures will over-ride human instinct and nature when it comes to rescuing another human in distress and danger of dying.

To assist the commission with these issues, attached to this section are:

- a) Incident Action Guide 3.5 Swiftwater;
- b) SO-Q-PD-1.2 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Training Level one;
- c) FCCD-Q-3.13 Fire Communications Centre Directive. Water Rescue all types.

These documents highlight the particular hazards and risks associated with carrying out a swift water rescue and highlight the need for a minimum level of response that for the safety of firefighters should be adhered to in all instances. In particular FCCD-Q-3.13 indicates that the initial assignment for any water rescue is one pumper (four personnel) and one specialist rescue/rescue appliance (two – four personnel) giving a minimum 6-8 personnel for an initial response. The experience of officers on the ground was that in most if not all instances this minimum response could not be provided let alone maintained.

See Recommendation four.



INCIDENT ACTION GUIDE

Swiftwater

Version: 3.0
Valid from: 31/05/2008

IAG 3.5

1. PURPOSE

- (a) To provide information and guidance for swiftwater rescues.

2. APPLICATION

- (a) Applies to fire officers who may respond to incidents involving swiftwater rescue.

3. PRE-INCIDENT PLANNING

- (a) Fire officers are to receive appropriate training and maintain their competency before undertaking any swiftwater rescues. QFRS has three levels of training, swiftwater awareness, Level 1 Technician (dry rescue only) and Level 2 Technician (dry and wet rescue). Only Level 2 trained personnel are to enter the water. Refer also to Incident Directive 24.1.5.
- (b) The Officer-in-charge should ensure that planning occurs for local response to a swiftwater rescue. This may be achieved by identifying potential rescue sites previous rescue sites and then identifying site risks and local procedures. Where sites have been identified, undertake familiarisation activities, including training and simulated exercises, to identify equipment required, natural anchors, access and site specific hazards. Plan access to potential sites taking into account road and bridge closures from flooding.
- (c) Anticipate potential rescues by monitoring weather situations such as prolonged heavy rain, impending storm activities or flooding. Liaise with local State Emergency Service (SES) groups and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) to promote interoperability for rescue operations. Ascertain what resources are available to assist within the area.
- (d) When regional resources are unable to meet response demands due to the scale, intensity and duration of operations, assistance from other regions and/or the Special Operations Unit may be requested. Support for additional Level 2 swiftwater rescue technicians and resources (beyond regional capability) can be arranged by contacting the State Operations Coordination Centre and coordinated with the Special Operations Unit Duty Officer (refer Incident Directive 25.1). This may occur prior to a response to a swiftwater rescue incident, or to standby at areas identified as having a risk of a swiftwater rescue occurring.
- (e) Fire officers must be aware of the importance these activities can have on familiarisation (e.g. hazard recognition and reinforcement of operational practices), and developing the Incident Action Plan (IAP) when an emergency does arise.

4. INCIDENT RESPONSE

4.1 Determine Tactical Response

- (a) Each swiftwater incident presents many variables (e.g. risks, exposures, available resources). The Incident Controller must adapt knowledge (e.g. pre-incident planning, training, previous experiences and innovative approaches) and obtain incident information to safely resolve the situation with the most effective and efficient use of available resources.
- (b) The Incident Controller will determine the appropriate response using RECEO and PACT to continuously identify hazards, assess the risks, prioritise objectives and apply tactics to control and manage the incident (refer Incident Action Guide 1.3).
- (c) The Incident Controller will identify the incident objectives, which begins from the initial response, so that the Incident Action Plan can be established, implemented and communicated using the SMEACS briefing format.

4.2 Specific Incident Information

- (a) Under the State Rescue Policy QFRS is the lead agency for swiftwater rescue incidents. Depending on the incident circumstances and conditions (e.g. swiftwater, floodwater or floodwater with swiftwater) the Officer-in-charge may either be the Incident Controller or the QFRS Commander.
- (b) The following table provides a list of given hazards and other issues associated with swiftwater rescues that may influence tactical priorities.

| SPECIFIC HAZARDS FOR: SWIFTWATER RESCUE |
|---|
| Firefighter Safety and Operational Issues |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personnel not trained or equipped to perform rescues safely.• Structural firefighting gear being worn during rescue.• Rescuer being secured by tying rope around waist as safety line.• Debris being swept into rescue area.• Risk of personnel being swept down stream and becoming a victim during rescue activities.• Temperature of water - low temperature will restrict exposure time.• Initiate IAP rapidly due to time restraints.• Losing sight and position of casualty.• Electrical hazards (e.g. powerlines being down in storm conditions).• Double the water speed (e.g. quadruple the force exerted).• Potential infections from water.• SES flood boat crews operation.• Unguarded propellers used on flood rescue boats.• Rescuers being drowned by panicked casualty climbing on top of them.• Low light conditions reducing visibility due to night time rescues and storms.• Weather conditions (e.g. storm activity increasing or tidal effects).• Immediate medical treatment required for casualty and possibly rescuer.• Critical incident stress affecting rescue personnel.• Riverbanks becoming unstable and collapsing. |
| Community Safety and Environmental Concerns |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confusion, panic and curiosity of members of the public trying to gain access and assist rescue.• Additional rescue due to members of the public attempting rescues.• Health and safety of non-QFRS support agencies involved in the incident. |

4.3 Tactical Implementation

(a) The Incident Controller (or QFRS Commander) will continuously monitor and review the tactics until the incident objectives are achieved and the incident is resolved. The following tactics specifically apply to swiftwater incidents:

- Assess the situation.
- Respond level 2 swiftwater rescue technicians.
- Identify type of swiftwater rescue:
 - Person/persons being swept away by current,
 - Motor vehicle with occupants being swept away into waterways,
 - Person/persons entrapped at a static location.
- Assess if it is a recovery or rescue mode of operations.
- Secure any witnesses or responsible parties to provide information.
- Establish incident control zones and clearly identify the zones with barrier tape (or other visual marker) to restrict the public from entering the water.
- Determine suitable tactics to effect the rescue with least risk to the rescuer/s (from low to high):
 - **Yell** - stabilise the situation, i.e. give the casualty instructions that will prevent the situation from becoming worse.
 - **Reach** - the rescuer is attached to a safety line with quick release mechanism and attempts to use boat hooks, ceiling hooks or ladders to reach casualty and recover.
 - **Throw** - if victim is out of reach, a throw bag or a secured floatation device is thrown to the casualty and then is hauled in or swung downstream to be recovered.
 - **Wade** - it is sometimes possible to effect a rescue by a rescuer/s wading out to a casualty and bring them back,
 - **Row** - if available boat based operations to have boat tethered and anchored on both banks.
 - **Go-Tow** - a rescuer will approach the casualty with a floatation device and assist the person to be extracted.
 - **Helio** - direct extraction assisted by crewman and pilot to have final say on use of aircraft given weather conditions and access.
- All personnel working in the rescue area to wear PPE relevant to swiftwater rescues. Do not wear SCBA when entering the water (refer Incident Directive 5.6) and do not wear firefighting PPE (including boots and helmet). Station-wear is acceptable.
- Appoint an upstream spotter to warn of any floating debris that may impact entrapped casualties.
- Appoint a downstream safety spotter as a back up for rescuers and casualty/s.
- Assess the need for additional resources (e.g. helicopters and flood boats) and anticipate with an early request.
- If casualties are trapped on or in motor vehicle, stabilise vehicle to prevent any movements.
- Use of thermal imaging camera to locate persons during low light level operations.
- Verbal and visual contact with the rescuer to be maintained.
- Before rescuer enters water to have sufficient personnel suitable equipped to be a safety team.
- Condition of the rescuer is monitored at all time during the rescue (fatigue and hypothermia).
- Areas near bridges or roads to have traffic safety measures in place.
- Instructions are provided to non-QFRS support agencies (including PPE requirements).
- Continually assess and manage the risks for the duration of the incident.

5. POST-INCIDENT RECOVERY

(a) The Incident Controller (or QFRS Commander) will:

- Ensure that overhaul is conducted (refer Incident Action Guide 1.4) and de-mobilisation of resources and de-escalation of the Incident Management System occurs.
- Ensure that the integrity of evidence at the scene is preserved and record all relevant information and observations.
- Liaise with the relevant agency/s to ascertain the impact of the hazard and if further QFRS involvement is required, before handing the situation to relevant authority (as required).
- Conduct an incident debrief and then a post-incident analysis, to identify improvements to procedures, training and equipment (refer Incident Management System 2.10).
- Initiate the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) de-briefing process as necessary (refer Incident Directive 13.1).
- Ensure that all equipment to be checked for damage cleaned and/or replaced.

6. TACTICAL SUMMARY

| TACTICAL SUMMARY: SWIFTWATER RESCUE | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess situation (e.g. rescue or recovery mode).• Request relevant/additional resources including Level 2 swiftwater rescue technicians.• Establish incident control zones and clearly identify with barrier tape (or other visual marker).• Identify type of swiftwater rescue:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– person/s being swept away by current,– motor vehicle with occupants being swept away into waterways,– person/s entrapped at a static location.• Determine suitable tactics to reduce risk to rescuers - Yell, Reach, Throw, Wade, Row, Go-Tow, Helo• Wear assessed level of PPE for water rescue duties• SCBA and structural firefighting PPE must not be worn when entering the water.• Appoint upstream spotter to warn of any floating debris.• Appoint downstream safety spotter as a back up for rescuers and casualty/s.• Before rescuer enters water to have sufficient personnel suitable equipped to be a safety team.• If casualties are trapped on or in motor vehicle, stabilise vehicle to prevent any movements.• Areas near bridges or roads to have traffic control measures in place.• Use thermal imaging camera to locate persons during low light level operations.• Verbal and visual contact with the rescuer to be maintained.• Continuously monitor the condition of the rescuer.• Continually assess and manage the risks for the duration of the incident. | |

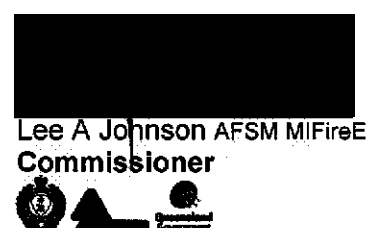
7. QFRS RELEVANCY

| IAG 3.5 | URBAN | | RURAL OPERATIONS | RURAL FIRE BRIGADES | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------------|
| | Full time | Part time | Full time | Special | iZone | Village | Rural | Primary Producer |
| Applicable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| Not Applicable | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| May Apply * | | | | | | | | |

* This document may apply to some Rural brigades. Check with your Senior Officer for additional information.

REFERENCES

The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990
QFRS Training Material
QFRS Operational Guides
State Rescue Policy





Standing Order

Version: 4.0
Valid from: 1 January 2011
Valid to: 30 June 2012

Document Number: SO-Q-PD-1.2
Process Facilitator: Director, School of Fire and Rescue Service Training
Content Expert: Executive Manager, Special Operations Command

Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Training – Level 1

Purpose

This Standing Order (SO) outlines the requirements for Level 1 Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue (SFR) trained personnel.

Application

This SO applies to the introduction of Level 1 SFR training to all Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) operational personnel.

Introduction

Under the Department of Community Safety's (DCS) State Rescue Policy, the QFRS has a primary response role to SFR incidents within urban areas serviced by permanent full-time stations.

The QFRS has two competency levels for SFR training:

- Level 1 – covers hazard awareness, personal safety and shore-based rescue competencies; and
- Level 2 – incorporates Level 1 competencies and further techniques, awareness and advanced techniques that enable in-water rescues.

Policy

All permanent QFRS Officers will be trained in Level 1 SFR techniques. This training is to be delivered by QFRS Level 2 Rescue Technicians.

QFRS Level 2 Rescue Technicians will be trained in Level 2 SFR techniques.

Level 1 SFR trained personnel:

- Will carry out shore based rescues only;
- Will not work within three metres of a watercourse unless wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- Shall use only the competencies taught in QFRS Level 1 SFR training; and
- Shall not undertake in-water rescues.

Level 1 personnel are able to obtain familiarity with wearing the relevant protective equipment within controlled static water environment (static water environment refers to a swimming pool).

Participation in this activity has no relationship with the Level 2 SFR competency, i.e. it does not equate to being able to conduct the activities of a Level 2 SFR competent person.

Procedures

As part of Level 1 SFR training, Officers are to be offered a voluntary opportunity to enter a static water environment (i.e. swimming pool):

- To increase personal safety in the event of accidental immersion during a shore-based rescue incident; and
- To increase familiarity with PPE.

Officers will wear their station wear uniform including a personal flotation device and a vertical rescue helmet.

No prejudice or pressure shall be applied to make an individual complete the in-water component of the Level 1 training.

The in water component does not affect the individual's Level 1 SFR competency regarding PUASAR009A – Participate in an Aquatic Rescue.

The Officer-in-Charge (OIC) and operational crews need to be aware of each other's levels of competency in order to allocate personnel effectively and in the most appropriate manner at water rescue incidents.

Superseded Documents

Standing Order SO-Q-PD-1.2 – Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue Training – Level 1 – Version 3.0

Relevant Legislation, Standards and Guidelines

- *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*

Associated Documents

- QFRS Incident Action Guide 3.5 – Rescue – Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue (SFR)
- DCS State Rescue Policy
- RTO Policies and Procedures

It is anticipated that the operational content of this document will be incorporated into the QFRS Operations Doctrine in the next update cycle.



Lee A Johnson AFSM MIFireE
Commissioner

1. PURPOSE

To provide information and guidance when responding to emergency calls for assistance to incidents involving the rescue of persons from swift or static water.

2. APPLICATION

Applies to all Fire Communications personnel who manage emergency calls for assistance.

3. DIRECTIVE

RWATER – Rescue Water All Types

All QFRS Firecom personnel will adhere to the following procedures when responding to this problem type.

This procedure applies to incidents involving the rescue of persons from water including swift water rescue. This may have occurred due to flooding, storm water, swift water, difficulties in surf, possible drowning, falling into a river, lake, flooded drain, etc. Also includes incidents in static non-domestic water supplies such as dams and reservoirs.

Water rescues require the attendance of specially trained Swiftwater Floodwater Rescue (SFR) Technicians and Equipment. Firecom personnel should anticipate potential swift water rescues by monitoring weather situations such as prolonged heavy rain, impending storm activities or flooding.

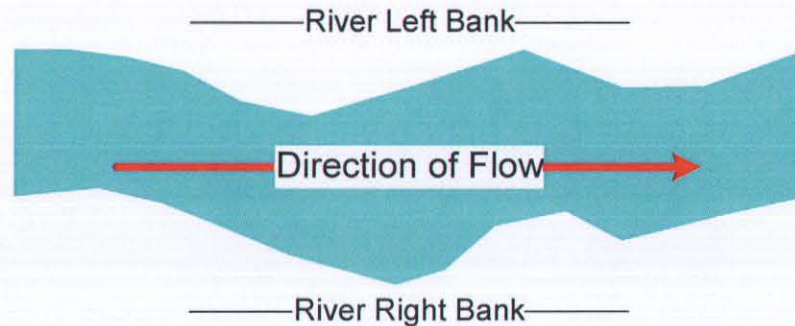
4. PROCEDURE

The following information provides the minimum response to this incident type:

- **Call taking:**
 - **Answer** the call as per [Emergency Call Management](#)
 - When you have confirmed the problem type and location: -
 - **Ask** the caller
 - **What** happened?
 - **Where** exactly is the person/s? Is the person/s in the water, in a tree, in or on a vehicle?
 - **How** many persons are involved?
 - **Type** of watercourse (i.e., river, dam, floodway or seaway)?

- **What** is the best access for rescue vehicles?
- **Is** the person injured?
- **Can** you communicate with the person?
- **Is** the water rising or falling?
- **Which** bank is the person closest to? *River Left Bank or River Right Bank?*

Caller to face downstream and advise which bank the person is closest to



- **Instruct** the caller to meet the brigade
- **Despatch:**
 - Initial Assignment:** One pumper on turnout
One specialty rescue/rescue appliance on turnout
 - Notify:** QPS
QAS
 - QFRS Notify:** Senior Officer
 - Consider:** Technical Rescue response procedures
Contacting Local Government Authority
Accessing flood boats or helicopter
- **Record:**
 - All actions on CAD
- **Action:**
 - All requests from attending crews

5. POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

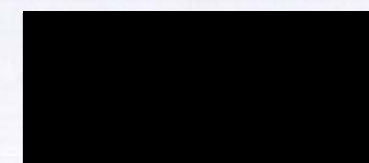
- Was the call managed appropriately? If not, what action needs to be taken?
- Did Firecom personnel follow the correct procedure for this incident? If not, what action needs to be taken?
- Does the procedure require review?
- Has all the relevant information been added to the incident report?
- Is a debrief appropriate for this incident?

6. QFRS FIRE COMMUNICATION CENTRES RELEVANCY

| 1 | Regions | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|---|---|---|-----|-----|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N | 5 S | 6 | 7 |
| Urban | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rural | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Not Applicable | | | | | | | | |
| May Apply* | | | | | | | | |

REFERENCES

Operations Doctrine IAG 3.4 and 3.5
Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990
QFRS Training Material



Lee A Johnson AFSM MIFireE
Commissioner



Terms of Reference

- 1) Preparation and planning by federal, state and local governments; emergency services and the community for the 2010/2011 floods in Queensland
- 2) The performance of private insurers in meeting their claims responsibilities,
- 3) All aspects of the response to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community and measures to protect life and private and public property, including:
 - Immediate management, response and recovery
 - Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment
 - Adequacy of equipment and communications systems; and
 - The adequacy of the community's response
- 4) The measures to manage the supply of essential services such as power, water and communications during the 2010/2011 flood events
- 5) Adequacy of forecasts and early warning system particularly as they related to the flooding events in Toowoomba and the Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys

Summary of Firefighter One Transcript

Terms of reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Misunderstanding between senior staff and operational staff as to the severity of the floods and when to expect it to peak (p8, 25).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Crew working shifts of up to 22 hours before change over, due to the shortage of personnel (p2, 5).
- An increase in qualified swift rescue technicians to assist with the growth in population (p22, 95)

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- Shortage of portable radios and swift water equipment for an incident of this scale. During everyday services every fire officer has a radio however, during a disaster, there was one radio between four (p10, 39).

D) Adequacy of the community's response

- Improved co-ordination with local disaster management group to provide quicker access to evacuation centres throughout affected communities (p15, 63).
- Although power was isolated due to flooding a large percentage of homes that have solar panels in the flooded areas were susceptible to live power if floodwaters came into contact with the solar panels and this information was not relayed to the public (p19, 73).
- Provide a clear system of procedures to manage and co-ordinate impromptu volunteers to assist the community (p17, 67).
- Increased media attention providing information to the public regarding the dangers of coming into contact with floodwaters and swift water (p3, 11).

Summary of Firefighter Two Transcript

Interview conducted at Toowoomba on the 24th February 2011.

Terms of reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Lack of guidance from senior management, resulted in firefighters on the ground left to do strategic thinking, planning and co-ordination with no support (p4 20).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Shortage of level two swift rescue technicians hindered their safety as rescues were pursued without suitable amount of support. Training is currently taught in the confines of a creek, not broad water or storm conditions (p24 106).

- Rural officers sent into flood areas without awareness level training and therefore hindering their health and safety (p12 50).

- It is alleged that an entire ROCC was manned by rural fire officers only whose situational awareness, training and skill set in an urban environment is very limited (p4 16).

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- When submerged in water, performing rescues, there were no means of communication as the portable radios are not waterproof or water resistant (p10 44).

- No wet weather protection for either in the water or standing outside (p17 70).

D) Adequacy of the community's response

- Lack of planning between state and local governments, emergency services and communities (p1, 2)

Summary of Firefighter Three Transcript

Terms of Reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- No consolidated effort between management and operational staff as to exactly where crews were and how they were recording jobs (p1, 5).
- Auxiliary fire fighters performed duties beyond their skill level due to the shortage of operational officers (p3, 16-24).
- Rural and auxiliary fire fighters need to be trained and have knowledge in water rescues (p17, 141).
- Poor communication and knowledge of the location to which vehicles had been sent to, resulted in numerous vehicles being sent to the same location, when others were already stuck and unable to proceed in that location (p5, 34).
- Fire fighters have no training to be involved with rescues involving helicopters (p5, 34).
- Procedures to manage and co-ordinate outside personnel such as the Department of Environment and Resource offering men, equipment and machinery (p11, 83).
- Further training and support for fire fighters who deal first hand with members of the public who have lost loved ones and dealt with deceased bodies (p19, 175).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Inadequate amount of rest time between shifts (p1, 3).
- An increase in four wheel drive high clearance vehicles to battle the flood water (p4, 5).

Summary of Firefighter Four Transcript

Interview conducted at Toowoomba on the 24th February 2011.

Terms of reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Consistently unable to contact management regarding providing extra personnel and information on weather formations and direction (p1, 2), (p6, 10).
- Operational staff received no information regarding any planning or preplanning for the flood incident (p5, 6).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Lack of management staff and supervisors on the ground left firefighters to co-ordinate and perform their duties with no direction and support (p7, 16).
- Equipment provided on the appliances allows for the safety of immediate crews, however, was not sufficient to provide support to the number of casualties (p7, 16).

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- Unable to seek extra support during intense rescue operations, due to inability to contact Firecom as portable radios were failing as they were not water resistant (p4, 6).
- Due to the inability to communicate, firefighters nearby were not able to support other rescues or code red calls (p5, 6).

D) Adequacy of the community's response

- Public vehicles attempting to drive through flooded roads, endangering the safety of the driver and causing more stress to public emergency services and personnel (p3, 6).
- Public civilians crossing flooded roads on foot without awareness and knowledge of the dangers involved resulting in more rescues (p3, 6).

Summary of Firefighter Five Transcript

Terms of Reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Use of public civilians to assist in rescues due to the shortage of crew (p5, 3).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Improvement in training of auxiliaries to level one or level two swift rescues, so they are of more assistance in flood events (p4, 9)

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems; and

- Improvement of Fire Communications to enable a high volume of calls (p1, 2)

Summary of Fire Fighter Six Transcript

Interview conducted on the 18th February 2011.

Terms of reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Shortage of operational firefighters and station officers caused an inability to relieve staff who had already worked a substantial shift (p10, 20).
- Due to shortage of personnel, this resulted in persons filling in for roles without the appropriate skill sets and knowledge to perform tasks safely (p15, 26).

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- Communication between officers via mobile phone became the primary form of communication due to the patchy, broken radio messages and failing radios (P7,8).
- Difficulty in reaching the fire communication channel, as it had not been set up during the early intense hours of flood rescues (p9, 8).
- Insufficient level of equipment for swift rescue technicians to man their vehicles and complete their job in a safe manner (p16, 26).

D) Adequacy of the community's response

- Queensland Police, Ambulance and Queensland Fire and Rescue Services worked together co-operatively (p3, 8).

Summary of Firefighter Seven Transcript

Terms of Reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Lack of knowledge as to what vehicles and personnel were on the ground (p12, 109)
- Management slow to react, even with access to weather forecasts (p14, 121)
- An increase of management staff on the ground would greatly improve their situational awareness, rather than changing procedures without seeing the direct affects (p14, 121) (15, 128)
- Due to the lack of communication, fire fighters were not aware to begin compulsory evacuations until four hours after the initial go ahead (p19, 147)
- Increase in operational debriefs (p14, 121)

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Great difficulty in receiving permission to call in additional operational staff even though the past few weeks swift rescues had been frequent (p1, 5).
- Shortage of operations officers and other personnel, resulting in affected areas left without support of a fire and rescue officer of up to five hours (p8, 53, 54).
- Operational officers and others working consistent shifts of up to 20 hours, due to the shortage of crew (p13, 117) (20, 151).

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems; and

- Carrying chainsaws on any vehicle responding to water rescues, this greatly assists in cutting through debris enabling access to stranded people (p7, 46).
- The communication between officers via phone regarding updates and crew numbers will not be recorded for future reference (p16, 128)
- Lost most radio communication due to weather conditions (p7, 46).
- Shortage of radios (p11, 107).

Summary of Firefighter Eight Transcript

Interview conducted at Toowoomba on the 24th February 2011.

Terms of reference

A) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Greater training of firefighters and auxiliaries to a level two swift rescue would provide more support, improve safety during tech rescues and allow quicker response times (p15 54).

B) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Increase in senior officers on the ground to support and provide direction for other firefighters rather than via radio communication. Minimal management resulted in firefighters making decisions on the ground running (p18 54).

- Inadequate amount of level two swift rescue technicians resulted in over fatigued technicians performing rescues and without the adequate amount of support (a level one technician) (p1 4).

- Lack of resources left the fire service vulnerable to additional incidents that could occur in the community outside of the floods (p9 32).

C) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- Difficulty in communicating with Firecom and ROCC due to the large amount of radio calls caused a lack of information and guidance to firefighters on the ground (p8, 30) (p9, 30) (p11, 48) (p18 54).

- Extensive use of radio communication during the floods was required, however, due to the wet weather; portable radios not being waterproof were failing (p7, 24).

- Limited lighting to perform rescues at night (p7, 18)

D) Adequacy of the community's response

- Greater sharing of information between all emergency services would improve public safety, e.g.) circumstances to which close roads/bridges etc. (p14 50).

Summary of Communications Officer Transcript

Communications Officer - Toowoomba

Terms of reference

D) Immediate management, response and recovery

- Unaware of any specific plan or actual preparations for the flooding events (p1, 4)
- Miscommunication between officers on the ground and communication officers regarding their location, which lead to communication officers trying to turn officers out to additional jobs, when they were due for debriefs back at their station (p5, 54).
- Communication centre, is not big enough to hold the personnel required to effectively respond and assist during the flood events (p8, 68)

E) Resourcing, overall coordination and deployment of personnel and equipment

- Firefighters unable to make it to their meeting points to gain gear of meet up with members of their crews, due to road blockages (p4, 50)

F) Adequacy of equipment and communications systems, and

- Firecom struggled with the high volume of calls, and also the movements of the appliances and dispatching of appropriate resources to the area (p1, 10)
- CAD system only equipped effectively for two communications officers, it has a phone systems attached to it but there's no voice logger, no radio and only some of the computer applications work (p6, 62)
- Toowoomba Firecom needs additional capacity of equipment consoles, radio systems and CAD programs to ensure within a short space of time the ability to respond to large events (p9, 76)

D) Adequacy of the community's response

Recommendations

1. Review of the level of training for both permanent urban firefighters and auxiliary firefighters, to ensure that both have the appropriate skills and knowledge to safely perform all levels of swift water rescue.
2. An update in equipment for officers, including water resistant portable radios, sufficient water rescue protective clothing and flood lights installed on all vehicles responding to water rescues.
3. Queensland Fire and Rescue Service procedures be reviewed so that better decision making regarding early recall of officers for early and strategic deployment can occur versus, managers situated at remote locations and without eyes on the ground.
4. For the safety of firefighters undertaking swift water rescue, a sufficient number of firefighters must be trained and crewing appliances to allow prescribed minimum crewing levels to be rostered and maintained for carrying out safe and efficient swift water rescues.

Glossary of Terms

Fire Com –Fire Communication Centre

ICC – Internal Communication Centre

ROCC – Regional Operational Communication Centre

SEWS - Standard Early Warning Systems

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter One |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at (insert place of interview)
on (insert date).

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | IB | Friday morning down at the Union office, union office, [REDACTED] station officer Ipswich based, discussing the recent events from Christmas involving the flooding in the south east area. And using the terms of reference as a guide to discussion points. |
| 2. | HL | Just say which point you're dealing with each time when you finish. |
| 3. | IB | <p>And point A is the preparation and planning by federal, state, local governments, emergency services in the community within the areas of, effected in the 2010/2011 flooding. The first point I want to address is the relationship between local disaster management groups or councils and the fire service and the role we have when we have a response role. The fire service is the response agency for swift water rescue. And as such we deploy and respond under, under time lines. Where the conflict comes into place if the event occurs and there's still rescues to be conducted, we have the local disaster management group, it starts setting its own parameters over the top of the fire service. These get interpreted down to our local incident control centres and then the incident control centre is not sure whether it's in a response or recovery mode. Examples of that, the day after the Grantham event, which was January the 12th, we had a local ICC set up at Ipswich. The local ICC at Ipswich was set up and it was co-ordinating the efforts of four stations, the Ipswich group. Typically the Ipswich group which is Ipswich station, Bundamba, Karana Downs and Camira would be responding normally into the Lockyer Valley on a day-to-day operation. As soon as the Ipswich ICC occurred, they started closing down and bringing us back because there was now an ICC set up in Gatton. But there were no clear lines of where the boundaries were, what the resources were and which they were set up. The other issue we have is in communications. So on the Tuesday morning when I arrived on the 12th, I'm manning up the 6-45 Mike and I'm told to report to ICC Gatton. So I respond or proceed to ICC Gatton. I notify Firecom that that vehicle was heading to Gatton. I get to the Worrall View Creek, Lockyer Creek sorry at Forest Hill Fernvale Road and it's under a kilometre of water. I can't make ICC Gatton. I contact them on the radio and they say oh no you're not required, we cancelled you half an hour ago. Not a problem but now I have to then communicate that back to Firecom. When I chase it up the ICC at Gatton had cancelled my services with ICC</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | Ipswich. But no one had told Firecom and no one had passed that on to me. So now I have a vehicle that is depleted with equipment because it's equipment is in Gatton and I'm proceeding back down the highway still not sure where the boundary is between ICC Gatton and ICC Ipswich and who do I talk to. Do I talk to Gatton on this frequency, Ipswich on this frequency or Firecom on this frequency. So which is the reporting agency. Where that creates issues is in tracking where the vehicles are and tracking what the vehicles are going to. |
| 4. | HL | Excuse me, it's Henry Lawrence. You were saying before about you've got a vehicle and it's depleted, depleted of equipment. How did that happen? |
| 5. | IB | The vehicle, 6-45 Mike is the rescue based out of Ipswich. 6-45 Mike wasn't, was involved and on location in Murphy's Creek and Gatton during the events of Monday at Grantham. During those events the equipment was being stripped and off-vehicle (?) and used and placed on a more appropriate vehicle. The 6-45 Mike is an approximately 12 to 14 tonne, two wheel drive, pantock style vehicle. The responders in the Grantham, Murphy's Creek and Gatton area, that vehicle was inappropriate. So what they had done, they'd stripped out the swift water kits and the boats and placed them on four wheel drive appliances that could give them access through flood water and through broken paddocks, over rough terrain, over ripped up roads to get access in. During the night the crew that had been on duty ended up being on duty for approximately 22 hours so when it came to change that crew over, the crew used the vehicle to return to Ipswich, but their equipment was still on location with other swift water technicians. |
| 6. | HL | And then the next day you couldn't get back. |
| 7. | IB | The next morning we couldn't return. |
| 8. | HL | Okay. |
| 9. | IB | Couldn't get back to ... (ui). |
| 10. | HL | Yeah sorry. |
| 11. | IB | So that's why the equipment was stripped off there. So we had the, we have a communications issue with the ICC and Firecom and also the ICC and the |

local disaster management group. The local disaster management group is a disaster manager group, I believe their role should be focussed on preparedness and also recovery. But the response part of it, it should be left up to the services that provide responding roles. Where we found was at some stage there, the disaster management group was trying to place restrictions, by that there were concerns that oh the flooding event's coming to Ipswich we need the resources remaining in Ipswich. But during the day the flooding event was occurring in the Lockyer Valley. So it's not necessarily they didn't say no you can't go, but what they were doing was the units that normally would respond in that area were not going to that area and they were trying to find other units, which in the end of the day probably didn't matter because every local community was isolated by flood water anyway. So if it wasn't dealt with by the local auxiliary crews, or the local SES or rural fire then there really wasn't much opportunity to get back through. The preplanning stage of it, by taking, by going back a week or two weeks before Christmas, in that period leading up to the, the month leading up to the flooding event at Grantham, was one of the busiest swift water events that Ipswich station had been involved in. I did a mental count and I thought it was in the vicinity of 12 to 14 responses out of Ipswich station, not necessarily allocated to that station but backing up other stations into the Lockyer Valley and the Cunningham Valley area, leading up to. Now it had been a wet summer, we were conscious of, it was being a wet summer, but we didn't have any warnings in place to manage the public about swift water. Now we had a standard message that used to come out, which was emergency services tell you don't go in flood water, don't walk through flood water. And then someone had always add the little proviso on the end, unless of course you have to. One of the observations that my wife identified to me, every flooding event had a media person standing in flood water telling the public how tragic the inundation was in Rockhampton, in Emerald and things like that nature. And used to interview people as they waded through flood water. We know from our learning, learning phase, adult learning, 5% of what we read, we retain, 10% of what we hear we retain, and 85% of what we see we retain. So we have the media telling everyone or showing everyone that walking through flood water is okay and we have fire service and emergency service don't go into flood water. So that's an issue where I

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>think our media unit isn't managing the media very well. The other area where we're not managing very well and communicating with the public, we now have, I would say 30% of our generation of drivers are au fait with facebook and twitter. We do not have, the fire service does not have a facebook or twitter site to get information out to the community. Now we're relying on older technology which is telephones, print and some news media, but if you lose power your TV doesn't work. But the youth of today, and by the youth I mean people under, under 25 or even 30, use their smart phones and phones as a media management tool as well. And we don't access that. The Queensland Police run a twitter site and it has some of the most up-to-date information on that site. So we should access that. We need to be conscious of seasonal messaging, so we can identify and get people prepared for these events. We do have our standard flood and storm season messaging which comes out from the SES. There is a little bit of a politicking that goes on with our standard messaging, the storm messaging is provided by the SES, the road accident safety messaging is provided by the police service. But the crews who actually do the response to swift water and to the RAR or RCR events are left behind, that being the ambulance service and the fires service, they're not included in messaging. Maybe they need to, we need to change the way we target messages to the community to identify for them the appropriate level. If we identify swift water with the fire service then people when they see the fire service arrive will identify that they're swift water technicians. Now I know it sounds a little by spruiking but it reinforces both ways. The strongest message in swift water we need to get out to the community in preparation and the planning is don't enter. Now if we have to change the road sides on the flood markers that changes it to if you enter above this point in swift water you will be fined, may, you know, maybe it needs to be changed. Maybe the police need to put a message on every flood marker on every road, that says it is an offence to enter flood water. I don't know, maybe it'll help maybe it won't. The ...</p> |
| 12. | HL | <p>Excuse me ■ what's classed as swift water? It's four knots or something isn't it? Any water ...</p> |
| 13. | IB | <p>Five kilometres an hour.</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 14. | HL | Five kilometres an hour. |
| 15. | IB | Yeah. |
| 16. | HL | Yeah. |
| 17. | IB | <p>The, what people don't understand is the power behind water moving. Some people have got a much better recognition of it now after the events we've had. But if you, if you've got five to ten kilometres an hour speed of water and you're waste deep in it, you will struggle to hold your feet. Cause your naturally buoyancy will lift. The interaction between federal, state and local governments, some of the issues that we do have is because of all the corporatisation of all the utilities that we have. It now becomes difficult, we can't go, there's no more one stop shop for the emergency agencies to go to one person and then co-ordinate our utilities. So we do need to know okay is it Queensland utilities looking after this part here, Ergon's looking after this part here, gas lines here, road is here. That breakdown from where it was the state corporation now down to all these privatised areas, we need to manage that better so that we are getting information from the water board that's telling us about water releases from Wivenhoe. We are getting up-to-date information from the councils about current river heights. There's no one collection of it. It's a bit like the boiling of frogs, where you put the frog in and it's cold water and you bring it up slowly, next thing you know the frog's cooked. Well that's pretty much what happened to us over that December period. We had all the information there but the people who had to make a decision about our response levels or our preparedness weren't able to make that decision because that information was cluttered and hidden in so many different pockets. Some of the other areas, in particular I'll move on now to point C, aspects of response, flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community. I've discussed the measures to inform the community in the flood events, I believe we need to communicate, find alternative communication methods to back it up through social networking sites. Measures to protect life and private property. One of the issues that occurred very, very quickly was the flooding of roads during those events and it overwhelmed resources or cut off the resources that were going to close those roads. Previously to this event, a couple of years ago we had the</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | same situation where we would go out in the Ipswich area, we went and at two o'clock in the morning, rescued a gentleman off a bridge under flood water in the, at Bundamba Creek in Ipswich. At 4:30 in the morning we had to go back and rescue another gentleman who tried to drive his vehicle below the first stranded vehicle on the same creek, even though the water was going over the bonnet of the first vehicle. At six o'clock in the morning we had to come back and search the vehicle that had been swept off the creek which was the third vehicle on the same bridge and at that stage then the council responded and closed the road. So what we need is a more rapid ability to isolate the threat areas from the community. I don't know what the most appropriate resource is but if it's two o'clock in the morning and we only have police and fire officers then maybe it has to be only police and fire officers. But then what has to happen is that information has to be entered into a database so that those police and fire officers know the roads closed but also the public can access it very quickly to know the road's closed. If we inform the public beforehand that that road is closed, then there's less likelihood of them attempting to go through floodwater because they can source an alternate route. The response levels by the fire service to the events of the Monday and the Tuesday. Of the Monday, I can only speak from the Monday night as I was arriving back from Emerald on Monday afternoon. On the Monday ... |
| 18. | HL | From another deployment ■■■? |
| 19. | IB | From another deployment, that swift water deployment in Emerald. |
| 20. | HL | Yep. |
| 21. | IB | I arrived back with a swift water team of four persons from Emerald. We'd been sent in as the last team in Emerald, they hadn't been used as swift water, but actually taken up more of a recovery mode. What we were doing there is doing rapid damage assessment and then clean outs of the Emerald community. So we arrived after a seven day deployment, rather concerned about what was happening in the Grantham and Lockyer Valley area because we'd been in communication with fire-fighters who were already in that area being deployed, and being our backyard we were concerned about it. We arrived at Brisbane airport after a delay and were told that if we'd |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | arrived 15 minutes earlier we would have been going up to Grantham by helicopter. Oh we weren't able to go so we said oh we're going now by road as a backup or staging and we were told no we had to go, go home. Fire-fighter [REDACTED] and myself, both from Ipswich, weren't happy with that decision, so I made a few more enquiries, ended up speaking to the ROCC South East where I spoke to the duty manager, and informed him that we had been basically rested on the whole of the Monday, we completed our duties at nine o'clock in the morning and waited to catch a plane to come home, we were fresh and we were equipped and we knew the area and we were ready to back up. |
| 22. | HL | So you were equipped with your own little level two gear is that right? |
| 23. | IB | Yeah our own personal equipment. |
| 24. | HL | Yep. |
| 25. | IB | And I was told by that person that my services weren't required. I wasn't particularly happy about that so I made a few more enquiries. I also checked with people who were up in the Lockyer Valley. I spoke to [REDACTED] at the time the situation up there from his perspective was not a situation where it was under control, it was still a developing issue. I rang back, again got the duty manager and I spoke to him and said was he aware what was happening up there, because I was concerned that he was bit isolated being in Southport, the level and the extent of the event. And his words to me were that the situation is under control and it's scaling down. That was at 6:30 on Monday evening. Obviously my response to him was colloquial and I did inform him that I didn't think he'd know if his arse was on fire. And then I hung up. I then rang the fire station at Ipswich and typically after a deployment they place you on 24 hour stand down. After I spoke to [REDACTED], rang the fire station and made sure that they were aware that we were both ready and able to come in at a moment's notice, had our equipment and should we be needed we would be there. Throughout the night I had numerous communiqués back with [REDACTED] and with [REDACTED] who was in the operations centre at Gatton. And the event certainly didn't look like it was scaling down, in fact it looked like it was ramming up. And it concerned me at this stage that our senior staff at Southport at 6:30 on the |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | Monday afternoon were considering the event to be over and done with, whereas the crews on the ground were saying that it was escalating you know. |
| 26. | HL | So when the water had gone through or the, the peak was on Monday afternoon? |
| 27. | IB | Yeah Monday afternoon at around, between two, I think they, 2:47 or something like that I believe, mid-afternoon the wave of the water that had come through from ... |
| 28. | HL | Lockyer Valley. |
| 29. | IB | ... from Toowoomba had hit Grantham, Murphy's Creek or Murphy's Creek first, past Helidon, Grantham and then proceeded down the Lockyer Creek. But at, what people didn't allow for the fact that it was still raining and continuing to rain heavy. So that water had gone through and done a phenomenal amount of damage but the follow up rain was still falling so we already had the ground soaked, we already had a wave of water run through it and now we're getting follow up rain,. So all the catchments were filling up and coming up. |
| 30. | HL | (ui).... |
| 31. | IB | So we missed, we didn't miss, we didn't react well in closing roads and identifying, we had plenty of experience about roads were going to go under because two years previously in November we had 350ml of rainfall in three hours and that had identified for us roads that would be closed. So we were aware of these needs. The, at around about 4:30 on the Tuesday morning I was up pottering around at home. I hadn't rested well that night and I made a determination that I would have to go into work and I was ready and leaving home at five o'clock. I got a phone call on route to the fire station from the station officer on duty requesting I attend the fire station for a stand up for swift water crew, which was fine by me cause I was already on the way. When I arrived at Ipswich station, it was fair to say that we were in very much a response mode, we were rapidly trying to assemble crews. The duty crews were trying to co-ordinate re-stowing of vehicles and the co-ordination of getting those vehicles out in the field, fully equipped and with your change |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | over crews. What was lacking was a briefing on what we had, what we were going into and what we expected to find. Now in defence of the people at Ipswich they weren't aware of what was happening in Gatton, and in defence of the people in Gatton ICC they wouldn't have had a moment to scratch themselves to prepare briefings for oncoming crews because they were still trying to catch up with what was happening around them. They were still in, a very much an evolving incident. The immediate management of that broke down to station officer level. There wasn't necessarily an overlying or governing body at this stage. What was occurring was station officers in each of their own patch were equipping their people as best they could and then were responding to whatever incident they had. Now in the ICCs they were in the process of, an incident came up, they grabbed a resource, they dispatched the resource to that incident, then they moved onto the next incident. |
| 32. | HL | So when you say equipping their crews as best they could, what do you mean by that? |
| 33. | IB | Briefing the crews as best they could. |
| 34. | HL | I understand. |
| 35. | IB | So in my ... |
| 36. | HL | With information. |
| 37. | IB | With information. |
| 38. | HL | Okay. |
| 39. | IB | With my incident where I was even though I was called in, it was actually, it was my C shift crew were on duty, it was a normal on-duty day for me. However half my crew weren't there, because they had been working till 2:30 in the morning at Gatton, so those persons weren't there. So with a quick safety brief, I was inviting the people to make sure that when they went out to swift water events make sure they didn't wear their heavy turn-out gear, make sure that they kept themselves safe, stay away from water's edge you know, preliminary safety messages, watch your speed, watch the road surfaces cause the roads were breaking up already, just general safety. We |

also activated our localised communication system in Ipswich group you use the VHF radios on channel 725 cause that's a far north Queensland channel and we use that to talk around amongst the Ipswich pumps. We find that it allows us to communicate well with the other pump without actually having to go through Firecom, it's just a localised thing we do. Some of the other things we were doing, cause we were now starting to up, up-staff other vehicles, we were rationalising equipment issues between the vehicles. Obviously we're short of portable radios and we're short of swift water equipment, in, at that scale. In a normal incident, at a normal scale, the equipment would be sufficient, but when we start up, up-scaling, Ipswich being one of, Ipswich station being the focal point for task force, it becomes difficult to get hands on the equipment, the problem is that, that the issue is, not the problem, until recently we did have stores at Ipswich station, but under the new regional plan we have a regional store which is down at Southport, that the store only works Monday to Friday, nine to five. And so that, that equipment is down at Southport. Under normal wild fire event it would, it would manage, because the task force would be pulled from the Southport, Gold Coast area, come via the regional store, pick up the equipment they need and proceed out to Ipswich where they would stand up. But when you're actually pulling in off duty crews, throwing them into any spare vehicles to get these vehicles out and on the ground it becomes difficult to manage them. The, the last point of incident management response and recovery that I want to address is, incident management itself covers the whole encompassment of the incident, from the time you respond to the time you close the recovery down. Generally the response side of it in a management framework doesn't work. Now I'll clarify that. Your ICCs, your local incident control centres, they are staffed by, Ipswich I'll give an example, they were staffed by rural fire service personnel and some urban personnel. And by no means am I offering a detraction on their staffing abilities, but their staffing are response agency which was focussed on, at that time of the morning, urban response, because they're the people on the ground, they're the only, they really were the only assets they had. So you have a rural framework trying to respond an urban response, so there are time lags which are going to occur. On top of that you have Firecom activating the bells and responding you as well. The local ICCs can't manage

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | response and by response I want to define that as life threatening, triple 0, our normal day to day business. The local ICCs very well can co-ordinate the recovery because they are fielding the requests for things and they have time to make a decision and time to make, to gather all the information. Our day-to-day managers on the fire ... |
| 40. | HL | Sorry just on the staffing of the ICC by a combination of rural and urban people, were the rural people controlling or were they the incident controller or were they ... |
| 41. | IB | To be honest on the very first day, on the Tuesday, I think they were. |
| 42. | HL | And they wouldn't be trained for any of the ... |
| 43. | IB | Well no they are, they're trained ... |
| 44. | HL | Because they're trained in ... |
| 45. | IB | They're trained in incident management. |
| 46. | HL | Yeah. |
| 47. | IB | But what, what I'm, well the point I raised there is they are trained in incident management, they are very much focussed and they're experts in wild fire management. This is a, a swift water on an urban interface is a whole different kettle of fish. When you, when you, you can draw similarities between swift water and flood water. Where the, where the problem lies in, I'm sorry, between flood water, swift water and wild fire, where the problem lies in a wild fire event, once it's gone through, you can still move around behind it. In a flood or a swift water event, as it goes through you can't move behind it, there aren't alternatives, you've got to stay in front of the event and you've got to clear the people at risk from in front of the event. Now obviously swift water response side comes from managing the people who weren't cleared and then are caught by the flood water. What is, what I believe we're guilty of is trying to apply one model of swift water response to all swift water events. And where, where I'd say that model is, I believe the model for swift water and response should be broken up very similar to our eye-zone model for wild fire impact on the edge of an urban community and a wild fire impacting on a standalone farming community. As you move away |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | from the urban centre the population density is a lot lower but the likelihood of someone being stranded further out in the flood waters or further out in swift water is increased. Typically two reasons that happens. One the person out in the rural environment is probably in a four wheel drive and has probably got themselves part the way through the water before they've got themselves into trouble. Now events leading up to, even on the day of the Tuesday, one of the swift water rescues we did back before Christmas, it was a 1.3k wade through waste to chest deep water to access the couple that were stranded on top of their vehicle. Now you don't have a throwback you can throw 1.3k's so how do we manage it as a swift water technician. |
| 48. | ?? | Well I was constantly in those too, but that ... (ui) no such sorry (... (ui) ...) let's make some positives, Colleges Crossing at Karana there, the swift water is right in the middle of the river, to get there you had K's to walk virtually to get out to where the stream was, you'd never ... |
| 49. | IB | Yeah, and that's an issue there which where there's a political dilemma there too, the fire service has been requesting work platforms with motors on it, you would know them as a boat. There is hesitancy because currently the flood boats are the domain of the SES. Now we're not requesting flood boats, there is a big difference between a heavy V-bottomed |
| 50. | ?? | Platform. |
| 51. | IB | ... platform flood versus a swift water platform. You know a swift water platform it's going to have, going to have a short shaft, 25 to 30 horse power engine on the back, it's going to be an inflatable with a semi-rigid floor, it's going to be light, it's going to go over the top of water. A flood boat from SES is designed to evacuate people from slow moving water. Now as a simple by-line to this, prior to Christmas the South East and South West rescue, rescued 12 people from swift water. Five of those 12 people were SES boat crews who had rolled or lost control of their boat in swift water. So I mean like, I did make a comment at the time, if we want to reduce our swift water rescues by 40%, take the motors off, off the SES boats. But I mean that was a little bit of a throwaway line. But don't get me wrong that the boats from, from the SES are a valuable tool in flood water, they are not the tool of choice though for a swift water environment. So to bring it back to the points here, |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | immediate management. The immediate management needs to have reasonable response, still needs to work that, that network up and works off Firecom. The local ICCs really need to focus more on the recovery and the managing of the less immediate response. Part of the problem here with the ICCs is we, we don't capture the data off the crews adequately when they're responding under an ICC. An example of that is if I respond, if Firecom responds me, I transmit my acknowledgement, my arrival, my situation report, my updates and my stock message in code four, all on Firecom. If I'm responded by ICC I acknowledge the call from the ICC on another radio, which is not data logged and not captured. It's just a hand-written note. I tell them when I arrive, again there's a hand-written note, if the person, if the incident control centre has been set up sufficiently that they have a radio operator answering and acknowledging. And then we start trying to track that vehicle through that environment. So we, we're losing all that data. Then Firecom hears from me again when I finish the job to say I've been released from the ICC. |
| 52. | HL | With the ICCs and the setting up, do you have any comment in regard to, say the minimum personnel for the establish, initial establishment of an ICC and what the make-up of that should be? |
| 53. | IB | Well the ICC make up and their staffing levels have already been identified across each region. And they identified, typically they identify, response teams for regional co-ordination centres and then local ICCs and an example of the Ipswich group, the first incident control of the Ipswich or operations office at Ipswich area would have been either the rural regional inspector or the urban inspector for Ipswich, because that's his, that's their assets there. And then the staffing, to fill the other role models in under, the other roles in underneath in the model, come out of the local staffing area. An example up in the Gatton area, the Gatton ICC was first commanded I believe by [REDACTED] and the staffing of that was then pulled out by the people, the resources he had available to him in that area. |
| 54. | ?? | Would be shipped out of Ipswich. |
| 55. | IB | Yeah and they replaced, relieved C shift crews that were on. |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 56. | HL | Do you think that model works well at all, have those models worked well? |
| 57. | IB | The problem with the model, it's duality of the model. The best of the model is that your local people know the area, are in there filling the role. The problem with the model is you're pulling the people off the trucks that know the area, that can be used to respond. Maybe an alternative to that model is they should have been taking the off duty people, the ones who weren't going to be called in over the next three days. |
| 58. | HL | What about using com's officers or admin people in the establishment of your ICC from the point of view of operating the computers and ... |
| 59. | IB | Yeah certainly if you're, if you're going to be using a radio system, then obviously the best person to co-ordinate and control that radio system would be a qualified operator and a com's person. If you are going to be using, focusing on an administrative role where you are doing more of a logistical area and by that logistical area I'm not talking about replacement of task force, I'm talking about the feeding, fuelling, and supporting of those task force, then an administrative person who is comfortable with their roles and functionality who deals with day-to-day finance issues and can source and knows how to track and source those expenditures, ideal person for that role. It would be inappropriate to have a person who is an admin assistant all of a sudden doing briefing preparations for oncoming crews. For one their environment has never trained them and two we're taking a person from a rather sheltered environment, and we're dropping them into a front line environment. If you're going to create a load of work for your fire care operators, continue to do it that way and I'm sure fire care will be busy. |
| 60. | HL | Okay. |
| 61. | IB | The deployment of personnel and equipment, overall , one of the things that I found difficult on the Tuesday was to understand why there wasn't more resources being deployed into the areas where we were needing them. We had a big resource base in the Brisbane area and with the South East area. And I was concerned that we didn't appear to have the resources that I thought would be available to us, available to us. Now having said that I'm in the fish bowl looking out, I don't know what's happening around me. But I, |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | when I got back from, about Tuesday lunch time from the events of Tuesday morning, I would have expected to see a staging of vehicles of urban vehicles in that environment. But we didn't. |
| 62. | ?? | What did you see? |
| 63. | IB | <p>I saw two off-duty fire, station officers who had been on duty till two o'clock in the morning co-ordinating, manning up on a second appliance at Ipswich by recalling staff. Now they did that because they know that when the flooding comes we always, we always lose Leichardt and we always have foot, a fire service vehicle over that and I'm sure one of the other gentlemen this morning will discuss that, but when that vehicle went over with him, he was the only emergency service personnel in that community. They were providing policing and ambulance for the whole community out of a thrown together pump crew. And they set up the only evacuation centres over there. Now that really should have been managed and that's, that co-ordination effort, that's a, that is a local disaster management group. They should have had evacuation centres set up. I mean they know the flood is coming, this is Tuesday, you know, it's not real hard. I mean it's raining all day, they know the flood's coming, they're predicting a 22 metre height flood level through Ipswich and evacuation centres are being set up by fire crews. That's not very well managed at local government level. The, the next thing I'll talk about is the adequacy of equipment and communication systems. Alright, the equipment level I've discussed briefly about the issue of in a type two or more rural or more extensive flooding issue, we still have swift water events involved in that and it's very onerous on a swift water technician who knows that he's qualified and capable of entering flood water and swift water, to gain access to people who are stranded hundreds of metres away from any clear bank. He enters that water knowing that there is no throw bag in the world that's going to offer him safety and he's going in on his own conscious to, and his own confidence in his equipment levels and his capability to try and bring about some, a level of safety to the people that are stranded. On the Tuesday morning, myself and [REDACTED], we were the only people who were able to access the family of four on that vehicle. They were probable, close to a hundred metres clear of any, of any road part standing and the water, the width of the water when we entered the water was about 1.3k's wide and</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>travelling fast. We had no options other than to take the four spare PFDs with us and attempt to gain access to the vehicle and try and offer a degree of safety. What was an issue for us is we had no communication ability because we only have a limited number of wet packs for our radios, they were already been deployed with the swift water teams in Gatton. So we had no radio communication system. And speaking of the radio communication system, fire service acknowledges that on the pump crew every fire officer has a radio. However when we go away on deployments for swift water events to disaster zones, we get one radio between four. So I leave a normal day-to-day environment, which is not a disaster zone, I have one radio each, each of my crew, I get deployed into a disaster zone and I get one radio between four. I'm not sure that that actually makes a lot of sense. I've spoken briefly before about the operation of the different radio systems. I believe, particularly on the day of the events at Grantham and the Lockyer Valley, there was an opportunity there to break that area away from the rest of the fire com network and either in Ipswich or use the repeater at Marburg, establish a separate fire communication centre for the Lockyer Valley to capture all that was happening because our Firecom operators at Southport were trying to capture everything that was happening in the Lockyer Valley and manage flooding impact on Ipswich and manage day-to-day fire operations in the South East.</p> |
| 64. | HL | Sorry ■ this was on the ... |
| 65. | IB | Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. |
| 66. | HL | Yep, yep. |
| 67. | IB | <p>The, realistically we have Brisbane Firecom, we have Southport Firecom, in those particular events there we should have the ability to isolate repeaters and set up a communication centre, even if, and realistically even if we piggy back into the Queensland police communication centre at Yamanto or we had that ability where we could park like a command rescue vehicle the CR or something of that nature, or the Tango, park it in situ and then run it as a communications centre. It reduces the road, reduces the traffic on the radio network to that specific incident only. But more importantly it gives, we're not fighting at that incident, with radio time with somebody booking out a station</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>down at Southport. You know that, that is an issue. Prioritising radio frequencies or radio network. The adequacy of community's response. Fire service does not have a process in place for managing impromptu volunteers. So when we do come across community members who are willing to step up we actually don't know how to manage them, or co-ordinate them. An example of that, on the day of the Minden cross roads, my back-up safety plan for myself and fire-fighter [REDACTED] when we entered the water was a community member from Brisbane utilities who pulled up behind us, because were the only two vehicles on the highway and I gave him the mobile phone from the truck, I dialled Firecoms number and hung up and told him in the event that he lost sight of us or we were swept away, that he was to press redial and tell them that the two fire-fighters and the family were lost. How do we capture those impromptu volunteers. That man, I don't know who he is, I don't know how he's fairing. I don't know if he feels like he's under stress, we talk about fire care for our fire-fighters, I mean when you think back to that, I placed a hell of an onus on him and at the time I was focussed on the safety of the four people in the water. I don't know if that gentleman is travelling okay or not. But we haven't captured that and I'm not, it's my responsibility to capture it, I presume, but I'm not sure if we have a system in place to recognise those people. Now it's not just those people. We had people turn up at the fire station at Ipswich over the next three, four, five days. They come to the fire station because they see resources going in and out of the fire station and they want to assist the community. We don't have a, a system in place where we can capture those people, find out what their capabilities are, find out how long they've got for us and what they can contribute and then direct them to the most appropriate agency to manage them. The SES are an operational role. Fire service is an operational role. But we don't really link in very well in those areas with the other non-operational people.</p> |
| 68. | ?? | <p>So it has to be reviewed in terms like that [REDACTED] ...(ui) thing. (?)</p> |
| 69. | IB | <p>Now there are outside agencies in other parts of the country that do have guidelines on how to manage community volunteers and that's probably what we need to look at, across the State of Queensland, how do we manage those people.</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 70. | HL | Specifically ■ what like MFB or ... |
| 71. | IB | CF8, I believe. |
| 72. | HL | CF8 okay. |
| 73. | IB | <p>And the last thing obviously where people are going to be looking at is the adequacy of forecast, early warning system and in particular relation to flooding events in the valley. Forecasting and early warning systems. I'd like to add also one more area we looked at there, is road closures. Part of the problem we have with the, oh well I'll deal with road closures first. Part of my issue as a swift water technician is I go to events where people have taken cars into swift water because they haven't had early enough warning that the road is closed and then they attempt to get their vehicle and complete their journey. Now that's always going to be an issue with people who believe their life is more important that they get down to the shop and get the milk than it is of sitting at home and having tea without milk. Those are issues that we can't manage at this level. But where they become really critical, the only access for emergency service personnel to road closures is to the government websites. The problem we have is that those government websites are being bombarded. We don't have a standalone system where we should have access to the most current up-to-date closures. Now the best people to manage that are the councils. Now whether we can access a council database or whether we can tie in the council database with road heights and flooding heights and determine the likelihood of that road to be closed. And then when you start looking at that, then you can start putting in forecasting for people that, in the event that this, this happens, these roads will lose thoroughfare. The early warning system as such, I don't know if there is an early warning system that could have saved the people at Murphy's Creek from the events that happened from Toowoomba. Remembering that the people at Toowoomba, when the event happened to them, were focussed on recovery and it's very, it is a very, very clear thinker that, you know up to his arse in alligators can think the next village down the, down the hill that's going to get all the alligators shortly. Normally when the alligators all disappear he sits there and breathes a sigh of relief and then starts you know what, what damage has been done without realising what's</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>happening down there. However having said that, by the time we got to the Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday, we should have been on top of the warnings and we should have been on top of road closures, knowing what roads were going to go under. And the evacuation and dare I say it, even the compulsory evacuation of communities at risk. Now that pretty much sums up everything in relation to this. Oh the last thing I wanted to talk about sorry, the measures to manage the essential services such as power, water and communications. That's point D. One of the issues that I thought which was poorly managed is the power. And I'm not putting blame or pointing blame at the power industry, there's a point that they missed. They isolated powers to homes because of potential flooding. What they missed was the large percentage of homes that had solar panels in the flooded areas. Which means that those panels are live. Now that's not an issue until the flood water hits the wire that is live from the panel down to the inverter. Now that particular issue alone has been causing heartache for the fire service because the power industry has decided that it's too expensive to put a \$115.00 isolator switch at the bottom of the panel that can be accessed by the fire service or by any emergency service to isolate those panels. They believe that the wire at the back of the box is satisfactory for isolation. Now under normal events it is because if there's not power coming into the switchboard then the inverter isn't live, if the inverter isn't live then you can't get flood of current from your solar panel. But the wire from the solar panel into the back of the inverter is live. And if it's damaged or flooded then you have live power. Now we know about step potential on the ground, step potential still exists in water so if you have water up to your meter box and where that power is coming in to that inverter now makes the water around that live. So it's something that wasn't managed and wasn't communicated well to emergency service personnel and or to the public.</p> |
| 74. | ?? | How powerful is that stuff coming off those then. |
| 75. | IB | Well ... |
| 76. | HL | Depends on the size of their range doesn't it? |
| 77. | ?? | Oh no I suppose, yeah I ... (ui). |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 78. | ?? | Average 1.5 in it, no 1.5 is at normal strength. |
| 79. | IB | Yeah it is about 400 ... |
| 80. | ?? | 415. |
| 81. | IB | 415 direct current. An example is ... |
| 82. | ?? | What's life threatening |
| 83. | IB | Okay and I'll give you a simple example. 240 volt, if it hits you it's like a knife through your heart, okay. Okay that same conversion of 400, 450 of direct current it's like being hit by a wrecking ball. |
| 84. | ?? | Okay, okay. |
| 85. | IB | Both will do the same amount of damage, just one will do the damage differently. |
| 86. | ?? | Okay. |
| 87. | IB | So if that, the next, the other thing is water supplies. I don't believe we, we communicated to the public adequately enough the possibility of contaminated water supplies. Now the reason I say that is some of the water that was coming out of pipe systems when we were doing hose downs was chocolate brown. And that's the same water that's going through the drinking supply. Now that's going to be managed at the council level and communications well ... |
| 88. | ?? | Filters. |
| 89. | IB | The phones, the radios, and things of that nature, we really do need to get much better control over the media, the quality of release in relation to that. And now I'll conclude that. Is there anything else you'd like to ask me? |
| 90. | HL | Have you got any specific comments about crewing sizes and, in addition to what you've already said or. I mean one of the questions I suppose people are going to ask if people are talking about sufficient crewing or resourcing as far as human resources go for want of a useless term, if you had had crews with three level twos, and six level ones on them, would it have made any difference to the overall outcome. And I guess it just depends on specific |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | circumstances. |
| 91. | IB | <p>It does, unfortunately in this, early on when the water hit Grantham, I wasn't there, but the other speakers from this morning will be talking to you about that. Now the day of the Tuesday, where we had numerous rescues to perform. It wasn't necessarily the adequacy of the size of the crew, it was more the access to the rescue scene because of the extensive flooding. And examples of that, Lowood was fairly much isolated on one side of the river or between the Brisbane River and the Lockyer Creek, but the Lowood auxiliaries which were responding in a very, very small crew, crew of two I think at one stage, they must have been responsible for putting 30 or 40 people, getting 30 or 40 people out of isolated structures and getting them back into an evacuation centre. Only because they had access with their large four wheel drive tanker. Where we had issues was access with our two wheel drive urban pumps. And also understanding that the ...</p> |
| 92. | HL | <p>Is that sorry ■■■, is that more related to evacuation than actual rescue, you're talking about there.</p> |
| 93. | IB | <p>Well yeah it is, well they're rescuing such that the people couldn't self evacuate any more cause the water was, the water was too high for them, but no you probably would classify, you and I would look at them and say they successfully evacuated people, the media would report it as a rescue because if they weren't evacuated, they were going to be in trouble and the only way they could be evacuated was by a large vehicle going through flood, travelling through flood water. Now crew size, it's more the capabilities of the crew, what you've got, it's a combination of equipment, crew size and placement, where you are in relation to it. You can have all the tech rescue operators of South East Queensland on one side of the river but if the people are on the other side a kilometre and a half away, we can't, we can't get access to them. So what we need, particularly in these sort of events, is you need the ability to rapidly deploy to the appropriate area ...</p> |
| 94. | ?? | <p>The flexibility.</p> |
| 95. | IB | <p>Yeah. Now obviously we're starting to talk about aerial assets if we're going to move people from point to point or the appropriate vehicle that's going to be able to get them around the flood water or through the flood water. Now,</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | so when we start looking at those things there, you're looking at getting the appropriate resource to the appropriate location and the appropriate means. So what you're talking about there is trained operators in a vehicle capable of getting them there, and at the right time. And the only way we can manage that more successfully obviously is if we have more trained operators, we have less of an onus on us to get the ones that we do have to the right location because they'll be in situ and again as in comments we've raised before, every Queensland town sits on a water course so if the town has fire-fighters in it, the town should have a swift water capability in it, in the event that that water course floods. |
| 96. | ?? | As part of the, ...(ui) us having an opportunity to present or provide like you already suggested some of those affixments, but this purely what happened and I mean presume down the track it will be reviewed to well how are we going to do it better. |
| 97. | HL | Well like today, I think it's, we're making a submission on the basis of what happened and how we think it could have been handled better. |
| 98. | ?? | Yeah okay. |
| 99. | HL | What you have to have in place for the future. |
| 100. | ?? | Yeah. |
| 101. | HL | And you know take it from the point of view of staffing where that's appropriate sorts of things, to the best. |
| 102. | ?? | Yeah to that question you asked. Oh good, okay. |
| 103. | HL | Better placement of your resources and all that sort of, (ui) failure this time. |
| 104. | ?? | It's true though. |
| 105. | HL | You might have adequate resources but they were cut off and couldn't get there. |
| 106. | ?? | Or they might have all been sent. |
| 107. | HL | Yeah, yeah. |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 108. | ?? | Which is something ...(ui). |
| 109. | IB | Yeah look and one of the things, I mean one of the things is, I don't know what the current population of Queensland is ... |
| 110. | ?? | It's growing, well... |
| 111. | IB | Yeah it's growing even a thousand a week or whatever it is. But there's a 162 swift water technicians across the whole State. |
| 112. | HL | 162 level twos. |
| 113. | IB | Across the whole State. Now giving an example of that, in the month or in the six weeks from Christmas through to end of, or middle of February, with the rolling of disasters we've had, there, my wife commented that I slept at home nine times in that period because I'm on deployment here, deployment here, isolated with flood waters here, deployment here. |
| 114. | ?? | Because you're a level two. |
| 115. | IB | Yeah. Now that, that, don't get me wrong, that, that's good utilisation of the skills. |
| 116. | ?? | No that's how I understood it. |
| 117. | IB | But the deployment levels or the staffing model perhaps we're using for level two probably needs to be examined. |
| 118. | ?? | How do you know there's a 162? |
| 119. | IB | Cause that's all there is. |
| 120. | ?? | Cause I figured the other day there were 280. So, I'm just wondering ... |
| 121. | IB | 280. |
| 122. | ?? | That was support ...(ui). |
| 123. | HL | That might have been, that could be across all disciplines. |
| 124. | ?? | Okay. No, no, I'm not, I'm just saying ..(ui) that was. |
| 125. | HL | I think he's talking specifically swift water. |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| 126. | IB | Swift water, but the guy who'd be able to answer it, I'm, I would have said maybe 164 but I could be out of touch with it. ■■■ would know. |
| 127. | ?? | No look (ui), specifics doesn't matter for me other than there's just a real variance in 280 and obviously 162, but I don't think you're far out. |
| 128. | HL | I think that's because the 200 plus figure includes five disciplines. |
| 129. | ?? | Okay (ui) yeah okay. |
| 130. | IB | Where's, where' that, you've hit on actually on one little staffing model already. In South East and Brisbane, to be a qualified tech rescue, you must do all aspects of tech rescue. So, so ... |
| 131. | ?? | Oh. |
| 132. | IB | Right. But in Bundaberg you do one aspect of tech rescue, they call you a level two. Far North they do the same. I mean I, on a recent deployment I went there, one of the fire-fighters introduced himself as a level two, but he doesn't have swift water or confined space. |
| 133. | ?? | Oh that's probably might be it. But then the ...(ui). |
| 134. | HL | Yeah. The same discipline's involved all up. |
| 135. | ?? | But that's what really important here in terms of whatever figures we're voting in, we need to say that's our raising, reason for raising it. If it's 162 then the maths, that's what has to go down. |
| 136. | IB | Yeah, it's, but I'm sure ■■■ will be able to fill you in all that ...(ui) on swift water technicians. Because one of the things obviously we need to look at is do we need to be, cause swift water is often, swift water is taught at the end, at the completion of all your rescue disciplines because there is a requirement that your roping skill, your ability to use rope is taught at the end of the vertical component, there is a roping component in swift water so that's the reason why. |
| 137. | ?? | (ui)... But the horizontal isn't? |
| 138. | IB | It is but it's a different component. But it's the same skill set it's just done, applied on an horizontal plane you are correct so at the moment, the you are |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | taught vertical rescue, fine, trench ... |
| 139. | ?? | For level two? |
| 140. | IB | For, that's, that's all, that's aspect, that's level two you're taught so and then urban search and rescue and then after that swift water. |
| 141. | ?? | Swift water. With its own component including ... |
| 142. | IB | The (ui)... it draws rope, harnessing things like that. |
| 143. | ?? | So what's a level two person who's got swift water, is it level two swift water, like level two. |
| 144. | IB | No there's no level two swift water only. |
| 145. | ?? | It's still two with that component half swift water so you could be level two without being swift. |
| 146. | IB | That's right. |
| 147. | ?? | Oh. |
| 148. | IB | And that's why there might be a difference in that figures. |
| 149. | ?? | That's what it is, yeah okay. But that's important for us to know. |
| 150. | HL | Just there's a range from some people, level two and one or two disciplines to the whole five. |
| 151. | ?? | But how does somebody know, I mean, I don't suppose, I mean if I'm a communications officer say should be level two or the other. Is it local knowledge that you know who's level two for that support. |
| 152. | HL | The people in com centres wouldn't necessarily know, but it'd only be like local knowledge and the special ops people who know how many people are trained in each discipline. |
| 153. | IB | And on our starting our wondrous bombs it depends on how you identify the staff on duty. Having said that in South East the model is ... |
| 154. | ?? | How, how are bombs. |
| 155. | IB | In South East the model is you're not counted as tech rescue until you've |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | completed all five, yet every time we have a swift water precursor coming up, the duty manager will ring up and say how many swift water people have you got on duty and he'll say how many tech rescue have we got, oh we've got three, well we've got three swift water then. Oh okay. |
| 156. | ?? | That's not right. Yeah that's not right. |
| 157. | IB | It is for us. |
| 158. | HL | That's the way it works in South East. |
| 159. | IB | That's how it works for us, but that's what I'm saying but even, even the duty manager ... |
| 160. | ?? | That's tomato and tomatoes isn't it. |
| 161. | HL | Yeah I know it's, it's what he says in South East the requirement for level two in swift water doesn't apply until you've done the other four ... |
| 162. | IB | That's right. |
| 163. | HL | ... then you're counted as, so you've got the whole five. So if you say you've got a level two tech rescue in South East region they know that the person's got it. |
| 164. | IB | That's everyone. But when you go, but when you're on neighbouring regions, they might turn up and say yeah I'm level two, oh really so where's your wetsuit, oh we, and there's another issue which, God, north coast, north coast region has their level two swift water technicians, they don't have their personal issue of swift water equipment. They have to go to the station and open up the station store ... |
| 165. | HL | Far north is the same way. |
| 166. | IB | Yeah. And see how much equipment is left and take what is available. So that works really, really fine if you only ever have four tech rescue people on duty at any one time, you've got four sets of gear, but it's a real pain in the arse if you call in the other eight. What, what equipment do they use. So, again that's all down to funding, perceived threat and the risk and how they manage it and ... |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 167. | ?? | As you said also and that's why ...(ui) explained the population growth, I mean you know there's people everywhere, particularly now also, more so in regional areas like your Lockyer Valleys and so on. |
| 168. | IB | Well Lockyer Valley ... |
| 169. | ?? | Some of, some of the stuff you do then, it's over to ...(ui) some of it, even the number of swift water rescues that are happening in relation to, I don't know if it's as far away as that, but ..(ui) defiant has increased. |
| 170. | IB | Oh yeah. |
| 171. | ?? | So that leaves the emphasis that's more on this because the emphasis is changing. |
| 172. | IB | It is. Tech rescue wise, I've been doing tech rescue now for 20 years and I've never been busier with tech rescue than Ipswich water(?). |
| 173. | HL | And that's likely to increase as well. |
| 174. | IB | Yeah. And then there's the whole issue, like there's questions being asked now in New South Wales, why weren't Queensland swift water technicians responding to northern New South Wales, cause they don't have swift water technicians. |
| 175. | ?? | And that's ...(ui). |
| 176. | IB | But that's more of a fetter ...(ui) than an issue. |
| 177. | ?? | But no this is will flow into that anyway, this scenario. |
| 178. | IB | Yeah. But anyway that's enough from me. |
| 179. | ?? | Well done. Oh shut up [REDACTED]. (???) |
| 180. | IB | Yeah and I'll get out of your hair. Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to this and I'll leave you with [REDACTED] |
| 181. | HL | [REDACTED] thanks very much for what you said, I appreciate it. |
| 182. | IB | Thanks mate. |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 2 |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at Toowoomba
on 24 February 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | HL | Yes Henry starting the third interview with [REDACTED], Toowoomba on the 24 th February. And just say your name. |
| 2. | JB | Yeah [REDACTED] Fire Station. Just looking at the Commission of Inquiry point number eight, preparation and planning by Federal, State and Local Governments emergency services and community, I'd like to say that unfortunately there was very little to no planning in advance. The operational crews seemed to be far more aware of an impending disaster ... |
| 3. | HL | Excuse me [REDACTED] you're focussing on the fire service here? |
| 4. | JB | Yes I am focussing on fire. |
| 5. | HL | As an emergency services agency. |
| 6. | JB | Yes an emergency services agency. The crews on the ground in fact were far more situationally aware of what was coming up, they didn't know when it was going to happen because as has been stated by members previously, there just was no communications of the impending event coming from senior management. And unfortunately that has gone back, my belief is probably, four or five years, in the phrase that I'd use as a timeline to disaster. And why I say that is that with regards to the preparation, when tech rescue was first rolled out into south west region, the standard protocol would be that the on-duty appliance would respond and then automatically the off-duty technical rescue people were paged and then reported to station and then responded. But over a period of four or five years, it's slowly but surely been diluted down to let's wait and see what happens when the truck gets there. Instead of responding as the agency says with force or strength of operations, it's been diluted down to a very minimalist response, and the standard phrase from management is oh but let's wait and see. Now if somebody's life is on the line, this wait and see attitude where in fact the specialist rescue appliance may run three hours on the ground, and if it's further than that they're flown out, three hours hanging by your toe nails may mean the difference between life and death. |
| 7. | HL | Sorry [REDACTED], do you think it's been commented on before that on the morning of the 10 th I think it was, that the army evacuated Oakey and that that should |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | have sent, or triggered some beginning of thought process in the fire service, should there be some greater interaction at a local level in situations like Toowoomba where you've got an air force base adjacent to the town or whatever? |
| 8. | JB | Look it, that the utilisation of ADF assets had been discussed many years before. |
| 9. | HL | Or advice or communication onboard if any. |
| 10. | JB | Or communication yep. |
| 11. | HL | Yep. |
| 12. | JB | Had been discussed years ago but unfortunately because of the, the local to state to federal triggers for communication to occur it just was actually discouraged, even though the senior based commander of the day, [REDACTED], said he would love nothing better than to be able to task his helicopter assets from day to day flying circuits to an emergency response, he said that would be absolutely brilliant. He said, he said unfortunately the levels of government mean that for him to do that, it has to be approved by the federal level of government, even though they have brilliant assets. And unfortunately within that, on the day or in the evening when I was working, where we were told that the helicopter assets had not been able to come up the range, I found it obscene that we were not able to utilise the Aussie tigers that were on training missions at Oakey that are equipped with a very, very sophisticated day and night forward looking infrared. |
| 13. | HL | Was any assist, any requests to get that assistance or to be able to access those assets made? |
| 14. | JB | On the day we were, we did request helicopters, now we were not specific as to where those helicopters would come from. Now as far as I'm aware with the Aussie tigers for instance, they can tell at a distance of four kilometres on the human face whether the person's got a moustache or not. That is how good these, these things are and they are designed to be able to fly in complete wipe-out conditions. That's the way their operators are trained and yet we were not able to, to contact or utilise those assets. |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 15. | HL | So there's no mutual assist or interagency co-operation in place as far as access to Oakey etc. |
| 16. | JB | <p>No, no, none at all. But again what I need to say is there was no preparation. Again another point I think is where a lot of this miscommunication or no communication has occurred that within the Toowoomba area, whether it's been a conscious or unconscious effort by management there has been no managerial station officer meetings as is required to occur five times a year, these haven't happened now for three and a half years. So any views that, that may in fact be out there as far as senior officers are concerned are not being conveyed to the station officers, which is a breach of their own business rules. The business rule states that they're meant to have a minimum of five station officer meetings per year. These have never occurred in the last three and a half years, for all sorts of very obscure reasons. So the express wishes of the Assistant Commissioner etcetera, or senior management was never adequately conveyed back to the station officers or the fire-fighters that are in fact the initial first responders. And over the years it's been, become increasingly apparent that the station officer who is the person who is responding to the incident and is the incident controller, he has no ability to be able to ask for any other additional equipment unless it's been approved via Firecom to the senior on call. And unfortunately over many, many years now it's been a very arduous process to get hold of the senior on call. They may or may not answer the phone. They may be up to nine and a half hours away. They may be on call at Charleville, and it might be a heat wave out there and yet it's bucketing down with rain in Toowoomba. So they have no operational appreciation other than what Firecom has got in a fleeting instance to be able to provide them with information. So you've got, as I say you've got senior on calls that are sitting on the side of their bed of a night time, making calls and they are not on the fire ground, that is meant to be against fire service policy where they're not meant to over-ride the request of the incident controller until they get onto the fire ground because 1-0-0-1 of a standing order it specifically details that even if the senior on call does not elect to attend, it does not abrogate his responsibilities as far as the equipment call or the manpower call is, been concerned. Unfortunately I've got quite a few documents that detail the</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | number of times and the number of concerns in the past where we have said we have not got sufficient resources to safely handle more than one structure fire or one swift water rescue at once. So just looking at the preparedness, there was none. The amount of information that was coming from senior managers, was abysmal as I found out there were at eleven o'clock on the 10 th , Firecom were manning up Firecom and it ended up with being six people in a very small work area, I think it's approximately 10 square metres of workspace. The regional operations co-ordination centre was crewed up primarily by rural officers. This was contrary to what the senior management in the area had said would occur. He said he would not man the ROCC with rural fire officers and yet on the day and in days afterwards, in some instances the entire ROCC was manned by nobody other than rural fire officers whose situational awareness, training and skill sets in an urban environment are nonexistent, they are vegetation fire-fighters. |
| 17. | HL | That'd be an inspector and above levels? |
| 18. | JB | [REDACTED] (?) and then you had a number of training officers, rural training officers, ADSOs and BITSOs (?) and also a couple of administrative staff. All aspects of response to the ... |
| 19. | HL | Which ROCC was that [REDACTED] sorry? |
| 20. | JB | That's the one at the rear of 201 Anzac Avenue. But I need to go back because again I believe very passionately in the timeline of the disaster. About six weeks before this flood event, we had been getting an increasing tempo operationally of floods and swift water rescue. Fortunately they were contained within the creek banks. We had any number of jobs that were occurring and unfortunately we were not getting any guidance from senior management as to how we were to respond to these incidents. We did highlight to the Acting Superintendent at the time that we needed some sort of in water boat capacity to which a couple of tours before the 10 th , they did borrow a second-hand boat from Brisbane. Even about two tours before I was being re-educated in the joys of the OM system and I was being trained by the Area Director from Dalby, and we're sitting in at station 12, listening to a flood response go down. And unfortunately one of the shifts for three months beforehand had no level twos on that shift at all. That shift quite |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | correctly responded lima (?) but fortunately we had one of our members that went against a directive and he actually self-responded. He was on duty, heard the incident go down, took or was forced to actually take a rural training officer with him to back him up and went to Dalby. And I proceeded unfortunately to detail my concerns to the Area Director ... |
| 21. | HL | Was that a rural volunteer or? |
| 22. | JB | No a rural training officer. And he then proceeded out there and attempted to do the best that he could. And it was only as he was going out there we were hearing that the incident controller, which was [REDACTED] had said yeah we've got a flood boat out there but the SES have advised that there are no qualified people to operate it. And then we heard, SIT REP come back that the police were going down to get the flood boat knowing that they had no operator and got it. |
| 23. | HL | Now tell me this, flood boats, that the SES use is used for evacuating people in ... |
| 24. | JB | In comparatively still water. |
| 25. | HL | ... it's not meant as a ... |
| 26. | JB | It's not designed nor are they trained to operate in high turbulence water. Anyhow they went out there with the intent that, I don't know who was deemed to be the boat operator, but somebody operated the boat. They came in from the high side by the video footage and in his own words later the member said it was exceptionally lucky that the boat capsized into the current not with the current because he believed that there was a high probability that they could have been killed, and that's on the video record. But and then, it was only after the incident controller came back and said I have now three rescuers in the water with the patient, now awaiting another flood boat from Chinchilla. It was only then that the senior manager, [REDACTED] allowed the Area Director who knew the area very well to actually respond back to his area, because they seemed to be very keen to make sure I knew all of the fundamentals of the OM system. Then the tour before, unfortunately we had an incident where we were absolutely slammed. We had four people in the water between, it was on the Oakey Pittsworth Road |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | and it was very, very broad water, and we dragged four people out, we were just coming back and then there were another two separate swift water incidents. I know one of the rescue technicians he stayed with one of the members from Pittsworth, had a portable radio and he was responding on his own to an incident because the roads were, were that severely cut. But I came back there, when we still had two active swift water incidents on and we were standing by at station 11 because station 11 had responded to another job at Pittsworth and because of the limited access around the roadways they went and backed up there. |
| 27. | HL | What's 11, that's Anzac Avenue? |
| 28. | JB | No station 11's Kitchener Street. |
| 29. | HL | Kitchener Street. |
| 30. | JB | So we're at station 12, we come back from a job, I'd rang the senior on call and I was absolutely gob-smacked but also incensed at the same time. I said to him we are absolutely being flogged, Firecom are flogged, they are having to say wait all units are on triple-0 etcetera, and I said we need to go to a level two incident and we need to man up an ICC. And I was absolutely gob-smacked and it was witnessed by other members of the crew, he said but it's dark. And I said turn your light switch on. Unfortunately I knew what he meant, he didn't say it, but with what he said unfortunately he implied it because he, he couldn't come to grips with what was actually occurring because what had happened before that was all the senior officers were on holidays. He had no one to help him. So he's gone but it's dark, I could do something in the morning, which was six hours away he said, but I can't get an ICC going now. So again the crews that were responding were left to do the strategic thinking, planning and co-ordination in the absence of a senior on call. The senior on call did not come to the area that was being affected. He was making decisions 140 kilometres away which was not being affected by rain. That was one tour before then, another night on that same tour, it was responded to a report of a motorcyclist in on a causeway on the Toowoomba Cecil Plains Road. As I'm pulling out past the racecourse, I heard on the radio from Firecom that we had a fire bird, the call sign I can't tell you, but fire bird is a rotary winged asset that is primarily used for |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>reconnaissance, hence the fire bird designation. I knew I had three quarters of an hour of available light left till last light which, if they're not instrument rated they have to be on the ground. The fire bird operator said yes we were still running and available at Toowoomba airport. I requested fire bird be responded to the incident and it was never responded. It had to go through the senior on call, via Firecom, and then I was told after the event that no it was not available until it had to have a written tasking request come in from the ROCC for it to be tasked to go out and save a life, or at least report on where the life was in the flood. So I tried to use a helicopter but because of administrative constrictions the asset that was still running, it still had endurance time, and would have been no more than seven minutes from the incident in air flight time, was not responded to the incident. And I just find that that is just indefensible, that we've got such an administrative log-jam in place. Years and years ago in another fire service I was always told and taught that administration is in support of not of operations. Not the other way around.</p> |
| 31. | HL | <p>So who, who's that with, the fire bird, which agency?</p> |
| 32. | JB | <p>Well if it's called a fire bird it is a fire service asset.</p> |
| 33. | HL | <p>QFRS asset.</p> |
| 34. | JB | <p>QFRS asset and I was not able to access it. It's not as if I was going through a state or in the federal level to try and get the Oakey assets, this was a fire service rotary asset that was, had just touched down at Toowoomba airport and said he was available for tasking if required. I requested him but because he didn't get the tasking request and the directive from state who were probably at 6:30 at night nobody was around, I would suggest that's probably why it didn't occur. And this is contrary to me in the past teaching air operations where in the fire management one package we're told that you can have up to two hours of aerial assets without even having to be approved by the Air Director. If you want to go in extension of that it has to be approved by the AD in conjunction with the AC. But on that night it, it just went to, lock a computer, locked up and I had no response forthcoming. I requested that the asset be responded and we've always been told by state air desk that an aerial asset you should consider it to be no different to a rural</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | asset or an urban asset, it is just another unit at your disposal to be able to utilise to do the response. And it didn't happen. |
| 35. | HL | Okay. |
| 36. | JB | Also to the tour before, [REDACTED] and myself were having a discussion with [REDACTED] at around eight o'clock in the morning. |
| 37. | HL | Sorry [REDACTED], had the fire bird been available during the floods at all? |
| 38. | JB | It was on it's.... |
| 39. | HL | 10 th , 11 th of January? |
| 40. | JB | I don't know, I don't know. I believe that a lot of them went back down the hill and then when they tried to come up the hill the fog had dropped in and they had to land I think around Withcott, Helidon way somewhere. |
| 41. | HL | Is it normally based here or elsewhere? |
| 42. | JB | No, no we don't have a fire bird. |
| 43. | HL | Okay. |
| 44. | JB | But somebody must at some stage or another deemed that we needed to have made up a fire bird to carry out aerial reconnaissance of the flooded area, because we actually had in South West region, we've got people that are trained as air observers and also air attack supervisors and they've been trained in utilising both fixed wing and rotary wing assets, and had been used in the past to do over flights to gain intelligence for floods such as Condamine, Oakey etcetera. And for whatever reason when you've suddenly got a life rescue, you couldn't get that asset. As I was about to say, the tour before, [REDACTED], myself heard and had a discussion with, with our senior manager, [REDACTED] and he had dropped onto the realisation that perhaps we needed to be starting to treat swift water rescues the same as we do wild fire alert levels, and that is that based on the information that comes from the weather bureau we need to be manning up the stations. And that's how wild fire alert level works. It actually dictates under a wild fire alert level the operational tempo or building inspection temp that is to be carried out or not carried out, because the higher the alert level the lower the administrative |

tasking occurs on the station. You get to say alert level four which is the top, you don't go out and do building inspections or school visits. You check your gear actively in the morning to make sure it's ready for that tasking. Now all of that wild fire alert level is only coming out of the bureau of meteorology. The exact same source of information that was telling us that we were going to have significant weather events. But for whatever reason on the 10th management failed to act on an operational level to man up the stations, where you had your trained assets. And the stations I'm talking about are stations 21, 11 and 12, so now that's Warwick, Kitchener Street and Anzac Avenue. They stood up three auxiliary stations, none of them are trained in swift watery entry, awareness etcetera, and as was said in a debrief at around 7:30 in the morning the on duty operational crew did request additional swift water assets to be stood up for the day and that was declined, I'm told well too late. Now on the 10th I was being the dutiful parent with my daughter and her mate from across the road went out to get some DVDs and went down to what we affectionately know as the Goober Track, we know if there's a bit of rain people insist on driving through. And unfortunately to my horror I observed that we had the airport flyer which is a shuttle bus between Toowoomba and Brisbane airport was stuck with rising flood water on the corner of Long and Mackenzie Street. And low and behold with two teenage girls and myself, between the three of us we didn't have a mobile phone. I drove to Kitchener Street fire station through the Heritage Street intersection there, the water was only about 150ml deep. Drove around to the rear of the station, all of the on duty crews were out. I observed that 3-11 Kilo, 3-11 Juliette and 3-11 Sierra were still on station, but nobody else was there. I rang the call into Firecom. Firecom said oh is that you JB, I said yes it is and the person that I took to be behind was [REDACTED] Firecom said do you want [REDACTED] to be on duty. So around, it would have been about quarter to two-ish, I have been able to access my OMs report yet because we seem to have a huge back-log of OMs reports and as management said at the debrief, they're unable to accurately come up with a representation of who was on what truck and when and where, and it's still ongoing, there is pages and pages of incomplete fire reports due to OMs deficiencies. But anyhow having said that, I instructed my daughter and her girlfriend that look there appeared to be water coming in through a couple areas of the station, to sit in the front

office and if they were concerned to evacuate up to the hose tower at the rear of the station and I waited for [REDACTED] (?) to come in. We then, once he came in we booked on and said what the crewing was on 3-11 Kilo which was [REDACTED] and myself. We then proceeded north up Kitchener Street. Went around past the Department of Main Roads and then were responded to two persons trapped initially at the corner of Hill Street and Dent Street and we went via Hume Street, James Street and then down into Clifford Street, which is the top side of Grand Central. The water at the bottom there was probably only 300ml deep at the bottom of West Street. We went around to Hill Street and found that, as a crew of two and that's all we were, we could see two people stuck on the top of a single car at the corner of the Grange and Dent Street. I put on a PFD and the appropriate gear beforehand and said to [REDACTED] look there's nobody else looks as though I'm going to have to back you up. [REDACTED] knows my previous history that I've actually done a little more than level one but unfortunately in Queensland my skill sets are not recognised even though I wrote the swift water awareness package that had been accepted for the State, my external qualifications are still not recognised in Queensland. So [REDACTED] was fairly confident with what we were trying to do, so we tried to wade up against the current but using the lead of a couple of the buildings to try and walk up against the current. We got to about waist depth and the current was too strong. We then elected to move to the Grange and Dent Street and we were met by probably about half a dozen people in what was the Hertz Rental car dealership. They'd moved all the cars out so it was quite good to be able to walk through but to get right down to the door we were could see these people about five metres away on a pole, we had to wade through water that was chest deep. Now I stayed within the confines of the building, I said to [REDACTED] well I'll back you up on the tag line, which is yellow line that we attached to the back of him, and we call them a throw bag by any other name. So [REDACTED] gone out there, he's made contact then he was swept away. Then I've watched, and tried to yell a bit of information to another one of the people on the pole and cars careered up as you would have seen in one of the photos and it has basically knocked them off. On that point because we were in water, we had no means of communication, because our radios, our portable radios are not waterproof or water resistant. So I've had to try and wade as quickly as I could back to 3-

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>11 Kilo, the radio was absolutely jammed with radio traffic and I made the first of I think what ended up being two red, red, red calls for the day. Now to invoke a red, red, red means that it's only to be used in your extreme operational emergency where a fire-fighter's life is in immediate danger. I considered that was the appropriate call because I had a swift water technician, which was [REDACTED] and two civilians swept away. As soon as I got on the radio, made the red, red, red call, I've directed that other appliances go to down stream intercept points, 3-11 Alpha were at the corner of Margaret and Dent Street, and they actually intercepted a couple of people there and then I believe there was [REDACTED], I can't recall what appliance it was but in total and much to the credit of all people there, we had the total of four appliances respond to the red, red, red call. The outcome was that we got [REDACTED] out of the water safely but it's fair to say and I'm going to use the language that [REDACTED] used that when he came walking back around to, and backing up to the top of Clifford Street on the Grange Street, he's come back to the truck, he said [REDACTED] I just fucking don't want to do this at all, this is just fucking lunacy. And he was, even [REDACTED] his wife, he rang up between that and going to another job on his mobile phone, and rang her up and was in no uncertain terms, he said this is fucking bullshit that, that we're trying to do stuff and we just didn't have the resources. And unfortunately it was fairly prophetic that, that given the wisdom of hindsight, management knew that an event was coming and they didn't, or they've failed in their duty to man up operationally. And in the past with a wild fire alert levels, [REDACTED] has in fact put every station in South West on standby, so that's 45 stations he put on standby for a wild fire alert level, based on information received from the Bureau of Meteorology. But for a flood event, or a potential of a flood event, he failed to do anything based on the information received on an operational viewpoint. He manned up his administrative support areas but didn't man up the, the initial primary response crews. With regards the manning on the day, it really was just sheer dumb luck, there was no, no ...</p> |
| 45. | HL | Which day are you talking about now John? |
| 46. | JB | I'm still talking the 10 th . I'm still ... |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 47. | HL | Still on A or? |
| 48. | JB | Well we could probably go to the aspects of the flood and events, particularly measures taken to inform community measures prior, immediate management and response and recovery. |
| 49. | HL | Yep, okay. |
| 50. | JB | The immediate management was left to the guys on the fire ground. There was no management. I became aware when I was responded around to the rear of the Defiance Flour Mill and unfortunately I was the first to contact a deceased who was underneath the slab, that rural officers had been sent out to drive around to do I don't know what. They had not been trained in swift water rescue. They haven't even been given an awareness level of training, and yet the senior manager sent these people that were sitting in the ROCC out into the floods. |
| 51. | HL | These were the training officers that were there? |
| 52. | JB | The training officers that were crewing up the regional operations co-ordination centre. So that he ended up with skeletal staffing in his ROCC in a time of a massive developing calamity, to which my mind speaks volumes as to the lack of command control that was being instilled from this ROCC. They didn't man up an incident control centre in Highfields, even though in the debrief [REDACTED] said look we, we got all the laptops out, got the projectors working and that sort of carry on. Nobody at any time put any sort of structure in place for a large emerging event. It just went to operational lock up. But as I was about to say on the, on that day, and you're talking about resourcing, it was just sheer dumb luck that we actually had a full strength of ten on duty and what I mean by that is that within some sort of a sick relief policy that has been agreed to years ago, and I don't believe that it's been fully thought through, we had full operational strength of ten on. If the flood had happened later in the month we may have only been down to eight. Now a fire-fighter is no, no more immune to illness than the general population and in fact when you look at the statistics, a fire-fighter has no more or no less sick days off than anyone else within the civil or public service. And yet he's got a duty of care to both himself and to the crew that |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>he's responding, that he only reports to work if he's 100% operationally fit, so I think to put any sort of cap on the amount of sick leave that's to be taken by an area is ridiculous. Teachers don't send classes home because a teacher is reported sick for the day. Nurses don't send patients home for the day because their nurse has reported sick. And we talking about an emergency service, an initial primary response agency putting caps on manning for the month. And that's why I say it was just sheer dumb luck that we had ten on for the day, not potentially eight. Let's see, resourcing, as I said was not resourced. They resourced off the fire ground, but didn't resource on the fire ground. And I'm jumping a little bit. Immediate management and response was pathetic. Again I believe it is toxic to have more than three people at fire communications, and what I mean by toxic is having people that are trying to interject and put, have their input in over operators that are taking life critical calls and the room is not big enough to do the task. It has no capacity that as the job increases that they can actually go to a third console or a fourth console, there is no redundancies and it was highlighted by the fact that they dragged another Firecom operator in, so you had three Firecom operators, the Firecom manager who is not in that Firecom on a day to day basis and is in fact sitting in a remote location at regional headquarters. How the hell can you supervise a fire communications centre if you're not sitting in or adjacent to the fire communications centre, I just can't fathom it, it beggars belief that she has to wait for a phone call or hopefully listen to her scanner to be able to determine what level of operational tempo is occurring.</p> |
| 53. | HL | <p>So what, what were they actually doing in there those three management people in terms of ...[unintelligible – '(ui)']....</p> |
| 54. | JB | <p>What they were actually doing, what they were doing was standing there pontificating on what was coming in and then trying to interject into the operators as to what was going on. What they were doing by default was running an ICC, but it was not formalised, they were not running the incident logs as they should be, they were just three spectators to the disaster that was unfolding. They had, if they went onto a mobile phone to, to provide advice to senior management when, just through them with their act of talking, it's raising the amount of noise, background chaff within that operations centre to the point where the operators said on a couple of</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | occasions they could not hear themselves think because people debating, discussing or communicating in the background. It is not in a workspace that's ten square metres in size, it's barely adequate for two people to work there, it is not designed as a work station for six people, and it has not got the acoustic isolation to be able to do that adequately. It is, and has been flagged many, many times in the past, it is woefully inadequate for the task that we're trying to do. We've been jammed into one corner of an ambulance communication centre. |
| 55. | HL | Ambulance still up there? |
| 56. | JB | Pardon? |
| 57. | HL | That's a combined centre? |
| 58. | JB | Yep. |
| 59. | HL | Yeah. |
| 60. | JB | It's the only one left in the State that is combined. |
| 61. | HL | That's right. |
| 62. | JB | But I just want to put on the record if you wouldn't mind please Henry, it's interesting that on the 24 th of seventh 2009, I must be a prophet of doom, I don't know, but I send an email, and I'll provide you with a copy, to our senior manager [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] just a couple of observations about the Black Saturday fires and a couple of sobering comments that I've found. One, conforming to the rurals was the enemy of judgment, commonsense and moral responsibility. And this is the Commissioner from the Black Saturday fires. So the second comment he made, there was a failure by media to distinguish between the fire-fighter on the front line who were rightly lauded and the competence of those who were controlling the font. And as a closing paragraph I've said to [REDACTED] however in conversation with some QFRS managers, there is a belief that this would not happen in Queensland. What's your thoughts? Have we prepared ourselves to ensure this doesn't happen? Signed myself. I had no response back to that, and when I actually spoke to him face to face, he seemed to think oh no that's Victoria, it would never happen in Queensland, we've got everything under control. And |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>unfortunately that finding and that commentary out of the, our Royal Commission in another State has become so true and prophetic that you'd almost expect to see that sort of a commentary coming out of this Commission of Inquiry, I believe, if, if any sort of investigation is conducted in any robust form. But, with regards to resourcing, we have over a protracted number of years tried to increase the resources that's the human resources available to get out of the door to do a job. In 1976 there were 12 fire-fighters on shift. In 2011 our maximum or minimum, whichever perspective you want to look at it on shift is 10 fire-fighters on shift. And that may decrease depending upon the amount of sick days that have been taken. And yet in 1976 the town was 56,000 people. In 2011 the daytime population is 156,000, sorry correction daytime is 210,000 and night time is 156,000. The fire resources or fire rescue resources have not increased in over 34 years and yet the administrative staffing, the backroom people who do not drag people out of cars, floods, fires, etcetera, has gone from 1.5 administrative staff to almost 80 administrative in the same region. Now this just, again beggars belief. What is the focus, is it administration or is it operations. Have we lost sight of the focus within Queensland and that is that as an emergency service we're here to service the community in which we reside, not belt them with paperwork, or belt the operational crews with paperwork, I believe, and that's what I said before, administration is meant to be in support of operations, not the other way around that operations are only there to keep employed in this case, almost 80 administrative staff.</p> |
| 63. | HL | That's for the region? |
| 64. | JB | <p>And that's for the region. Adequacy of equipment and communication systems. I'd have to say that the equipment was inadequate. And why I say that is over a protracted number of years and I would really encourage anyone who wants to pursue it further to have robust discussions and obtain the email correspondence of Station Officer [REDACTED] and then after him Station Officer [REDACTED] where over a protracted number of years we had identified equipment shortfalls and we were told in no uncertain terms, no that's not going to happen. And yet a Brisbane taskforce that I was sent on, the Commissioner stated that in the previous two months with swift water rescues we had saved more people than in structure fires in the previous ten</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | years. Now he said that in a large gathering of urban search and rescue operators. I don't believe that that would be a flippant comment because the gentleman concerned is usually pretty deck-handed in getting his facts right. |
| 65. | HL | So that was swift water in what period of time? |
| 66. | JB | Two months. |
| 67. | HL | Two months. |
| 68. | JB | <p>We'd saved more lives in the previous two months in swift water than we had saved lives in structure fires in the previous ten years. So from a head of agency, he's acknowledged that this has got a huge potential to save life and we had been saving multitudes of lives, but we had limited number of human resources and even smaller numbers of physical resources. What had been happening and was identified in the debrief that operational equipment was being removed from our 3-11 Lima, or Kilo and was being removed out west to some of the other swift water standby sites. We, which meant that the operational appliance was devoid of some of the vital pieces of swift water equipment. We had no regional cache or regional store as was requested previously, in previous swift water events, so that its, it was designed so that we could respond to other swift water events but not take the operational equipment off the operational trucks. And yet in the preceding weeks before that it was being allowed by management, or directed by management that you would take personal flotation devices or throw bags or longer lines off the operational appliance. Now that has to affect deliberately and intentionally the operational capacity of that primary appliance. And 3-11 Lima or Kilo is tasked to respond to any technical rescue incident, including swift water right across South West region as required. The co-ordination, as was mentioned before, we did in the days and weeks leading up to the events, try to determine what roads were open. We had the ROCC that was in their own words was working in a shadow capacity for many weeks, but we were unable to obtain what roads were open and what roads were shut, which on first flush may mean nothing, but as professional career fire-fighters we'd like to be able to pride ourselves in knowing how we're going to get to person in need. Not having to wing it on the appliance, as we're turning out, on the mobile phone to try and work out what's the best access route to get to the</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | particular incident. Up until the flood we were not given daily briefings as to what roads were open and what were shut. These miraculously started to occur after the event, but these road openings or closures were actually only put onto email format and put around the stations after we had the debrief at Gold Park. So it was two or three weeks after the flood event that we were now starting to get intel on what roads were open and what roads were shut. The deployment of personnel ... |
| 69. | HL | So was that the first operational debrief on the 4 th of February? |
| 70. | JB | Yes. And it was only, and to his credit, it was only [REDACTED] initiative that got that going. But I'm still not aware of what roads are open and what are shut it doesn't appear to be a daily briefing style of thing in which it would or should be coming out of any section that is working as a planning section. Because they're meant to be putting all of that information out there for any of the operational resources to use and then work out how they're going to get to the job. Deployment of the personnel and equipment was on the day, was ad hoc and probably a lot of it was actually self response. Interestingly enough deployment of personnel, it was only a couple of days before the 10 th that our tech rescue co-ordinator, [REDACTED] [REDACTED](?) was pulled up by our Acting Superintendent [REDACTED] for self responding. He was told you will not self respond. And his self response only in fact involved, cause he, we're all as techs have to take our packs home with us. His self response was he'd been rung and told that Lima was coming down the hill to an in water event, and he said well righto I'll meet them at the end of my street, which just happens to be the Warrego Highway so he was then picked up by the responding crew. He was sanctioned by senior management and told do not do that. And then, I think it was a day before the 10 th , he was told he could actually take a QFRS vehicle home with all his gear and in fact respond from there. So I don't know what difference a few days make, but unfortunately it's just another example of the guys on the floor being far more situationally aware of the potential or actual rescues that were occurring than management who were either on holidays or miles away or didn't want to listen. Again sorry, back to the equipment and communication systems, the inboard communication was non-existent. We had no wet weather protection for either in water or standing outside. A |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | number of the radios, the portable radios were drowned. They just didn't want to work, Firecom had extreme problems in trying to talk to the people that were running and at various sections of the job. I know Acting Station Officer [REDACTED] was having a lot of difficulty there, and also to the potential for that lack of communication capacity with all members at all times was really highlighted when I lost [REDACTED] and the two civilians off the post. It was probably the longest minute and half wade back that I've ever put in in my entire 42 years. You felt completely helpless, that I was unable to raise an alarm until a fair way down and my estimate of the, in the centre of stream current, I believe that the current was flowing about 55 kilometres an hour. Now some people would refute that but I know some years ago with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in only a minor event we clocked or paced a bicycle helmet in short drive and it was doing 43 kilometres an hour and it hadn't broken outside of the concrete embankment. So I know that it had to be doing in excess of that. And my concern was that I was going to lose [REDACTED] and I just felt totally and utterly helpless, because we just didn't have the equipment to do the task and we didn't have enough resources downstream, but, in as far as human was concerned. |
| 71. | HL | Did you have any? |
| 72. | JB | Only by default we had 3-11 Alpha who were on the west side of Margaret Street. And that they were going into the water, we, I think the young bloke that they pulled out, his prophetic words were I'm from the SES so I know what I'm doing in water, and he ended up bear hugging a tree that had been swatted by a van, and you saw it on the footage. |
| 73. | HL | So when you say by default do you mean they were downstream ... (ui) ... |
| 74. | JB | They happened to be on the right side and in a intercept location and ... |
| 75. | HL | No, I mean because they were involved in another rescue. |
| 76. | JB | In another rescue that's right. |
| 77. | HL | Yeah. |
| 78. | JB | It was not by design, it was by default. It's fair to say that absolutely everyone that day did the absolute best that they could. It was, but from a |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | strategic level that we'd been told time and time again, it's not your job as a responding officer to worry about the strategic functions of things, you just focus on your job. There was no guidance from above. There was just nothing occurring. |
| 79. | HL | So this instance here, is that the incident that was referred to earlier where one crew were engaged in a rescue unaware that there was a crew 50 metres away and ... (ui). |
| 80. | JB | That's right. That's right. Because we had no ability, once I've left the truck, we had no ability to be able to communicate with any rescue teams downstream, because we didn't have robust communications, we had no in water communications or in fact as I said before, some portable communications were failing because of just the sheer amount of water. |
| 81. | HL | Okay. |
| 82. | JB | Also to just as far as the, the equipment that we're using, I would certainly support the evolving this technical rescue field where if somebody and I've got a couple of old fire-fighters that are still active surf lifesavers, but because they don't or won't climb a vertical rope, they are excluded from being swift water technicians. Personally, I believe that there should be no such thing as stratification of skill sets. We don't do it when we go to a house fire and wear breathing apparatus. We don't do it when we go to hazard material incidents. We respond as a crew, we utilise the skill sets that as an officer I am aware of within the crew that I've got with me and I try to utilise those skills as best as possible. You have people that are level two techs now that, that are doing a top job but then we could have a lot more people doing in water rescues. |
| 83. | HL | So to make sure I've got it right, to become level two swift water rescue tech, you're required to be competent in vertical rescue compliance base and user (?) |
| 84. | JB | Yes. |
| 85. | HL | Before being able to be ... |
| 86. | JB | That's been the primary focus. When [REDACTED] first started rolling it out, |

he said the core skill that everything else within technical rescue is to platform off is a vertical rescue. And so to that end that if you can't obtain a vertical rescue you can't do anything else. And unfortunately to both within the region and within the State there had been a conscious directive out there to put a cap on the number of people that were to become rescue technicians for want of a better description. Which seems strange. I would have thought as an agency wanting to maximise the physical bang for the buck that if 80% of the people on stations were prepared to have a crack at getting qualified or obtaining the skills to become swift water operators that should not be stifled, it should in fact be encouraged. It'd be a bit like saying well we've only got one bloke on the truck that is prepared to wear breathing apparatus in a in structure fire and the other three are spectators. And that in essence was what was occurring, that we were being told no you're a level, that you're not a level two technician so therefore you can't go into the water. But on the day the people elected to make the decision whether it was conscious or unconsciously to say no stuff it I've got lots of people in the water and I'm going to give them a hand. Now by our estimates, and it's only estimates, on the 10th we saved 90 people as a fire service, and lost two. Which isn't too bad with an on duty crew of 10 people only, and particularly when you look at the other factors such as the Alpha appliance and Lima from station 11 who'd been responded down the range as it kicked off. And as it turned out it was the way the rain was coming, it was coming in from the north-east so it was natural that Murphy's Creek had an incident or two occur initially they responded to that and fortunately they didn't get down and were trapped. But the other thing that I really take offence to is that the senior on calls, it's been an ongoing problem where you can't contact them, so therefore operations cease, or not cease but you are only limited. Firecom will not, if I make pumps three, before that third pump is even approved, it has to go via Firecom to the senior on call. Now the senior on call, he may not be available. We have had it happen many times where the senior on call will not respond to his pager or his mobile phone, and yet that person is being paid to be on call for all operations in that area or areas. Now in South West region they've come up with this weird system whereby they actually have a senior on call for eastern and a senior on call for western. And that's to cover six areas. So if the senior on call for eastern is uncontactable you've got

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>somebody as I said before who may be nine and a half hours away road time at Charleville, making the call. Now a lot of these senior on calls and I know through looking at the learning management system within DCS have not even done swift water awareness training. There is no record of qualification or of skill and yet these senior on calls are basically God as far as the amount of equipment and human resources that will respond to that incident. So I don't know how these people can make a strategic operational decision if they have not received training in that particular technical skill set. Most of these guys are relying on what they did 20 years ago when they were on the trucks. These guys have not in the main, been operational for years, they are administrative staff and yet they have in, I will use the word, the gall to stop equipment requests or manpower requests to an incident that is going down and they have not got eyes on the incident. I believe what should occur is that if the incident controller requests something it comes. If the senior on call has an issue with it, he gets up off his backside, off the edge of the chair, off the edge of the bed and he comes onto the fire ground, is given an incident action briefing and then a SMEAC's brief and then based on what he's seen on the fire ground physically he can either support or downgrade the response to that. Not do it by remote control.</p> |
| 87. | HL | Okay. |
| 88. | JB | Adequacies of forecast. Yeah, down the bottom. |
| 89. | HL | Oh down the bottom, yeah. |
| 90. | JB | Yeah adequacy of forecast and early warning systems. |
| 91. | HL | Will this be your last one? |
| 92. | JB | Yes. |
| 93. | HL | Okay. |
| 94. | JB | Okay. |
| 95. | HL | Just grab that other guy |
| 96. | JB | The adequacies of forecast were brilliant. The weather bureau did the best that they could do but unfortunately our management let us down. They |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | manned up all of the wrong areas, but failed to notify the operational crews that something was going to happen. The only word I can use is organisational negligence. They knew it was happening, they manned up the ROCC, they manned up the fire communications centre, they actually stood up three stations in anticipation of a major weather event, would they have been in breach of their own zero harm policy by standing them up when they knew that they were not trained to work in a swift water environment. I'll let others decide. But they certainly did not hand out what they knew to the operational crews who were then expected, quite rightly to go out into the, in the deluge. And if I may and I'll just go through them really quickly Henry. |
| 97. | HL | Yep. |
| 98. | JB | I'll give you a quick brief of what I picked up from the debrief that was conducted on the 12 th of February. It was chaired by [REDACTED], you had [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] there. But it was very conspicuous by his absence that his senior on call which was [REDACTED] was nowhere to be seen. They elected to start the debrief from only the 9 th of first, they wouldn't allow it to go back prior to that to give a bit of a timeline as to what was occurring. The ROCC was operating at the time of the incident. Lessons learnt, QPS etcetera are needed for further use. The ROCC had been running them loosely from the 27 th of twelfth, working on a low profile. I've never heard of such a thing, you either run it, properly manned or you don't, but they've come up with this term of low profile. On the 9 th of the first, they had a flood at Grantham and A shift were on. They responded down to there and did a number of very good rescues. But as was pointed out earlier, as soon as we go down to Grantham we've lost any sort of operational capacity there. Management did not call in additional staff to cover those, the movements into another region. I don't care whether it's in there, another region or in the north of Toowoomba, where you've got crews away doing one job, what's happening to the rest of the town. |
| 99. | HL | Where exactly is Grantham? |
| 100. | JB | Grantham, you can drive through on the way back it's now open again. It's on, it's on the old Toowoomba Road, you get down towards ... |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 101. | HL | You go through Withcott? |
| 102. | JB | You go through Withcott and then you know you've got that little bridge you go over near the park ... |
| 103. | HL | Yeah, yep. |
| 104. | JB | ... you go off to the left and then that takes you through Gatton, you go on the road to Gatton. |
| 105. | HL | Okay. |
| 106. | JB | <p>Grantham is just Toowoomba side of Gatton. Anyhow on the 10th of the first, normal SOCC monitoring, they were doing reports approximately four or five people. They had [REDACTED] there to do electronic incident action plans. They actually got a Senior Fire-fighter up from Brisbane to make their reporting system work. The seniors, the senior management didn't know how to work their own electronic incident action plan. Claims all functional roles were being maintained, which we know that they weren't and [REDACTED] had stated previously to quite a few people that he would not have rural officers in the ROCC, yet on the day there were plenty of them there. AC said or he knew that on the 20th of the twelfth that we were proceeding towards a major flood event. We had regional fire communications centre and prior to the 9th of the first, he established electronic incident action plans and across the region we had three corridors of operations, which he detailed. You had your Condamine area, you had your the areas such as, I'm just trying to think, St George, Oakey, Dalby that was severely flood affected. But interestingly enough he did state that whilst we had all of these things happening and they did actually have incident control centres running out in the region, he did not maintain a nightshift capacity with a regional operations co-ordination centre prior to the 10th of the first. So that there was, he got all this (?) important to us but we'll see tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. So if anything happened overnight the ICCs were left on their own. There was no forward planning that I could determine and I have been teaching incident management systems right across the State both internally and externally and it just, there has been no preplanning. There was no logistic section getting together and saying well what do we need for the next day. It was all done on a wing and</p> |

a prayer. They did bring in extra people as I said before to the SOCC and Firecom. AC will allow discussion of timeline leading up to the 10th but then when we pushed on it, it didn't happen. On the day all normal manned station 11, 12, it was just a status quo, which was ten. [REDACTED] said that at nine o'clock in the morning on the 10th of the first, she knew that rain was on the way and arranged for [REDACTED] to come in if required. So she was becoming operationally aware. [REDACTED] asked was there a trigger to when the extra Firecom operator would come and the answer was no. So it was just seat of the plan, pants activation. [REDACTED] agreed third operator could come in if necessary. [REDACTED] wasn't advised. [REDACTED] was advised by [REDACTED] at 1100 hours to call [REDACTED] in. [REDACTED] couldn't get in due to the water, it had become, by the time she dropped her kids and that's sort of carry on, it was very hard to get in but she finally got in. Gail came in and [REDACTED], ...(ui) [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were at Firecom along with [REDACTED]. So you had a total of six. At 0700 hours the boys, this is according to [REDACTED] attended a structure fire, requests from floor to man up at 0700 hours and was declined and not until 1300 hours was any intel provided to crews on the floor, that things were going to go to crap. An hour and a half before the event, duty crew, [REDACTED], unable to contact a senior on call, which was [REDACTED]. The duty crew had no intel of the coming storm. [REDACTED] at 12:30 and then 1300 had rung the senior on call which was [REDACTED] to set up in the ICC and finally at 1300 he was told he could set it up but not man it. [REDACTED] from Firecom's first job was to Murphy's Creek, 3-11 Alpha and Yankee went but due to location they split the turn out. In other words it was a good sound operational decision made by the responding crew to go two different ways, and that was, that's the intent, try to get a crew on each side of the swift water. And unfortunately the training of swift water has been taught within the confines of a creek. Not broad water or massive storm. So that, that would have coloured their thinking. I would have done the same and in fact had done the same on a number of previous jobs. The crew had pre-planned due to an incident on the 20th of the twelfth. This is what they were talking about where, right across the shifts, not just A shift, it had been agreed that if a swift water job goes down and Lima is going out of the town for a reasonable distance, the nearest station whether it was station 11 or 12, would back them up with a level one qualified people so that they had some means of being able to be

rescued because they were only responding at best as a team of two qualified rescue technicians. In some cases it was only one, and it was, it was vital to maintain the safety of the crews. [REDACTED] on 3-17 Alpha responded at Murphy's Creek but was stopped by landslide, then went to Toowoomba. [REDACTED] went down the range in 3-11 Yankee and was being passed by waves as I said. He described it, it was as though the range was trying to eat us up. Trees and rocks were coming everywhere, waterfalls, mudslides, the lot. Then turned back up the range, radioed that cars were being swept down the range. [REDACTED] (?) said two swift water technicians on duty and 3-12 Alpha were responding to a fire call at St Andrews. [REDACTED] at the top of, said he was driving around at the top of North Street, just driving around, and he was going to crew 3-12 Bravo, so he went back to station 12 with auxiliary crew but SO Wensley crewed with auxiliaries. And then [REDACTED] said he went to Dent and Margaret Street and I think he was directed to go there by this, sorry [REDACTED] out of the SOCC. [REDACTED] also requested a helicopter by QPS, Pittsworth were being crewed up and assisted by [REDACTED]. 3-12 Bravo were directed to James and Kitchener Street but stopped at Helen Street, this was with [REDACTED] onboard, which it's a very, fairly steep part of the Warrego, and he was stopped at Helen Street with cars with water up to car windscreens. And [REDACTED] responded to, at station 12 just before he responded. For two hours triple-0s were non-stop ringing within Firecom, this is from [REDACTED], from Firecom. One radio operator and two call takers were continually overwhelmed and control was lost. So they were doing, they were working well outside any possible means of control and very, very regularly they were saying all units wait out on triple-0, wait out on triple-0 and it was just in. [REDACTED] stated that he didn't have time to set up an ICP. AC still unknown how much workload was expended by Firecom but an SCAD team are coming, are carrying out a forensic breakdown. So on the day they had no idea. They still to this day, are still trying to wade through the OMs reports because it's just so unusable I didn't say that because it means I'm going to have to get OMs training [REDACTED] three and I don't want that, it's, it's what we're stuck with. OMs was hard to enter, was the general comment made by everyone. Radio was unable to be used due to overload. [REDACTED] was unable to enter or finish three fire reports. [REDACTED] we won't

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | get anything in this period relating to OMs. And [REDACTED] went on to say no he's quarantined the whole lot. And for a while there we were missing 80 fire reports. 3-12 Bravo heard red, red, red and went to, went to assist. [REDACTED] on 3-11 Alpha was at Margaret Street, this is when [REDACTED] and two civvies went in. Male clung himself to a tree with throw bag. Had to elect to have level one assist level two in water due to width of water, dynamic risk assessment was conducted. [REDACTED] was the person who called in South West technicians, seniors didn't know. [REDACTED] and two crews self-responded due to civvies radios. They were hearing all of these reports of things go to crap on the radios and they ended up self responding to the station. Oakey had been told to man a station for the day as well as Pittsworth and Highfields. And that's all that I was able to get out of that debrief, but it was, a) it was not within the recommended timeframe, which was meant to be 48 hours. The critical incident stress debrief was only randomly carried out. I know attended the day, I've never been through a critical incident debrief. And ... |
| 107. | HL | So CIS debrief had been held when? |
| 108. | JB | I don't know because I've never been through it. |
| 109. | HL | Okay. |
| 110. | JB | And the debrief itself, the operational debrief was about two weeks later on the 12 th of the second. |
| 111. | HL | Yep. |
| 112. | JB | And it was not one big debrief as it should have been. It was broken up into six and my concern is stage managed debriefs. You had the crew on the day, then I was told that the other three shifts did debriefs. Then there was a debrief held at Highfields for the auxiliaries. We tried to get Firecom staff into all of those debriefs and it only happened on one occasion. So unfortunately I have to conclude that the debrief was not conducted the way it should be under the business rule. |
| 113. | HL | Alright. I'll make a note to check the business rule about that. Okay. Alright. Now I'll give, you'll you get a transcript of all this so you can see as well so. |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 114. | JB | On this, all of those papers. |
| 115. | ?? | (ui) one there all for youse. (?) |
| 116. | HL | Yeah I've got the one that you gave me this morning. |
| 117. | JB | Okay I won't use these ones then. |
| 118. | HL | Yeah someone, someone did have another one (ui). |
| 119. | JB | So do you want to take all the |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046


Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 3 |
| Interviewers: | Henry Lawrence (HL)  |

Interview conducted at (insert place of interview)
on (insert date).

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | HL | Okay this interview is with [REDACTED] with Henry Lawrence and it commenced at 12:30 approximately. |
| 2. | MA | Okay state your name. |
| 3. | GD | [REDACTED], Auxiliary Captain, Gatton Station, Station 77 also Senior Fire-fighter at Station 45 Ipswich. Level 2 swift water qualified. On the night preceding the flood event, the 9 th of the first, I was on duty A shift, nightshift at Ipswich. We were listening to radio communications of an event in the Grantham area, which was of interest to me because I live in that area. We were hearing Toowoomba, Helidon and Grantham were all trucks proceeding around the area evacuating personnel. One of the jobs that they, Toowoomba vehicle was involved in was actually rescuing or evacuating a rural crew who had their vehicle disabled or stuck in water. The next morning I've ceased work, travelled home to Gatton. I received a post message that afternoon and after seven hours of rest time I responded with 77 Echo to a call of persons entrapped in a house, rising flood waters, Murphy's Creek Road. Once proceeding, it was raining fairly heavily we were able to pass because of the four wheel drive high clearance vehicle we were in, 77 Echo, we were able to gain access as far as the bridge on Murphy's Creek Road just before the Energex depot. On the other side of the bridge which was impassable at that time we could see 6-45 Mike and we made radio contact with them. Station Officer [REDACTED] has detailed the jobs that we progressed to and I don't think I need to cover those. |
| 4. | MA | Yep we're good. |
| 5. | GD | We've did several rescues and did work as required. On return to the ICC at Gatton it appeared that when we arrived at the ICC at 1:00am in the morning, that there was still a large amount of confusion as to what crews were doing and where they were and how the jobs were being detailed. For me, being the Captain of the area, I took particular interest in what was going on and was amazed that there was no consolidated effort to determine where the exact crews were and how we were getting, issue the jobs. The jobs were coming in via Firecom through triple 0 calls, through the local police, coming into the station. We also had walk-ins. So we had persons walking into the station and saying my family are, are stuck at Grantham or Helidon, can you |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | help. There seemed to be no one line of information coming through. The ICC at that stage was not operating what I would say effectively, and .. |
| 6. | HL | ██████ sorry, this is still on the 9 th of January? |
| 7. | GD | Say again? |
| 8. | HL | This is on the 9 th of January ... |
| 9. | GD | This is on the 9 th . |
| 10. | HL | walk-ins saying my family is stuck at Helidon or Grantham or, is that right, what you said? |
| 11. | GD | <p>Yes, yeah, we were, we were there. With regard to preparation and planning by local government agencies or emergency services in the area, the Lockyer Valley I'm quite au fait with what happens in that area, I'm part of the disaster management organisation there in a group that do joint emergency services training with the hospital, the ambulance, the police, the local SES. In our wildest imaginations we couldn't have prepared for this event. All of the planning and preparation that goes into these events is done usually with prior knowledge of previous events or incidents. I've lived in the area for over 50 years and seen several flooding events, nothing of this magnitude or style and the, and the event was definitely a first time occurrence, so to prepare for that would be really unfair to be too harsh on the local organisational groups to say that they weren't prepared for something that they couldn't envisage. The preparation from the fire service side of things, as a level two swift water technician, I was aware of the incidence building over a period of weeks because of the numbers of jobs that I was attending at Ipswich and also attending in the Gatton area as an auxiliary. Because of that increase of attendance at jobs I declined to attend a couple of deployments as a swift water operative, cause I deemed that the need was greater in my own personal area and didn't want to strip out the area of personnel, which is one of the things that could be said occurred, that there were personnel away at the time which reduced our responsibility and obviously we have to have people on deployments and help people in other parts of the State, but considering the building level of jobs that we had in our area that were known, maybe some forward planning about holding people in our area</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | rather than sending them away could have been done. |
| 12. | HL | Or would that be also an argument for an increase in the number of auxiliary brigades ... |
| 13. | GD | Increase in crew yep. |
| 14. | HL | greater number of level two people around the State etcetera. |
| 15. | GD | Yeah. One of the things as a swift, level two, or swift water operative is that I could recognise the need for that service in my auxiliary area and to that end I was taking my gear home with me at the end of every shift so that I had some personal gear with me because the auxiliary appliances carry no swift water gear and fire-fighters being fire-fighters in the auxiliary areas when they were tasked to perform swift water duties prior to this event, they were performing swift water duties without equipment and the idea of management that the auxiliaries will travel to the event, secure the scene, tell the people stay where you are the rescue swift water guys are on the way, they'll be here shortly is just farcical you cannot do that and stand by while people are in distress, you, and other people are there viewing you, you're expected as a service to act, which our guys do and without going into detail they do several things that aren't in the rescue books. So we're doing things outside of the scope of an auxiliary fire-fighter purely because they have an obligation to the public and I know the management will say you don't have to but there's a moral obligation there and all fire-fighters do it in all types of situations. |
| 16. | MA | Can I just ask you a question, [REDACTED]...[unintelligible – '(ui)']... just asking the question. How many of the auxiliary fire-fighters that you know perform outside their scope as far as swift water rescue during that period? Was it 70% of your fire-fighters, was it ... |
| 17. | GD | Oh leading up to that period? |
| 18. | MA | And, and ... |
| 19. | GD | And during that period would probably would be six or seven. |
| 20. | MA | Out of? |
| 21. | GD | Out of 10. |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 22. | MA | So that'd be 70% of the crew. |
| 23. | GD | Yeah. |
| 24. | MA | (ui)... outside of their scope. |
| 25. | GD | Yep. Put their life at risk. The, along with the lack of equipment, the inappropriate designation of vehicles was something that's a concern to me in our preparation and response, the sending of vehicles such as 6-45 Mike, which is detailed as the rescue vehicle, it's a very low clearance, very awkward vehicle that should not go near any water at all. Yet it carries the swift water equipment. Auxiliary appliances, two wheel drive aren't really appropriate. We do have four wheel drive high clearance vehicles in some stations that are adequate and appropriate but in the processes these vehicles are being removed and I've been advised by senior management that once four wheel drive vehicles reach their turn-over time, or age, they'll be replaced by two wheel drive vehicles and that's a hard and fast management decision. I've argued against it and said that we have a need for four wheel drive vehicles with high clearance in country areas because of the imminent flooding that happens on a regular basis. I've been advised that we're not to travel through flooded water. So we don't need a four wheel drive vehicle. |
| 26. | MA | How will this affect your ability to respond with two wheel drive low clearance vehicles? |
| 27. | GD | Well for minor local flooding it would knock us out. We wouldn't be able to do the minor local flooding that we're currently doing and we've been doing for probably ten years or more. |
| 28. | HL | It'd go beyond your swift water work too wouldn't, I mean if your low clearance two wheel drive could be ineffective just for normal fire-fighting response. |
| 29. | GD | Yes. |
| 30. | HL | You're restricted in that way. |
| 31. | MA | Your grass fire, grass fire response. |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 32. | GD | Yeah well that's what it's ideal for. |
| 33. | HL | Yeah okay, yeah. |
| 34. | GD | Yeah we're having that vehicle taken from us and it won't be replaced so it's still there now. And with regard to response another thing that was evident to me that vehicles were being sent into a dangerous area with knowledge that other vehicles were stuck or unable to proceed in that area. So what we had were vehicles virtually backing up at each water course being stuck so we'd have a vehicle stuck at Murphy's Creek, then we had a vehicle stuck at Helidon, then we had another vehicle stuck between Helidon and Grantham and the communication centre or the management just kept responding more vehicles that area and during the event as waters were rising, they were unable to pass and just becoming part of the incident as it were. So that sort of wasn't thought threw very well. The poor use of helicopters in the early stage of the incident, there were helicopters available but in the forward planning and preparation we received zero or no training or cross-training with EMQ or any other service with helicopters. So for us to be involved with helicopters is an untrained event and it did happen, and there were people riding helicopters and being detailed and working from helicopters in an untrained environment. So for me that was a concern and also with the use of helicopters in the later stages we, as a service provide air operations or air ob supervisors and air ob technicians. Those technicians that they were providing had no local knowledge so to that end I had an air ob supervisor from Townsville approach me at the Gatton ICC asking which direction Plainlands was because he had to meet up with helicopter there. |
| 35. | HL | So these trained air obs or air ob supervisors are they trained in helicopter observation at all or anything. |
| 36. | GD | Yes. |
| 37. | HL | It is helicopter. |
| 38. | GD | That's it, that's basically what they're trained in. |
| 39. | HL | Okay. |
| 40. | GD | A lot of the people were coming from the rural sector which is great for them |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | to be involved in bush fires, but again we're talking about a different discipline here and for rural air obs guys to be in the helicopters doing work with rescue or with swift water guys, they're way outside of their scope of experience and training where we have air ob supervisors on the fire service from the urban side who do have experience with level two or swift water operators. They are familiar with the area, and to my knowledge, I know of two who were not even advised or put on call for the event. They weren't even given a phone call to say that we've got air obs going on you may be required. |
| 41. | HL | And they're trained observers. |
| 42. | GD | And they're urban fire-fighters trained ... |
| 43. | HL | Where are they from Toowoomba or ... |
| 44. | GD | From Ipswich, yeah. |
| 45. | MA | Can I ask you a question [REDACTED] |
| 46. | GD | Yes. |
| 47. | MA | [REDACTED] asking [REDACTED] the question. In regards to communications with the helicopters, ... (ui) arrive on site, did you have any radio channels which the air obs were operating on? |
| 48. | GD | No. |
| 49. | MA | Were you able to contact an air obs person? |
| 50. | GD | Yeah. |
| 51. | MA | Were you able, was it practical to be able to drive a vehicle to a rescue and who were they reporting to? Were you aware who the air obs were reporting to at that stage or not? |
| 52. | GD | No we had contact with a ground supervisor via mobile phone and we were relaying messages via mobile phone to that ground operator which was not very effective. |
| 53. | MA | Where about was he located? |
| 54. | GD | He was located at Plainlands. |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 55. | MA | So he was at Plainlands, was he a local who had good operational knowledge of the area and also of the type of operations that the helicopters would be undertaking? |
| 56. | GD | No. The communications at the incident from day one were at least poor. We had loss of radio communications at Murphy's Creek. A loss of telephone communications, purely through the event and the loss of radio communication towers. One of the concerns with communication was the lack of communication between South West Firecom and South East Firecom. A specific incident of that was on the 10 th at about two o'clock in the afternoon, during the height of the rescues, there was a qualified swift water level two technician positioned between Withcott and Toowoomba, stuck, unable to proceed. He could have hooked up with the South East crews, he had his equipment with him. He advised South West Firecom that he was in that location and was available and he was advised by Firecom South West to go home. Another concern with South West communicating with South East as a member of the ICC on the 11 th , during the rescues at Grantham, we were aware of a rescue team from Toowoomba, working out of South West Firecom, on the ground, but with no communication with the ICC at Gatton, either from Firecom or from that team. They had communication via police co-ordinator, asking what he could task our men at a location to do. And we said we don't have any men at that location and he said oh yes you do I'm talking to them now. And they weren't our men they were Toowoomba. |
| 57. | MA | Where was that, at Grantham itself? |
| 58. | GD | Yeah on the western side of Grantham. |
| 59. | MA | So they come down from Toowoomba, to the western side of Grantham and not come into your sector or sphere of operations, which was definitely under the Gatton ... (ui). |
| 60. | GD | No they were freelancing. |
| 61. | MA | With no radio communications or safety? |
| 62. | GD | No, no communication with us and South West hadn't communicated that |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | with South East Firecom. With events and measures taken to inform the community, again on the night of the 9 th when there were attempts to evacuate people from the Grantham area, I wasn't present but after talking to some of the operators from Helidon station who were present during that event, the response they were getting from the local people when they were advised that they should be evacuating was that I was okay in 1974 the water didn't come up to my house then I'll be right. So they were trying to evacuate people but the reply that they were getting was I've experienced this before, it floods here all the time, we know how high it comes, we'll be right. Little did they know that there was a catastrophic event going to occur. With regard to community notification the availability of notification via mobile phones through text message or radio is known to me and amazingly not known to the local LDMG. I advised the local LDMG some days later of this facility when they were enquiring about how they could notify the townspeople that the local water was unsafe to drink. And they had actually approached me and asked me if I had a loud hailer or a megaphone so that they could drive around the streets and tell the people that the water was unsafe to drink, at which time I advised them that well maybe we should use this EMQ text message system. Oh that's a good idea we'll do that, and they did. That could have been used ... |
| 63. | HL | So they didn't know about it or forgot about it? |
| 64. | GD | Well ... |
| 65. | HL | Or both? |
| 66. | GD | Bit of both probably. And my views on the local disaster management group, although they have done some forward planning and had a, an actual group and persons in place, the major problem with that group was that they are mostly all council employees and once the event had occurred, being council employees, their priorities were really infrastructure and looking after water, roads, sewerage, became their focus and they become overwhelmed and because they don't have the access to numbers of staff that are trained, the LDMG after a couple of days became fatigued and they weren't effective at all, whatsoever. They were of no assistance to the fire service and actually became a hindrance. The immediate management of the response and |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | recovery has been touched on already, was fairly appalling managed by the fire service. We have some excellent systems that we can put in place, aligned with the aim (?) system and incident management. Some of those processes weren't followed and in the Gatton ICC, from people that knew how to organise an ICC, there was actually a sign put up saying there is no need to reinvent the wheel because some senior officers were trying to put in place their idea or their spin on how an ICC should operate rather than following the aims format ... (ui). |
| 67. | MA | I have question, [REDACTED] here with a question again. What role did you fulfil within the Gatton ICC from the Tuesday on? |
| 68. | GD | From Tuesday, I arrived at the ICC at 0500. I, as a swift water technician was under the impression that I would be using my skills as a rescue technician that day. I was advised to pack my wetsuit away and go into operations. |
| 69. | MA | So who's the technical rescue specialist? In an area that you knew well. The, ... (ui) controller task you with becoming the operations officer? |
| 70. | GD | That's correct and his exact words were you're more value to us here [REDACTED] because you know the area and you know the people. |
| 71. | MA | Was there other people from your station, who as an auxiliary perform a role of command and leadership, who could have fulfilled this role and did not have your skills as a swift water level two? |
| 72. | GD | We have one other lieutenant in the area that could of fulfilled that role who was not called upon to do that. |
| 73. | MA | Who was, who was the incident controller at the time? |
| 74. | GD | [REDACTED] (?) |
| 75. | MA | Did you have a scribe located with, or an assistant for each role under the umbrella (ui)... for effective aims to be achieved at incident control. Did you have an assistant? |
| 76. | GD | Not as operations officer at the start I didn't. The fire-fighters that I have detailed to operate the radios were acting as scribes, I had two guys doing |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | that. They were recording all incoming and outgoing messages and aside from that we had a, an administration lady doing typing. |
| 77. | MA | What amount of assistance to you, under the set up from ICC or any ...(ui) there is advice out there to get a communications specialist who can operate radios and also log any information and all information reported. Would that have been some assistance to you? |
| 78. | GD | That would have been of assistance. The guys that were doing were local auxiliary fire-fighters quite capable in that role but I believe their abilities could have been probably better utilised outside. They performed that role quite well and there was no problem with that. After the Tuesday I was not relieved of the duties as operations but given another station officer to work alongside of me as operations officers. He wore the ...(ui) as operations officer and I virtually became his assistance or guidance and that's the way that it operated through three sets of ICC personnel. |
| 79. | MA | So who was operations officer? Who was the operations officer you assisted?. |
| 80. | GD | The operations officer, at that time was [REDACTED] (?) from the Gold Coast, [REDACTED]. |
| 81. | MA | Who was the approval officer, who was appointed as the operations officer of a major event. |
| 82. | ?? | Can we stop for a second Henry. |
| 83. | GD | Just with regard to the, the Gatton station being used as an ICC, it was really poor in the initial stages because they were trying to use the Gatton station as a welfare point for guys to rest and recover after the incident. They were trying to use it as a staging point and also an ICC all rolled into one. And at the same time an operational fire station. So it was overcrowded and the problem being that the Gatton station has never been identified or equipped as an ICC so there are no phone lines, extra phone lines into the place, there is one phone line and one fax line. By sheer luck or fortune there was still computer connections and a computer router in there from when it was the regional office, which hadn't been taken away so hey presto we had communication ports via internet and desk portal, which was great and that |

part of the operation worked well. As [REDACTED] had touched on, in the initial stages of the ICC, there was much problem with the IAP, the electronic incident action plans weren't working. The computer network sending and receiving information wasn't operating correctly and there was a lot of time wasted, I believe, in trying to deliver information rather than be operational. And in the early stages on that first day it was even put to me that it was more important to get the updates through to the RFCC than to dispatch work to the men. Cause as an operations officer I was trying to dispatch jobs to the crews and I was advised that I had to get those jobs onto the report by nine o'clock so that the ROCC could present them to some political figure and give an update, which to me was ludicrous because far more important to get the men out and working than filling out a report, that can be done at a later time. Important to do it but not to take precedence. And the focus of the incident controller was wholly and simply to fill out those reports and that was to me it appeared that was his focus for the day was I must get these reports out, make them look spiffy and what happens out in the ground well doesn't really matter, as long as the reports look good. I touched on the LDMG being overwhelmed, we at one stage were fielding numerous phone calls on our one little line from people wanting assistance. We were doing as directed by this controller to redirect those people via 1800 number to the LDMG to which they were doing. And then after a couple of hours they were ringing us back and saying nothing's happened, we still need help, we're still in trouble, the LDMG aren't operating or not listening to us. The assistance that was coming into the station was overwhelming at times and we were sending people away from the station to the LDMG and saying they are responsible for co-ordinating recovery assistance, well we're rescue and that's our portfolio, but we found that because the LDMG was overwhelmed and couldn't do that, that we actually started taking on that role. In one instance I had a crew from DERM or Department of Environment and Resource Management come to me and say that they had numbers of men, equipment and machinery available to do work immediately. We'd organised to get this done and to my surprise when I started organising it I was advised by the new incident controller at that stage that we do not detail other personnel and to tell them to go away, which I wouldn't do and he arranged a meeting with the management of the DERM team and sitting in front of them and listening

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | to the incident controller tell them virtually to go away, was one of the low points in the whole event for me, cause it made me feel like an absolute fool and all the information that I'd give them and all the advice that I'd given them had been pulled away. And to that end they were redirected to the LDMG, some two or three hours, they came back to me and said the LDMG don't want to know us, what can we do. To which time I short circuited the system and started giving them jobs and helping set up them as a part of our recovery team. This was eventually relayed to the incident controller who again advised me that we do not control outside agencies and again I had discussions with him about why do we hold green tea cartons if that's the case. |
| 84. | MA | Just a question for you [REDACTED]. Did the task indicate to do that or was it a rescue ...(ui). |
| 85. | GD | No. |
| 86. | MA | (ui). Like the physical recovery and being able, even being able to get access to that area so you can go and check. |
| 87. | GD | Yep. And look the recovery part of it was the bulk of the work of the ICC at Gatton purely because the local LDMG was overwhelmed and we remained there and remained in place providing a service to the community for the recovery process and I don't know whether that's within the scope of our work or not but that's, that's what we were doing. |
| 88. | MA | Was it staffed 24 hours day? |
| 89. | GD | It was at the initial stages. And after the first week then it was scaled back to day time operations only. But in the initial stages we were staffing 24 hours and manning the phones, and we were getting calls for assistance because, although the flooding peak had past at Grantham, there was flooding that was happening downstream and Lock, Rose, (?) Lockyer was, Fernvale, it, as the water progressed towards Ipswich. So there were rescues being done during the next couple of days as well so. |
| 90. | MA | So how long did you have to keep the DERMs hidden from the ...(ui) or your operations within them ..(ui) from the controller. |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 91. | GD | How long? |
| 92. | MA | Did you manage to keep it hidden? |
| 93. | GD | Oh yeah. For a couple of days. I shouldn't say that should I. I provided housing for them and food, all sorts of things, unbeknown to the ... |
| 94. | MA | Controller. |
| 95. | GD | ... incident controller. |
| 96. | HL | The incident controller is a senior was it or? |
| 97. | GD | Yeah. |
| 98. | MA | Recently appointed inspector. |
| 99. | GD | Yeah an inspector. So. And look I think he was taking that advice from higher up, he, he'd made a phone call and been advised. Purely because they thought that it would be an expense to us but it was no expense to us because all of the facility that were arranged for them was free of charge, so. |
| 100. | MA | Are you aware of the charging as far as that kind of stuff goes in a major incident befall in the heat (?) of the Public Preservation Natural Disaster Act. |
| 101. | GD | I'm aware of that. |
| 102. | MA | Was the controller aware of that? |
| 103. | GD | I'm not sure. |
| 104. | HL | Somewhere all this money is recovered by the Fires Service from outside agencies. |
| 105. | GD | I can't answer for him. |
| 106. | HL | Yep. |
| 107. | GD | Yeah well that's, that's about it for me in, in just in closing I've made a statement, and I've made it several times that once again it's the grit and determination of the fires on the ground that have made a flawed service look good. And that's what we do. We adapt and overcome. We use the equipment that's available to us, whether it be inferior or lacking and we do |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | the best that we can with it. The fact that there was no loss of life or serious injury was sheer good luck. And I saw many instances where ... |
| 108. | MA | Sorry [REDACTED] when you say no loss of life you mean of fire service personnel. |
| 109. | GD | Mmm. |
| 110. | MA | You mean loss of life from the fire service personnel. |
| 111. | GD | I mean by fires yeah. |
| 112. | MA | Yeah. |
| 113. | GD | And I saw numerous instances where fires put their lives on the line to do the job and that's what they do. And it could have been a lot safer with more equipment, with better equipment. And an example of that is auxiliary fires with a piece of rope tied to them, a GP line, stripped down to their day clothes, wading through water to help get people off the top of a car because there was no other way of doing it. And if we followed the procedures in the books to say that as an untrained auxiliary fire-fighter you will not enter the water, yeah that would look great if we stood on the side of the creek bank and said to the people ... |
| 114. | MA | (ui) procedures and |
| 115. | GD | ... hang on there's, some bodies going to ... |
| 116. | MA | (ui) workplace health and safety. |
| 117. | GD | Yeah. |
| 118. | MA | Yeah. |
| 119. | GD | You know we would like to conform with the rules and regulations but if we don't have the equipment and the appropriate vehicles well. |
| 120. | PP | To make a comment [REDACTED] this is [REDACTED] speaking, it's, to me it's very reminiscent of what ... (ui) breathing apparatus procedures where they right procedures down and knowing full well a lot of instances it will still be carry out your job because your moral obligation to assist a human being over, over-rides any SOP, so therefore at the end of the day if something did happen your guys would still be ultimately responsible for their own welfare |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | because they went outside procedure. |
| 121. | GD | And that's the thing, as an officer on the appliance I have an obligation to do a risk assessment before I detail anybody to do a task and it's wholly and solely up to them on their own initiative if, if they want to put their life on the line, well they do so. There's no way I'm going to force anybody to do an action and at no stage during this incident did I have to force anybody to do anything. They were more than willing to get in and help to the point where I had to stop people from doing certain things because my risk assessment had said no that's too dangerous you won't be going across there. |
| 122. | PP | And if you didn't do that you'd be abrogating your responsibility in not doing that risk assessment in ordering that they don't do certain things. |
| 123. | GD | And one of the things that comes from that is purely because of my knowledge and experience as a swift water operator, it's just coincidence that I was auxiliary captain or officer in charge on an auxiliary crew at that time, that my experience as a swift water technician told me no that's not safe to do that. Stop the guys from entering or doing that. And that's one of the things where the local rural fire service got themselves into trouble the night before because they let their expectations exceed their capabilities and they were doing things that were unsafe, that they didn't have any training or forward knowledge of, of what could go wrong. So in their case they just went along ignorantly and had no knowledge. And this is one of the things that scares me terribly the way that we are heading or the path that we're heading down with the fire service of bringing more and more responsibility on our volunteers, our rural volunteers. We're trying to train them up to have awareness and attend road accidents, we're starting to respond them to swift water incidents. None of these portfolios or none of these incidents do they have training. And we're throwing them in at the deep end virtually and then when things go wrong we're looking for, oh why did this happen and why did that happen. |
| 124. | PP | Righto, so [REDACTED] again, so to generalise that comment would you say we have volunteers essentially being given the responsibilities of a trade person level. |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| 125. | GD | Exactly and ... |
| 126. | PP | Cause that's what your fire fighters are, essentially a tradesperson in a specific field and we're throwing that on, that responsibility onto a volunteer. |
| 127. | GD | And the volunteers, like they do an excellent job and ... |
| 128. | PP | No doubt. |
| 129. | GD | ... they have their, you know the best interests at heart, the same as we do, but the thing is that with that lack of knowledge, they're attempting to do things that they shouldn't even be, be there, they shouldn't even be present at the incident, like alone attempting to, to do things and that's very evident to me in my 25 years of exposure that they tend to get themselves into trouble because of that lack of training. And the same thing happens with auxiliary personnel, I have experienced ... |
| 130. | ?? | It's actually not just rural volunteer. |
| 131. | GD | Have auxiliaries that are lacking in the training and think they can do more and end up in, in trouble. Cause we all like to think that we're, we're bullet proof and that we can do anything once we put the uniform on and we can do anything but that's when ... |
| 132. | PP | Normally the effect the same (ui)...but to a swift water rescue before the training's actually to them before they're properly equipped. You turn up throw a rope around your waist or whatever and one of them, someone yelling out it's alright, the experts are here now. |
| 133. | GD | Yeah. |
| 134. | MA | Just a question I'd like to ask [REDACTED], you mentioned that the rurals that they responded via Firecom to respond to an incident saying the auxiliaries have been responded to an incident. |
| 135. | ?? | In responding(ui) incident. |
| 136. | MA | In your experience as an auxiliary captain and member of the fire fighter, if you respond to an incident would you think you would have the ability to cope with that incident and deal with it if you were responding? |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 137. | GD | In relation to that type of incident or? |
| 138. | MA | If you're auxiliary training responded to a house fire? Do you think you would have the ability and skills to cope with that incident? |
| 139. | GD | Yep. |
| 140. | MA | Why would they respond you to a swift water then? |
| 141. | GD | My question exactly, why were we responding to an event that we don't have any equipment. |
| 142. | MA | And no training. |
| 143. | GD | No training. |
| 144. | MA | And for the rurals they have even less training so why would they respond unless they intended them to be operating outside the scope. |
| 145. | GD | Yeah. And that's the expectation that we will have somebody on scene irrespective of their abilities. |
| 146. | PP | Yes. |
| 147. | GD | Purely to have somebody on scene. But then the obligation for that person once they're on scene is to act. And not everybody has the ability to do a risk assessment and say, or the fortitude to say no I'm not qualified to do that or no, that's not safe. |
| 148. | MA | Cause you have to have that responded to help the community which you are bound to serve and to protect. So why respond someone if they can't fulfil any of the roles that are required? |
| 149. | GD | That's right. |
| 150. | MA | As Firecom would know, or management would know that they would do whatever it takes to perform the rescue, including operating personnel ...(ui). |
| 151. | GD | A prime example of that was not long ago an auxiliary crew responded to a parachute stuck in a tree. When they arrived, look up to the parachutist and said well we're here hang on. It's all they could offer him. Advice, hang on and you know. Was it better not to go. |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 152. | HL | So how would that type of incident be normally, and I know this is diverging from what we're really talking about, but with the parachutist up a tree, who would normally handle that and how? Fire service with ... |
| 153. | GD | Yeah depending on ... |
| 154. | ?? | Fire service. |
| 155. | HL | ... anyone with ladders or ... |
| 156. | GD | Yeah. There are a few technicians. |
| 157. | HL | As long as they're not tangled to power lines of course. |
| 158. | GD | Have you been shot at, not for the police. Are you having a heart attack, not for the ambos. Send the firies. And that's the way it exists mate. |
| 159. | HL | But auxiliaries go I suppose no ... |
| 160. | GD | Nearest fire service available vehicle, whether that be rural or auxiliary. |
| 161. | HL | So hang on until what? Hang on until what, until we get ... |
| 162. | GD | Till the cavalry arrive. |
| 163. | HL | You get an urban brigade down. |
| 164. | GD | Yeah or, they all string something together. |
| 165. | ?? | Yeah. It's a similar ... (ui) to ... |
| 166. | GD | Until we get someone together. |
| 167. | ?? | ... ringing up someone with a first aid certificate at home and saying look t here's someone having a some kind of cardiac event, four doors down, can you go and respond to that and you know we'll send some back up some time. The fact that you actually responding them, if they come across it by accident or by design that's a bit different, but if you actually respond someone, expecting them to do something. |
| 168. | GD | And the, and the smoke and mirrors trick that I see that the government pulling is that we responding something to an incident, the general public don't know what that qualification is, they just see a fire truck turn up and they |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | go woo hoo. |
| 169. | ?? | The experts here. |
| 170. | GD | Yeah. The cavalry's here we're alright now. They have no indication as to the level of training or the equipment carried or expertise level. And that's where we're getting away with under resourcing some of these jobs. |
| 171. | HL | I guess with the medical thing if you've got first aid training, if you have been trained in first aid and resuss then you've got a limited capacity to be able to do certain things, but I mean just not, not quite as bad but I mean you've still got the pressure or whatever on a person who goes along with first aid or resuss training but nothing beyond that, got to deal with something which they know is beyond that and they're told bag this person bloody well dies in your arms or whatever, that's it. |
| 172. | ?? | Well you wouldn't be able to send (?) someone who only had a first aid certificate, saying can you go to a car accident just down the road, we've got five people that are injured. |
| 173. | HL | Yeah, yep. |
| 174. | ?? | You could not do that. |
| 175. | GD | One of the other shortcomings in training that I've identified over the years is that when we attend incidents where there is fatality or serious injury, the fire service have certain procedures in place as far as fire care and so forth. But as far as training for the fire officers to deal with and manage members of the public who are under duress, we have no training and it's only from experience that you learn what not to do and what to do with people who have lost loved ones or have suffered serious distress, what to do with them. And it still continues to amaze me that we turn up at incidents where there's been fatalities and we have to deal with the loved ones because it's a more frequent occurrence now with the prevalence of mobile phones and things like and people turn up at incident scenes virtually before we do, so you have that extra public attendance. We're not receive, or don't receive any training at all on how to deal with those person that are under duress and we just normally fob it off to the police or the ambos, drop the shoulder and hand them over to them. But in a lot of these instances where we work in isolated |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | areas, we're left alone with those people and you know, some of the younger guys on our crew were just a little bit overwhelmed by the, you know, hysterical people demanding that we look for their loved ones or do something. And they're not really knowing what answers to give them, And you know it's only like the stuff that we learn from over the years dealing with it and dealing with your own family issues that you learn how to communicate and do that, but there's no training at all, with regard to that. |
| 176. | MA | ██████████ again. In those particular situations it is very difficult because there is so much happening (?), and you have your job to do. So you couldn't focus at all on how to deal with these people. I was the responding officer(ui) and ... (ui) particular(ui) just didn't have the time and I was needed elsewhere and they had to be fobbed off unfortunately. |
| 177. | GD | Yeah, yeah. But even a little bit of training to learn a few words ... |
| 178. | MA | Oh yeah. |
| 179. | GD | ... a few specific things to say to people to put them at ease or calm them down just a little bit, you know, we don't receive that at all. |
| 180. | MA | No. And how, like how do you deal with someone who comes up and says I've just lost my four year old kid, can you help me find them. I've lost my wife. |
| 181. | GD | Yeah. Well one instance where we had, we had a female casualty and I had two daughters turn up and said I won't to go down and see my Mum. She's deceased and there's no point you know, and that was, took a fair bit of convincing for them not to, to go down to the area where she was, purely cause it wasn't safe for a start, no but, and we managed the situation and you know, took the deceased person out to an appropriate area and appropriately covered and that sort of thing, but you know that sort of thing went on. Not even indicated what we should do in those areas, there's no procedure. |
| 182. | ?? | Still trying to grapple with everything else you've got going on as well and holding it together and. |
| 183. | GD | And we deal with it all the time. |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| 184. | ?? | But you had previously debrief. Have you been offered counselling yourself? |
| 185. | GD | I was offered counselling the first night which was totally inappropriate because we were still busy. Since that time there's been no approach. I've had maybe two approaches for interviews following the incident, one with QPS, one with the Fire Service with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] interviewing. |
| 186. | ?? | So no operational, Mark said (ui) ... |
| 187. | GD | No operational debrief. |
| 188. | ?? | ... (ui) duties before is cause they are capturing information. |
| 189. | GD | Yeah just capturing. |
| 190. | ?? | So you've received no operation debrief and no PSD debriefing. |
| 191. | GD | No. |
| 192. | ?? | And we're now five or six weeks suppose to be. |
| 193. | GD | That's it. |
| 194. | HL | Do you need more? |
| 195. | MA | Only if you just another quick answer to the points and just you know if you're satisfied that you've answered ... |
| 196. | PP | Do you actually, are you amazed how many? Do you reckon you'd be amazed ... |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 4 |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at Toowoomba
on 24 February 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | HL | Commencing the second interview with ... |
| 2. | SD | <p>Station Officer [REDACTED], assigned to C shift, Kitchener Street station on the 10th of the 1st 2011. The day started off 07, 06:55. The day started off day shift, our first day shift of our four day tour, 06:55 approximately we received a call for a structure fire in Toowoomba. Prior to that we had just relieved day shift who had spent numerous hours down in Grantham in the Lockyer Valley conducting rescues and evaluations of flood water down there. We responded to the structure fire, inclement weather, fog, rain. At the conclusion of the structure fire there was, it was discussed by two members of our crew of the possibility of contacting management to have extra personnel brought to shift that day for the possible chance of deployment, so not to deplete our operational crews and leave us with our full compliment of crew, which would be one Alpha and one Kilo response for Toowoomba. At that point we could not contact our management for consent to that. The day progressed, we were, we kept ourselves aware of, of any weather formations but did not receive any formal advice from management that there was an expected large weather system to be in our area for that day. Again at around about the twelve, twelve o'clock mark, it was brought to our attention again by our staff that maybe we should try and get someone else in to man our, at that stage was a vehicle assigned to swift water rescue, again we could not contact any management. Around about the one o'clock mark, after a period of between twelve and one of heavy, heavy rain which was nothing we hadn't experienced before in Toowoomba as being at the station seeing heavy rain fall. At one clockish around that time, we received a turn out to a life rescue, people on top of cars in the Murphy Creek area. At that time on, on our crew we had two swift water technicians and the rest of the crew trained to level one credentials. It was our, it was our, myself and my fellow station officer's decision that we would separate our crews to provide coverage in both directions as we were unaware of the exact location and also the possibility of being cut off.</p> |
| 3. | HL | Sorry [REDACTED] when you split the crew. |
| 4. | SD | Well one, one 3-11 Alpha, myself we proceeded north to Murphy's Creek via New England Highway. |

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 5. | HL | So four on the truck? |
| 6. | SD | <p>Yep a crew of four. And 3-11 Kilo with a station officer and one swift water technician proceeded down the range to enter from the Warrego Highway area of Murphy's Creek. Upon turning out of the station we encountered heavy rain. Around into Chalk, sorry into Margaret Street and Russell Street, still experiencing heavy rain. On turning into Chalk Drive we started to experience torrential rain and some flooding of the, of the Chalk Neil Street intersection. Upon turning right into Ruthven Street we experienced severe torrential rain with also flooding starting to come across the road. This was actually moving water at this stage. From the point on crossing Ruthven Street intersections of Campbell, Bridge, Jellicoe and particularly North, we experienced severe torrential rain with swift water moving to a depth of a, of roughly four to five hundred mil. At the point of intersections of Ruthven and North Street we encountered heavy traffic, which had been stalled by the torrential downpour of water and swift water running north to south down towards the West Creek area. I instructed my driver under caution to proceed across. And we did safely. We then proceeded up to roughly the intersection of Griffith and Ruthven Street where we encountered flooding water of up to 500ml spanning a distance of 50 metres. At that point I made a decision to contact Firecom and inform them that we would not be proceeding to the rescue down at Murphy's Creek due to the severity of the flooding and not putting myself and my crew and our appliance in a potentially dangerous situation. I instructed them then to respond south east region and also 3-17 Alpha which is from Highfields which were already proceeding. To a point, I instructed my driver to turn around and make our way back in towards the city where we had been responded to a report of persons trapped in a car in Holberton Street. To do this we proceeded in a southerly direction and as a crew, based on the information of what we'd seen and heard we knew we weren't going to get through North Street, so we decided to take an alternate route, which was then to proceed left into Mabel to right up the top to Stuart where we encountered heavy volumes of water coming down there but also traffic in the opposite direction. We turned right into Stuart Street and from Stuart Street up until we hit North Street, any valleys or low lying areas there was severe flooding and swift water travelling</p> |

in a north south direction. We came to North Street, turned right onto North and Stuart, left into Hume, proceeded all the way down from Hume Street to Chalk Drive. Again at intersections Jellicoe, Bridge and Campbell, experienced heavy volumes of water travelling north to south at a depth ranging from three to five hundred metres in depth. We proceeded slowly and cautiously through there whilst other vehicles, public vehicles were still trying to make their way through this, this tide and rain and water. Once we proceeded to arrive at Chalk Drive, we turned right in Chalk Drive from Hume Street. We, I then made a decision to turn left into Neil, right into Bowen and was trying proceed down to get across to Russell Street to make our way to Holberton. Upon that information we then received further information from Firecom regarding four children that could be possibly at West Street, around the Herries Street vicinity. I then decided we would take, so at this stage once we hit Ruthven Street at the end of Bowen, we tried to identify whether we could get down Scholefield Street. We couldn't cause the water had already back up half way up Scholefield Street. We proceeded along, south along Ruthven to the intersection of Russell Street where we identified water ready, proceeded half way up the street there. We were then, I instructed my driver to proceed south on Ruthven Street and turn right into Margaret Street. Upon turning right into Margaret Street we had traffic congestion to the point where we made our way to the intersection of Victoria and Margaret. At that point I informed my driver to stop there with the beacons because we had a water span of approximately 40 metres from Victoria Street across to Dent Street, flowing water to a depth of probably two to 300 millimetres. At that point I conducted a risk assessment we were to identify the depth of the water, we proceeded on foot, myself and a fire-fighter across to, across to identify any probable hazards. At that stage I deemed it safe to do so. We re-entered the appliance, proceeded west on Margaret Street, across the railway lines into Dent Street. It was at this time we identified an elderly gentleman, approximately 70, 80 years, with a walking stick trying to cross the street at Dent Street to the traffic railway island. At this stage the water had grown to around about knee deep and was becoming evidently faster flowing. I instructed my swift water level two technician to get out of the truck and then make his way to this gentleman to retrieve the gentleman back to safety. This was completed. At this time then we identified from our point,

advantage point looking south, two vehicles had been piggy-backed on top of each other and from information received from the public, they were on the traffic island railway crossing area, there possibly could have been two people in there. At that point then our crew, rest of the crew decamped the appliance and started to make our way towards there. My swift water technician in his, in his level two equipment then entered the water and conducted a primary search of those two vehicles. At this stage the water was then lapping up to the windscreens of both vehicles. Those vehicles were identified to be emptied, unoccupied. By the time we completed that we had a group of seven to eight people on the traffic island, refuge area of the, of the railway crossing. One particular gentleman had made his way out to a tree and had been isolated from the rest of the group and in the space of five to ten minutes the water had increased up to waist height and the area between ourselves and the gentleman was fast flowing and torrential and turbulent. We then made contact with the rest of the people and told them to stay where we were and then proceeded to try and extricate, extract the gentleman from that tree to safety. This rescue took a period of half an hour to 45 minutes because of the nature of our safety and trying to get something across to the gentleman, we were unable to do straight away. Our crew, after conducting our risk assessments, entered the water to a point of waist deep up to chest deep. My swift water technician then proceeded to try and get across on numerous times to get to the gentleman but with the amount of debris in the water and vehicles that were coming down at point at the conclude we identified up to five vehicles had past us, it was just too hazardous for the rest of our crew. We tried to resource other appliances to make entry from the Victoria Street side, but none appliances were available and also communications due to the weather and the water made it unsuccessful to contact Firecom. At some point during the incident Superintendent had arrived on scene, provided us some manpower which was greatly needed. Due for the rescue purposes we left one fire-fighter with a float rope to try and keep communication and visual on the, on the rescuee, at which time he was trying to provide him with a float rope to secure himself. During that time myself and rescue crew were trying to formulate a plan of trying to get access to him from other, the other directions or other advantage points. It was only due to the persistence of the fire-fighter who was in

communication with this person that he eventually was successful in attaching a float rope. He was then instructed to attach the float rope to a, to the tree. At that point another swift water technician who was trying to make his way back to the station arrived on scene and the two swift water technicians then co-ordinated a plan to retrieve the occupant. One swift water technician belayed himself across to the tree and then started to work on a plan of putting a life jacket on with a line to retrieve the casualty. After about five or ten minutes the casualty then was retrieved back to safety. Within the period of then five to ten minutes the water had decreased rapidly to the point there was no left, water left on the road, we completed our primary, secondary searches of that area. We were then informed then by two other swift water technicians that they, there was possibly two other people in the water and we had not identified anyone else coming past. This rescue actually was only 50 metres to the south of where we were and yet we were unaware of the activities in that area. Once our searches were complete and the vehicles had been identified as being safe we made up all our gear and the crew, myself and the crew of 3-11 Alpha which were not tasked any other rescues, then returned to station 11. Other crews that, the other swift water crew then proceeded down to Chalk Drive area, that point. There was a call made where of a code red, red, red, unfortunately I wasn't aware of that call because of lack of radio communications. So that was to the rescue, that was 50 metres from us in which a fire-fighter had been, apparently been lost in the water. We were not aware of this call had gone through. Upon return to the station we waited for further responses but were not required at that time so we stayed on station and started resourcing and retrieving information for oncoming shifts. With regards to preparation and planning, point A on the, the brief, at no time had I been, had I received information regarding any planning or preplanning for this incidence or this weather pattern. I make a point of noting that on a date before Christmas 2010 we were responded to a swift water rescue in the Murphy's Creek area of SES people trapped or in water, flood water caused by rain. We were responded, at that point I responded a Alpha crew and also a Kilo crew from Toowoomba because of only having one swift water level two technician on crew for manpower and also for fire-fighter safety. We were also informed that a crew, two crews from Ipswich had also been deployed and would take

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | some time getting there. I believe this was the start of the, the severe weather pattern and also I believe was, had part of the, the reason for the amount of water received in Toowoomba and also for the flooding that affected us on the 10. As part, in reference to part C, it was all ... |
| 7. | HL | Excuse [REDACTED] |
| 8. | SD | Yep. |
| 9. | HL | In regard to that I was going to ask you, you said you had lack of communication from management about what was happening weather wise, so that's management and comms there was no information? |
| 10. | SD | On that, on that day, no we had not received any information from management or Firecom that there was severe weather forecast put out for our area. In a previous fire service debrief involving Firecom staff it was let known that they had received information of a severe weather pattern forming to a point where they had organised for another Firecom staff to be brought in. I believe this, they'd had up to two to three hours notice of this before the actual weather pattern hit. At no time was, either of this information relayed back to operational staff on that day. |
| 11. | HL | I only ask that question because I've seen an incident directive for coms that starts off saying that it's the role of coms to monitor what's happening weather wise and the situation as far as additional resources etcetera goes. Is there a same sort of directive or procedure for management to be doing the same thing or is it only coms that's charged with that? |
| 12. | SD | I'm unaware of what the procedure is. |
| 13. | HL | Okay. |
| 14. | SD | At the, as far as being a formal process. |
| 15. | HL | Alright. |
| 16. | SD | Okay with regard to all aspects of response for the 2010, 2011 flood, particularly measures taken to inform the community and measures to protect life and public property. On our handover from A shift from their night of the 10 th for us, sorry the night of the 9 th of the first, coming onto the 10 th of the |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>first being our shift, we were only made aware of what their activities were the night regarding flood activity in the Grantham area. I believe as far as we're concerned as a, as a fire service and being one of the officers in charge on the day of the 10th, there was no other information to say that we could be expect any other flooding in the Toowoomba area on that day and the days preceding that. Immediate management response and recovery. Our immediate management response and recovery was we sent everything we had to as much as we could during that day. To the point of we were overwhelmed as regarding trying to get call back crews on the floor, on the, on the floor and I was unaware of who actually made the call to bring auxiliaries back on, into action. We were left to, I felt to a certain degree at the time, co-ordinate most of the, a lot of the response. Management until a period of time into the incident where they'd actually then came down onto the fire ground and helped out were virtually unaware I think of what was actually developing. I feel we had no assistance from management leading up into the events, no leading, no leadership, no direction, no support. As far as resourcing all over, overall co-ordination employment personnel and equipment, I thought this was all left to the operational staff, it was a very unfair because of what had happened. Again I don't feel we had any immediate support from our management, our direction or leadership role of leadership from the management in the immediate area. Adequacy of equipment and communication systems. The equipment we provided on our appliances allows for the safety of our, of our immediate crews but however when we're dealing with rescues and, and numbers of casualties, the equipment, personal equipment I think there's a lack of in the amount. It's also been identified with communication equipment of water entering radios and, and fail the radios, trying to get information messages through and trying to get additional resources. Communication systems, our Firecom did a good job with the amount of triple-0 calls and rescues they were dealt with in a space of three quarters of an hour. They were overwhelmed.</p> |
| 17. | HL | <p>Could I just take it back to the co-ordination and deployment of personnel and equipment. Insofar as your training for swift water goes, are you trained to operate with a minimum crew for an incident and if so what is that? Does that match what you actually have to work with?</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 18. | SD | In my response and this is my, my belief and my direction that I took. After the initial rescue before Christmas 2010 it was identified that, at no time will, we will attend a rescue or sorry start operations in a rescue, swift water rescue with at least, without least two level two swift water technicians and for the crew, for the safety of them I will always ensure that I have at least four other level one technicians to provide them with support. Going on then, reverting back to the day of the 10 th , that is why we, as myself as a station officer, for the initial response to Murphy's Creek, we proceeded with a crew, with our full complement of officers and fire-fighters with two level two technicians to that incident to provide safety. |
| 19. | HL | So you would have had six people? |
| 20. | SD | We had six people going to it. |
| 21. | HL | Okay. So and, and your training or direction was don't start an incident with at least level two techos? |
| 22. | SD | Yeah. Because the initial incident where at Murphy's Creek, I had one swift water technician and one swift water technician who had not been reaccruited. At all times during that we were conducting ongoing risk assessments and because of the nature of the rescue with two people needed in the water for such a period of time, with the, on the advice of my swift water technician, and my denote risk assessments, we decided to enter the water. But hence knowing that we had two other swift water rescue technicians coming from Ipswich who were some time away. After that it was then identified to us that there will be, we will not conduct any swift water rescue operations unless we have two swift water, level two swift water technicians on scene. |
| 23. | HL | That's water entry incidents? |
| 24. | SD | That's water entry. |
| 25. | HL | Yep. |
| 26. | SD | But that's anything to do with swift water or moving water. |
| 27. | HL | Alright. |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 28. | SD | So that is why at any time from that period on we, we always activated our full complement of crew. |
| 29. | HL | Shore based what about shore based? |
| 30. | SD | Shore based. So that was, that was my, my direction for responding to any swift water rescue that I had at least two level two swift water technicians and then others would be, others would be then contacted via Firecom and through the swift water technical co-ordinator for response to the incidents. |
| 31. | HL | So shore based or water entry minimum level two, two level two? |
| 32. | SD | For any entry water entry they'd be level twos. |
| 33. | HL | Yep. |
| 34. | SD | And anyone on the, on the shore base were to be at least level one. |
| 35. | HL | And minimum number? |
| 36. | SD | I thought it was four. |
| 37. | HL | Four okay, alright. |
| 38. | SD | <p>Okay. The community's response was, was a good, good response. They helped as much as they could to the degree that we allowed them still operating under procedures and guidelines. They were probably just as shocked as we were, or what had happened and how quickly it happened. A lot of other points have been identified through other debriefs regarding management's actions and regarding that day. I think that's about it.</p> <p>Further this on our second night shift, I think it would have been the 12th, we were responded to our station 11, 3-11 Lima was responded, oh 3-11 Kilo was responded to a swift water rescue or water life rescue in the Grantham area. Upon receiving information and consultation with my fellow station officer and because of our past experiences and past procedure response, we responded both Kilo and Alpha. Halfway to the incident we were contacted by Firecoms South East that we were no longer required. We were then, once we booked back onto South West we were informed that our, an Inspector would meet us on station. When we arrived back on station the Inspector informed us that why, why did we send two trucks down there</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>when it wasn't required. And to our, our response was after the previous incidents I then deemed it that we'd for fire-fighter safety that we'd send our two swift water technicians plus support of level one technicians. It was then identified to us that there was a directive, temporary directive brought out from the Assistant Commissioner from of fire in South West via Grantham control that the only response would be the response that they requested. This information had not been passed down to the operational crews from fire communications. Once the Inspector on station was informed of that he made phone calls to the Assistant Commissioner and Firecom and it was then identified then yes that information had not been passed down. So that was, to us it was a really good, a big kick in the guts to say well hang on we're, we're doing what we've been told to do then, and then informed that no you shouldn't have done that but to the credit of the Inspector, Acting Inspector at that time he came to our defence and did some inquiries and come up with the information and so that was good on his behalf, but it just brings to task that there was no, the information received from management, through Firecom did not even reach the floor and then leads onto the other information of the events on the 10th. I feel there's a really big concern as being within our region is the cross over boundaries between South East and South West which were, responding a lot more to. Whereas other emergency services being QAS and QPS take in the Gatton area, it is then within the fire service that it is South East. When we respond appliances from South West here it was always in our minds of what our safety were accruing (?) whether it be motor vehicle accidents, haz ham accidents, structural fires, we as station officers will always send support of our fellow fighters to support our fire-fighters, simply because we don't know what's already been sent, if the crews that are responding have a sufficient crew number, and have they had the training to respond to those incidents. I, my believe this is a really big concern that should be addressed, urgently as a matter of fire-fighter safety and also clear direction for, for officers in charge to follow.</p> <p>... these swift water technicians he brought up from Brisbane.</p> |
| 39. | ?? | <p>Yeah he walked past us, basically, I mean, but again there's no procedure for that he doesn't have a decent ... (ui), it's just all that shit it builds and builds</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | where guys are going well go and get fucked. |
| 40. | SD | We ... |
| 41. | ?? | I mean why |
| 42. | HL | So this was afterwards when you're down in the valley? |
| 43. | SD | This is, no this was ... |
| 44. | ?? | That third, the Wednesday after the Monday was ... |
| 45. | SD | It was their second nightshift yeah. |
| 46. | ?? | Yeah. |
| 47. | ?? | If you feel as though you're being marginalised and if I may [REDACTED] you felt that in the range fires you were evacuated out, throwing them in an evac centre and it just has not been addressed. People are swimming around like lunatics, wanting to be involved or in fact have been giving all the information being feedback on the other end and it's just really it almost appears to be blatant marginalisation. |
| 48. | ?? | To put it in perspective, I'll put it in perspective of about that time my brother was up from Sydney, he's a Detective Inspector in Sydney and he, he was here on the Monday when it all happened and that night and he was here the whole week with his family. All that week he couldn't believe, he said it's you know, police manage our management safety in regards to (ui)..., and I said no he just could not get his head around that at all, he was just too ...(ui). |
| 49. | HL | So when did youse have an op debrief? |
| 50. | ?? | Two, three weeks later. |
| 51. | ?? | Official debrief? |
| 52. | HL | Yeah. |
| 53. | ?? | Would have been at least three weeks... |
| 54. | SD | Fourth, fourth of the second. That's the day that we had that incident with that grass ..(ui). |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 55. | JB | Yeah there were no more than six official debriefs from out of that incident. The .. |
| 56. | HL | But none until the 4 th of February. |
| 57. | SD | Until the 4 th . |
| 58. | JB | No and the official guideline for running a debrief is not to be, no more than 48 hours after the incident. |
| 59. | ?? | Well critical incident debriefs or defuses, correct if I am wrong that's supposed to be carried out in the first 24 hours. |
| 60. | HL | That was my understanding, that's the other thing I wanted to ask you, what's happening there? |
| 61. | ?? | (ui).. we had one of those a week later. |
| 62. | SD | We had a barbeque with the other personnel on station that was it. |
| 63. | ?? | Imagine if you put a barbeque on station and it was like ... |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046
Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 5 |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at Toowoomba
on 24 February 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1. | HL | This is Henry Lawrence speaking. Interview number one at Toowoomba on the 24 th of February. First interview with ... |
| 2. | MH | <p>██████████ I was a station officer on that day the 10th of January from the Kitchener Street fire station. Started the morning on the 10th, we had handover from A shift from that night in regards to evacuations at Grantham. Had a structure fire that morning at about quarter past seven, obviously the weather was inclement. Proceeded with the day's events. Kept our eye on the weather forecast all through that morning. Two of the guys on shift actually suggested whether or not more crew could be brought in. We had two swift waters on shift. Whether or not more crew could be brought in so those two guys could be utilised autonomously in separate vehicles. Approximately quarter to twelve, heavy rain started to fall. Myself and Senior Fire-fighter ██████████ went for a recky of the water retention basis on Water Street South just to get an understanding of how much water is entering the city I suppose. The retention basin at that stage was filling quite fast, approximately a metre deep at that point in time. We turned around to head back to the station. We responded to a swift water incident, down the Lockyer Valley. We got back to station 11, switched vehicles to the swift water vehicle, 3-11 Yankee, myself and ██████████ proceed down the range. 3-11 Alpha proceeded up Mount Kynoch to go down to Murphy's Creek that way. Heading down the range, Firecoms radio traffic got more and more busy. Three quarters of the way down the range we were overtaken by a body of water. At that point we drove approximately 200 metres further, we were diverted to four children trapped in water in Dent Street. At that point we turned the vehicle around at the nearest location, proceeded back up the range where basically large obstruction I suppose if you want to call it, large water damage, large mass of debris, rocks and trees were sort of moving down towards us. Numerous, numerous vehicles began sliding past us, sliding back down the range. I put in a call to Firecom that we had up to a dozen vehicles with persons entrapped at that stage. At that stage radio traffic was that strong at Firecom that I think the word back was just simply noted. There was just, overwhelmed. We were then, proceeded up to Margaret Street, proceeded down Margaret Street. Again water was approximately 200 metres across, basically from the start of I think John</p> |

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| | | <p>Street, right across to Hume Street was underwater, running rapidly. We then responded to another job on Kitchener and James, so we were diverted from Dent Street. While we were at Margaret Street, we actually paused for a couple of seconds to prioritise what we were seeing, there was vehicles on the corner of, at the roundabout sorry, at the bottom of Margaret Street and Kitchener Street that we were unable to reach. We then tried to gain access I think around John Street or Mary Street up to try and get to Kitchener and James. We got to Kitchener and James. We were faced with approximately seven people holding onto a sign post in a medium strip, we had a single male holding onto a, I think it was a no standing sign up to his neck in water. We had one lady on the roof of a vehicle. One semi trailer was to the south of her blocking the turbulence of the water to prevent her vehicle from moving. Had unconfirmed reports of two children holding onto a light post. That call came from their Mum that was still entrapped in the vehicle apparently at that stage. Can I pause for a moment.</p> |
| 3. | MH | <p>Yeah at that point I heard radio that there were, there was a Bravo I think being manned at station 12. I established James Street control. I liaised with the police on the western side of James Street. Requested a helicopter. Advice from my level two technician was that those persons holding onto vegetation and the light post were at that stage completely unreachable. Police were trying to establish some aerial support at that stage. I tasked or I requested I think 3-12 Bravo to, if possible go downstream which is north of James Street, and set up some rescue lines down there in case these kids happened to let go. At that point we couldn't see the kids. Whether or not they were in the trees or I'm unsure.</p> |
| 4. | MH | <p>I think it was at that point we heard what was going over in Dent Street. I was unsure where Station Officer [REDACTED] was when the call come out that he went under. I was trying to establish whether or not, where they were for a start and whether or not they wanted us to set up lines to the west, sorry to the south of where we were in case he was heading our way, I was unsure where he was. We eventually made contact with the lady on the roof the car. A level two technician went out, established contact with her and effected that rescue of her. The truck was stable at that stage. We then proceeded along the creek north to try and locate the, the two kids. One of</p> |

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| | | <p>them apparently had been, that information at that point was incorrect, one of them had been rescued earlier on so that information wasn't quite accurate. We were trying to get an ID on the second child and a Mother. Unable to do both. Had to basically wait for the water to slow and recede. We then went through the trees in that area to try and get a visual, that's when we saw the other guy still holding onto the no standing sign. Level two deemed it was safe then for us to cross which we did. We roped up and got him off the light pole, sorry the no standing post, brought him back, at that stage I think Pittsworth truck was there. It was then confirmed that we had one child and one Mother missing. And it would have been about 10 minutes after that, that they found a female code nine Charlie or a female deceased down at the Defiance Mill. We then continued to search all the way through that parkland down opposite the fire station. I think then we went down to Chalk Drive to do a recky down there. We then got turned out again to a white Mercedes Benz that was located in the water at Kitchener Street. So we responded back to there and that was positively identified as, as that person's vehicle. We carried out a primary and second search of that vehicle. Seconded Salvies heavy lift tow truck to lift the vehicle out of the water to conduct those searches. There was no persons inside. Set up guys approximately 50 metre intervals further down the creek to set up a observation area. It was at that point, later on in the afternoon I think that the child was found down near Margaret Street in the trees, down near Margaret Street deceased. Herbert Street controller then set up. I had left James Street control in, in charge of 3-13 Alpha. Set up Herbert Street control. Liaised with the police, Assistant Commissioner or Superintendent at that point.</p> |
| 5. | MH | <p>Adequacy of equipment and communication systems. Firecom continued to tell me that my handheld radio back to them wasn't working. I later found out that water had got into the microphone so obviously there was some sort of waterproof sleeve or something we could have put over the radio that, that possibly would have helped. Immediate management and response and recovery, I mean we basically did what we could with what we had on the day. It was a bit overwhelming to have two guys in a ute look after nine people in the water but we, we had to do what we could do. Adequacy of community's response was in a lot of ways more thorough than ours as far as they were there before the water reached those heights and speed. We were</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | turned out basically out of the city so both appliances effectively in the first five minutes of the flash floods on the eastern side of Toowoomba weren't in the city at all, one was north, one was east down the range. Adequacy of forecast and early warning systems, particularly as they relate to the flooding events in Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley. Yes in hindsight it's a great thing, I, I mentioned this to, to the Premier actually when she was up at 12 that yeah if I could have I would have put through some sort of warning to the people down the valley but it's, we just had so much going on that you know it never, you know it's, it's nice in hindsight but whether it would have made a difference I don't know. As far as early warning of any sort of weather event, we receive no early warning at station level at all as far as this, this could potentially happen. What resources do we have, what resources do you require. We received no, no warning whatsoever. As far as helicopter response, I actually thought we would have got some sort of air support earlier on considering there's a lot of black hawks sitting just west of Toowoomba, but I later found out that the base was evacuated so. |
| 6. | HL | Any comment, any comment in regards to auxiliary response at all? |
| 7. | MH | Well ... |
| 8. | HL | Do you see a benefit in having all auxiliaries trained to level one or? |
| 9. | MH | Well, well I mean, yeah but I mean if a level one can't get in the water, anyone can stand on the side, edge of water and hold a rope can't they. So what's the difference. So no I mean I, if a level one, if a level one technically can't, can't enter the water, there's no difference between anyone holding a bit of rope on dry land including anyone .. |
| 10. | HL | But there would be, would be there be benefit in having auxiliaries trained and equipped ...[unintelligible - '(ui)']... least there for additional purposes? |
| 11. | MH | Oh. |
| 12. | HL | You think, I mean were resources adequate on the day or should officers have to respond with a crew of just two or? |
| 13. | MH | Well I was a crew of one. |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 14. | HL | Yep. |
| 15. | MH | Again I mean like I said, I mean look at that picture there, there's what two, four, six, seven there, eight, two in the trees, one on the post and there's nine, ten, eleven people and at that job for 95% of the time was me and [REDACTED] in that unit four in the background so, put that into perspective I mean. |
| 16. | ?? | That's the corner of James and Kitchener? |
| 17. | MH | That's Kitchener and James mate, yeah. |
| 18. | HL | Alright. Thanks [REDACTED], for that point view, your contribution here. Nothing further you wanted to add? |
| 19. | MH | Nothing I wanted to add, no. |
| 20. | HL | Alright. |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 6 |
| Interviewer: | Unknown |

Interview conducted at _____
on 18 February 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1. | | Yep here with the interview or statement by [REDACTED]. Friday the 18 th commencing at 2:45. Do you want to say a few words of introduction, [REDACTED]? |
| 2. | PP | Oh no, [REDACTED], Station Officer, Ipswich Fire Station ...[unintelligible – '(ui)']... |
| 3. | | Okay. Away you go. |
| 4. | PP | <p>Okay what I'll do is, at this stage I'll read from a, initially written. Okay on Monday the 10th of January 2011, I was rostered to a RDO or a rostered day off. At approximately 7:30 that morning I had a phone conversation with SO [REDACTED] on 'C' Platoon, which was rostered on duty that day at Ipswich Fire Station. I rang him and asked him in relation to the sponsor arrangements that were made for that day. In particular to any rescue, supplementary rescue operators. It was apparent from the conditions that existed at the time, that there would be a high likelihood for the requirement for rescue services, in particular swift water rescue operations. SO [REDACTED] indicated his agreeance with me and, sorry yeah his agreeance with me and my hypothesis on that and stated that he had already commenced actions to supplement the on shift staff with extra specialist skills with swift water rescue. And he wanted to use them as a strike team on top of our normal operational complement. Also he wanted to top up the crew on 645 ... (ui), which is a specialist rescue vehicle from Ipswich. He said that he had commenced this at approximately 7:15am and that he was waiting for word back in the form of permission to activate that extra staff. He was chasing that permission from the DMO or the Duty Manager for Operations for South East Region, at the time was Acting Inspector [REDACTED]. I stated to SO [REDACTED] I was available, if required and to keep me apprised of the situation, so I could make arrangements for the day. SO [REDACTED], he contacted me back some time later, it was approximately 8, 08:30 and he stated to me that the Duty Manager of Operations could not make up his mind or make a decision on whether or not to bring staff in. I informed SO [REDACTED] that conditions on the western, well in the western district from Ipswich towards Toowoomba was degrading. I arrived at this opinion through the fact that we had received a substantial amount of rain in the previous weeks and also QFRS resources, in particular Ipswich Fire Station had been used for water rescues on many occasions over those previous weeks, of</p> |

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| | | <p>which I was involved on a number of occasions. Finally I'd also made some observations of, from the Bureau of Meteorology of the present and forecast conditions over that next 24 to 48 hours. So based on that information, I informed SO [REDACTED] that I would come into the station to assist in preparations for a swift water or a flood water type event and I went in under the pretence that I was going to meet [REDACTED] for a coffee. So in the light of day where we didn't have permission, I still went in anyway. I just happened to be in uniform. On arrival at the station I received a situation report from SO [REDACTED] that he had received allowance from the Director of Regional Operations, Chief Superintendent [REDACTED], after the completion of a heated conversation over the phone to bring an extra staff member. He informed me that at the time that he requested extra crew in to put at Gatton Fire Station, in western command as a strike team and to also increase the crew in the 645 mike, which is a specialist rescue appliance out in Ipswich. He then stated to me that he had been given permission to upgrade the crew in on 645 mike but was denied permission to place a strike team or do call back to place persons at Gatton Fire Station. Okay. Those reasons for that were undisclosed at that time, to [REDACTED] who then in turn passed it on to me. I also proceeded to enquire about the activation of the local Disaster Management Group at Ipswich and the attendance of any QFRS senior members at the same group. [REDACTED], SO [REDACTED] was unaware. I then approached the administration officer for central west command and I spoke to her and asked if she was aware of the attendance of the Inspector or a senior member or the MG. She was unsure of that and was, however was not aware that the senior officer or Inspector in charge of Ipswich was actually even going to come to work that day.</p> |
| 5. | | Who was this, this woman? |
| 6. | PP | [REDACTED] the, [REDACTED] She was unsure whether he was even actually going to come to work. |
| 7. | | Who's she? |
| 8. | PP | At Ipswich. She's the administration officer for central west. And Acting, Acting Superintendent [REDACTED]. So however she was not aware that he had any intent of coming to the central west command office that day. I then |

proceeded to ask her to find out and if he was coming and if he was not, to let me know and either myself or [REDACTED] would attend that LDMG meeting. The reason why, my reasoning for this is I undertook that course of action as I believed it was vital to the QFRS to provide representation at that level because it was that important preparation phase, pre-incident phase before there was any flooding or any incidents starting to occur. And it was vitally important that fire take up with police, ambulance, other emergency service organisations and the local council in order to try and formulate a plan on how we're going to attack the situation. The reason why I did this, is I was convinced with the information available to me at the time, that Ipswich City itself was going to experience some level of flooding. It was only a short moment after speaking with the administration officer of central west command, the turn out system, Ipswich Station activated for a turn out to a swift water rescue job. I responded on 645 mike from Ipswich Station, with SO [REDACTED] and Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED], to Warraview-Rosevale(?) Road, backing up 671 alpha, which is an auxiliary appliance from Harrisville Fire Station. On arrival at that incident, 671 alpha had retrieved an individual from a flooded motor car. The two swift water rescue operators of 645 mike, including myself and Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] assisted the crew and therefore the appliance of 671 to actually exit the area that they had fiorded. They actually fiorded a fairly extensive section of flooded road to make access to the car. The swift water rescue guys, the pair of us, we helped escort them back out. So essentially they reversed out and we checked the road vehicle behind them as they reversed out. This was due to the fact the water had risen significantly during the time that they'd undertaken that operation. On completion of that situation, 645 mike was then responding to a swift water rescue in the Undulla district, south of Ipswich. We proceeded there and arrived within the Ripley district, on the edge of Ipswich and took up with 643 alpha, which is the pumper from Bundamba Fire Station and was met a short time later by 635 mike, which is a specialist rescue appliance from Beenleigh Fire Station. We met them on location and then they were assigned to us as back up. Myself, Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and a member of 635 mike, Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED], we transferred on to 643 alpha as extra crew. This was due to the fact that 643 alpha had negotiated a culvert type drain, forwarded out location, that had since been washed out and destroyed by

water. So weren't able to actually take our appliances across that water way. We moved to a safe location, upstream from that culvert and we swam across and took up with the crew of 643 alpha. The combined crew then, we drove some distance, making numerous water crossings in that time. After a period of time we came to a crossing that was un-, which I deemed unsafe to traverse and it was at that point we made the decision to turn around and go back to our original location. The officer on the appliance at that time, [REDACTED], passed that on to communic-, fire communications that we weren't able to locate or proceed any further. On arrival back at the initial water crossing, where 640, 635 mike and 645 mike were located, where I inspected again the washed out culvert. I deemed that it had been destroyed and therefore it was unable to be passed. The water was moving at approximately 50 kilometres an hour and it was approximately 1200 millimetres or four feet deep. My action then was to transfer the crew and any vital equipment from 643 alpha's appliance into an inflatable work platform off of 635 mike and provide them access, back across a lake upstream of that washed out culvert, that I deemed that the safest option at the time. We conducted, we achieved that. 643 alpha was left on the side of the road locked and any essential equipment taken from it and transferred back over to the, to the site where 645 mike was parked up. A short time later 645 yankee, a four wheel drive medium attack vehicle from Ipswich Fire Station arrived on the scene and was driven by a crew of one, which was Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED]. That vehicle also had another inflatable work platform at which we left on that vehicle. We then, well SO [REDACTED] tasked S, Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] to return the crew of 643 alpha to Ipswich Fire Station with their equipment to re-stow and equip with spare appliances to maintain operational capability. Upon leaving that scene and returning to Ipswich, whilst on route 645 was responding to a location at Murphy's Creek for a swift water rescue. Being back up, sorry correction. Being backed up by 645 yankee with a crew of one, travelling at code 30 road speed when it became available. Initial response to that incident was the closest auxiliary fire station, which was 678 alpha, which was the auxiliary crew from Helidon Fire Station. I'm unable to ascertain at this stage or I am unsure at this stage whether I was backed up by 643 alpha also. No, I don't believe that was the case at this time. On, moving along the Warrego

Highway we came through Helidon and made a right turn into Murphy's Creek Road. Upon crossing the first bridge from the high on Murphy's Creek Road, I observed a substantial amount of debris and a high level of water travelling at high speed, approximately 40 to 50 kilometres per hour, which was much greater than what I was accustomed to. Because I was, I'm familiar with that area and that crossing. 645 mike and 645 yankee then continued on until arriving at the intersection of Postman's Ridge Road and Murphy's Creek Road. During that time we had been listening to word back from 678 alpha, who'd also been responding to the calls. They're an auxiliary crew and which they do not have any swift water rescue training. However they were the nearest urban auxiliary unit to that incident. They were unable to access the incident location themselves, but had also become isolated by rising floodwater. SO [REDACTED] relayed a message via fire communications for 678 alpha to move to higher ground and a point of safety and not proceed any further. It was at this stage I then confirmed with SO [REDACTED] on the conditions, prevailing conditions at that time. We agreed that it would be best for myself to crew 645 yankee with Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED], as our skill sets, the resources on that vehicle and the ability to respond under emergency conditions, because we had a greater crew than one and to operate the appliance radio would create a greater level of capability for us in that area. I then conferred with SO [REDACTED] and we agreed to take 645 mike back to the highway, so that it didn't become isolated and therefore lose the capability of that appliance by rising water. As the senior station officer on the crew at that time, I had SO [REDACTED], sorry as the Senior Station Officer myself, I had [REDACTED] stand by me whilst I passed a radio message to fire communications. The details of the message were along the lines of, from Station Officer [REDACTED], conditions are deteriorating rapidly. 645 mike will be setting up a control point. We require assistance. A Senior Officer will be required. At that point alighted from the vehicle, SO [REDACTED] hopped in. 645 mike, they moved off. Completed a u turn to head back to the highway and weren't able to move any further, because the bridge had gone under water. I then observed from my point as 645 reversing at great, at great speed or as great as what it could, as the water was breaching and encroaching upon the vehicle as they reversed from their situation. It was at this time I was met by a member of the public who informed me, a member of

the public informed me that at number 365 Postman's Ridge Road, there was a female and three children trapped in a house, surrounded by rapidly rising floodwater. That was approximately 300 metres from our location. Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and I took the appliance and proceeded to that point. At that point we observed a home, homestead style home with Murphy's Creek in the, at the rear of the property, rapidly encroaching on a house and a large volume of water travelling through the front yard of the house, approximately 900 to 1000 millimetres deep, travelling at approximately 50 to 60 kilometres an hour. To the rear of the property I observed Murphy's Creek with a lot of debris, a number of houses, motor vehicles, water tanks, solar hot water systems, you name it, going down the creek and smashing into the bridge. It was at that stage that I, as I had my wetsuit already on, I said to Fire Fighter [REDACTED] that I'll go across to the house. I moved upstream of the house, some distance and traversed across a barbed wire fence to the house with a, dragging a rope behind me, with the intention of setting up a, tension diagonal for the house. [REDACTED] inflated the boat, attached the ... (ui), the tension diagonal once I had set it and sent the boat across with some personal floatation devices in. I then fitted them to the, to the people in the house, put them in the boat and removed them from that property. During this time, whilst standing in the front yard, I observed a number of small structures, motor vehicles running down, stop. From my location I observed a number of structures, structures and motor vehicles moving down Murphy's Creek behind the property with a number of persons in. We completed the rescue at which point the appliance became bogged, at which time we received some assistance from a heavy vehicle and a bobcat. Removed the appliance from the bog and proceeded back up to Postman's Ridge Road. Quickly liaised with SO [REDACTED] and then drove off up Postman's Ridge Road to search for more persons. Went to number 168 Postman's Ridge Road to undertake a rescue, at which stage we arrived and that house was gone. I observed a number of motor vehicles in Murphy's Creek, with what appeared to be people in. At this stage, due to the fact that we'd become isolated, I decided that conditions had deteriorated to such a point where rescue ceased to be a primary option and I then proceeded to go and do a head count of all the structures in Postman's Ridge Road, which we were able to access. Not, a short period of time later I was met by 678 alpha, the

Helidon appliance and I instructed them as SO [REDACTED] instructed me there were, other priorities became apparent. I instructed the Helidon crew to go and do a head count of all the properties they could access on Postman's Ridge Road and to provide basically accounted for, unaccounted for so that we could pass that through fire communications and the police. No, you're right mate. Subsequently I went back to 645 mike and spoke to SO [REDACTED] who then informed me that we were required at Ossian Drive at Murphy's Creek as there was a young boy trapped on a tree at the rear of the Murphy's Creek State School. We were assisted by a member of the public, in the area with directions who then come into 645 yankee and travelled with us to that location. On arrival at that point we met the individual concerned, who stated that his son had been recovered and had suffered no injuries. I met his wife, who received a number of injuries, cause she'd been caught in the water and rolled along a barbed wire fence. And it was at that stage I made the decision to send her back to the Murphy's Creek Pub as I was going to make that a refuge point for any persons that had been injured or required assistance. And any direction for the ambulance would be passed there. I attempted to pass the message to SO [REDACTED], informing him of the same, but with the quality of radio communications in the area, the message got through but was broken. And that was the heart attack. At this stage I spoke to the owner of the property and he said that the lower half of Ossian Drive had not been investigated, which we proceeded down there in 645 yankee, which was a dead end. We pulled up and alighted from the vehicle. I turned the appliance off. Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] checked the river bank immediately, well the creek bank immediately in front of the appliance. I commenced yelling out to people. I received, I heard something and I looked at Nathan and said did you hear that? I called again and he heard it and we raced, we, I ran off in a north westerly direction through a paddock and up over some logs and I, I observed a, approximately 45 year old naked female, approximately 15 to 20 feet in the water clinging to a tree. I moved down into the water, swam out, grabbed her and took her back to the bank, at which time I was met by Nathan Chadwick. We wrapped her in a blanket and then questioned the lady and then she informed me that her husband and her six year old child was missing and we then put her back in the appliance and took her to Murphy's Creek Pub and we created a refuge

centre there, at which point was met by the ambulance. At that stage we did another reconnaissance of the area, just to look for what I later came to find out was [REDACTED] and her daughter [REDACTED]. We did a reconnaissance of the area and were unable to locate them. I then went back to 645 mike, spoke to SO [REDACTED] had a number of tasks for us to do. We required fuel in that time. We appropriated fuel from a seedling farm in the vicinity and then proceeded back off to complete our jobs. In that time however I did receive a mobile phone call from the RACC for south east region from SO [REDACTED], asking that we proceed to a location to investigate a person that had been flooded into their house. Went to that location and found it was on high ground, it was at no stage under threat. In this, from the initial rescue to going back to 645 mike, I envisage at this stage it might have been approximately four, four to five hours. It was at that stage that 645 mike left the scene and we continued to do search and rescue operations in the Murphy's Creek area. It was approximately 7 o'clock at night we left Murphy's Creek area, mobile back to Gatton, the incident control centre, which we'd been informed had been set up. We made our way in via the Grantham District. We were on the Helidon-Grantham Road, proceeded along that road for some distance, until we were unable to proceed any further due to the water flooding the road. It was at that stage, I alighted from the vehicle and met up with an auxiliary crew, one of those members being Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED], also an auxiliary from Rosewood Fire Station and we proceeded to do a search of the properties in that area. During that time we met a number of displaced persons that were looking for their family members. At that time we considered them to be missing, unaccounted for and we collected that data as necessary and passed it on to Queensland Police members when they arrived on scene. During our search reconnaissance of that area, I located a rural type vehicle, branded as Grantham 51. I moved over to the vehicle and found difficulty looking in. There was approximately 1200 millimetres of water. I couldn't make any observations through the window, so I opened the door and found the, what appeared to be the deceased bodies of three individuals. I checked for signs of life and then proceeded back and contacted Gatton ICC and spoke to SO [REDACTED] on the situation. A short period of time later I was contacted by the RACC. I was on an open phone line in a teleconference with [REDACTED]

██████████, Assistant Commissioner ██████████ and other senior members from the RACC questioning me on the situation with the deceased in the Grantham 51. Completed that phone call, passed it on to police and then continued to search properties. After, I, on searching those properties with Senior Fire Fighter ██████████, we located, located and on some occasions photographed a number of deceased persons in their properties and then proceeded on to Railway Street at Grantham. By this stage I would assume, at this time of night, it was approximately 2300 hours, I received a phone call from SO ██████████ enquiring about the location of some potential persons if we could rescue and our ability to access them. At that stage I was unable to access them and Gatton ICC tasked other vehicles accordingly. During this time, throughout the night, the only communications I had was with SO ██████████ via mobile phone. We had difficulty with the fire communications channel or the local fire ... (ui) channel hadn't been set up. Over the next two hours, up till around about 0130 more swift water crews arrived on scene and then we began to prioritise our search area and we used two inflatable work platforms and a front end loader to spread, extend our search into the flooded areas and to escort a number of displaced persons from the roofs of their houses back onto dry land. At 0230 hours I was relieved by a crew of mixed location fire fighters from Ipswich, Beenleigh and I departed the scene in 645 yankee back to Ipswich Fire Station. Arrived back here approximately 0330am. I'll stop there for that second.

I don't know what time I went to work the next day. Approximately 0800 the following morning, which I think is the 11th, 10th, 11th it was, the Tuesday morning, I still have not received any advice or any telephone calls from the control staff from Ipswich. I made the assumption that there would be a high demand for swift water rescues services due to conditions have not been alleviated, the rain persisted overnight. I made a contact with SO ██████████ and we agreed again to meet for a meeting, under the guise of a meeting at Ipswich Fire Station at which point I took up there about 0915. We spoke at length about the situation that occurred the night before and the immediate situation presented itself, which was the flooding of the Ipswich area. Stop.

So of the Tuesday day, I spent my hours on a number of things and one of those was, is the establishing, coordinating of some of our technical

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | resources, technical rescue resources. Again I liaised with SO [REDACTED] who in turn took a crew to a partially isolated section of Leichardt, Wulkuraka, One Mile and to also assist in the management and setting up of evac centre at Leichardt, as it had not been done to any commensurable level. I also... |
| 9. | | Mate, can I interrupt you there? |
| 10. | PP | Yeah. |
| 11. | | Are you still on an RDO this day as well? |
| 12. | PP | Yeah. |
| 13. | | You're on shift? |
| 14. | PP | Yeah. |
| 15. | | You're on an RDO aren't you? |
| 16. | PP | We just went to work. |
| 17. | | You just both went in. |
| 18. | | But we both went, nothing's happening. We've got to do something. |
| 19. | | So, and nobody, none of the seniors or anybody said anything to you? |
| 20. | PP | No call, no call back arrangements or the management of back fill staff to cope with the situation had been arranged. So that's why we went in there on the pretence of having a meeting, just for the sheer fact is that we've got to go to work cause the shit's hit the fan and they were, no one was doing anything so we'll, we'll instigate the, instigate action and we just commenced that action ourselves. During that day I met with Acting Superintendent [REDACTED]. He was performing a number of functions. He was moving between the Ipswich ICC that was being set up and the local Disaster Management Group meetings, who were meeting at that stage only, once a day. I informed him of a number of situat-, a number of things that had occurred. I also advised him of the back fill with manning. At that point he had no issue with the fact that we'd, we'd retained our own services on overtime. Again during that day I also met up with Senior, oh sorry Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and together we carried out the duties of a strike team for swift water rescue |

as well as other jobs. The reas-, the vehicle we were on was a, a light attack Nissan Patrol, which was Echo India 42. Early in the afternoon of the Tuesday, I was contacted by a member of the ICC who stated to me that a rescue had occurred earlier that day at Minden, involving Senior Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and Fire Fighter [REDACTED] at which point undergoing a rescue where they retrieved three persons, they lost a fourth person into the floodwater. Ian and I proceeded out there in Echo India 42 to commence the search of the area. This was requested on behalf of the Queensland Police, primarily to locate the individual but also because the, the person they'd lost, the lost child was also a member of the police. So it was a favour to Queensland Police as well. On arriving at Minden crossroads, I met up with a member of the SES who had a flood boat. We did not retain the services of the flood boat, although we kept them on standby, should they be required. However I, I deemed it a sit-, the conditions were unsuitable for the launching of a flood boat and they were too dangerous for traversing in a boat. Ian Draconio and I searched the, the waterway, which was flowing at that time, I estimate to be approximately 50 to 60 kilometres an hour and parts, in sections there of it was a depth of approximately five to ten metres at its worst point. Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and I searched from the last recorded location, which was told to me by Station Officer [REDACTED] in my contact with him. And we searched for approximately one to one and a half kilometres from that point downstream. At approximately at 1750 hours, sorry, correction, approximately 1650 hours Ian, Fire Fighter [REDACTED] and myself located the, the body of a, obviously deceased body of a four year old male child, with a PFD on, hung up on a barbed wire fence. I made the decision, at that time, due to the fact that there was a potential for vermin or animals, for example dogs, to, to possibly mutilate the body overnight as it was near dark and due to the fact that there was potential for more rain to come, to remove, remove the body of the deceased boy and take him back to the highway. In other words I couldn't leave the poor little [REDACTED] (?) there. We found a blanket and a, a feed bin, a polyethylene feed bin that had been cut in half and we placed the body of the deceased in it. Marked the location, were unable to photograph it, due to the amount of water around, we didn't have a photo, a waterproof camera or anything of that nature. Marked the location, removed the deceased back to the highway. Contacted the Ipswich

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>ICC, correction, no correct, contacted the Ipswich ICC who in turn contacted the police and we were met on the highway, Warrego Highway and the Minden crossroads intersection by a single uniformed police officer by the name of [REDACTED], who then took the body of the deceased away. We then proceeded back to Ipswich Fire Station and were sidetracked and sent to another incident, of which we did not arrive and that put us back at Ipswich Fire Station approximately 1930 hours that night. I was then told by members of the ICC, I can't quite recollect at the moment. I'd have to check my personal notebook that I would be filling a role as a liaison officer at the local Disaster Management Group Recovery Committee for the duration, due to my level of local knowledge and my already established working relationship with members of Emergency Services and Ipswich City Council. Over the next four days I performed the duties in LDMG, coordinating and providing advice on flood recovery measures. And that's that phase out of the way. Oh, I got it out.</p> |
| 21. | | <p>Is this the first time you guys have talked about some of this shit?</p> |
| 22. | PP | <p>Yeah. It's not until I said, I was alright until I actually had to say it. That's why, yeah I didn't think I would have a problem. Cause I've been talking about it in my head for a long time. It's actually when it comes out you think fucking hell.</p> |
| 23. | | <p>(ui)...</p> |
| 24. | PP | <p>Yeah. So, okay so after a period of approximately one tour, the situation of tropical cyclone Yasi became evident to all persons concerned that it was going to be an issue for the persons in North Queensland. As the situation intensified and it was upgraded to a category five cyclone, the resources of special operations in the (ui)... taskforce were called upon. With 45 minutes notice, I was given advice to make my way to Cannon Hill special operations for movement to Cairns to support operations for the arrival of Cyclone Yasi. My personal opinion, to have on record is at that time we were all very well and truly aware of the potential severity for the cyclone. They left it to 45 minutes of notice to ...(ui) personnel to make it into Cairns. We arrived into Cairns. We were the last civilian flight into Cairns that day. A portion of the taskforce was broken up. I was despatched to Mareeba with a team of four,</p> |

including myself to support operations up there and wait for the arrival of the cyclone. During that time I provided regular updates back to the task force leader in Cairns. The cyclone came and went with very little effect on Mareeba. We inspected the area from Mareeba to Atherton, with, we were operating with chainsaws. We did the clearing of, of the roadway, Tolgo Scrub, just near Atherton. Cleared the roadway. At that stage, I was met on the road by a Superintendent I think it is, [REDACTED] who at that stage released us from Mareeba ICC. We then proceeded to Atherton, Atherton Fire Station. We dropped some equipment off. We were also at that time dispatched to an incident at Ravenshoe. We moved to Ravenshoe. Took up the location and found out that the incident had occurred some hours ago and our services were not required. From that point I contacted the local police and spoke to them of the situation. They concurred with our findings and at that stage I contacted the ICC at Tully, because we released then, we then made it and proceeded our way to Tully. On arrival at Tully, on that afternoon we performed some disaster assessment in the area. And then proceeded back to Mission Beach to investigate potential sources of accommodation for the (ui)... task force. I located a resort there that had power or had isolated power and they were able to provide hot meals and accommodation for the task force members. I contacted our task force leader and he said to appropriate the accommodation at which time I made a booking. We stayed there for two nights, at which stage we were told the next day that we can't be a burden on the community and were told to leave that premises. As I left that premises a police officer moved into the room I just vacated. I've been led to believe by information that presents itself to me from members of the QPS that the decision for us to leave that premises was a departmentally motivated or politically motivated decision, as our reason to not burden the community was more so a reason of you know the police want to use the property. I investigated that and I found that the police had occupied that premises one hundred percent. For the next two nights then we slept underneath, we slept underneath the Catholic Primary School in Tully. A number of taskforce members approached the command staff about the situation, at which time they were given the reason that they're ...(ui) people, that's what they're trained for, that's what they signed up for and that's what they've got to deal with. That's the accommodation they have to

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>deal with. They failed to identify the situation that the police had occupied the premises, as immediately as we vacated. We carried out damage assessment into Tully, Innisfail, Cardwell and Mission Beach areas over the following seven days. During that time we were not given, on any one occasion a commensurate briefing each morning following a SMEAC format at any stage. The task force leader did give us a briefing each morning, just to let us know perhaps to where he would be sitting that day, whether it be 501 tango or the Innisfail fire, the Tully Fire Station. At no stage until the day before were we given any information identifying how long we'd be away for. In my experience with our deployments is that you would generally have an idea of how long you're going to be away within about two to three days. We were not, we were not informed of any such thing till the day before we come home. During the time carrying out the damage assessments, I did find on many occasions that, that the incident controller or task force leader, in our jargon, had any inkling of what was going on and he provided no command or leadership direction to the operational staff. He was however, heavily focused on the reporting up the chain and providing situational reports to his senior personnel.</p> |
| 25. | | <p>Yeah that's sounds familiar.</p> |
| 26. | PP | <p>Sounds familiar. Okay. Now observations made, so to summarise, observations made over the period from the 1st of January 2011 where I was deployed to Bundaberg, from Bundaberg to Biloela, Biloela to Theodore, Theodore to Biloela, Biloela to Brisbane and back to Ipswich, Ipswich to Murphy's Creek, Grantham, Ipswich floods, then tropical cyclone Yasi, there is a number of common threads that appear throughout and I'll comment on them now. The first one is the actions of the RACC, in particular south east region RACC. Many occasions they step outside of the reporting chain and speak to operators in the field, without the knowledge of their incident control centre. Many times they, to the point of annoyance will pester the individuals in the ICC chasing information, which is a menial and is purely motivated by what would appear to me, in my opinion mind you, politically motivated and nothing to do with operations or the immediate welfare of the fire fighters on the ground. The ICC itself I found difficulty coming to terms with personnel filling functional management roles, which they are potentially not quite</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>qualified or do not have the appropriate skill sets. Examples of that is persons filling in, planning roles for example with an instant management structure and they have a rural, they are from a rural background and that is not to denigrate the rurals at all. However they're experience in that area, especially when we're talking about a rescue and recovery phase is light years away from their common operating environment. And I believe it's unfair to them also. Other concerns I have is the SCAD fire reporting system utilised by the Fire Service. I noticed that possibility to the detriment of fire comm operators and to my own embarrassment when providing statements to the Queensland Police is that the SCAD system obviously has operating difficulties where one particular incident might have word back courted across a number or several incidents, so it is hard to locate all items of operational word back, without having to go to the tape system. Other situations that I found that required attention too, is communications in the field. The Fire Service, unlike in a bush fire type scenario, did not immediately put repeaters or self powered trailer drawn repeaters into the field to assist in communications in the field. Whilst on the topics of communications, I found it to the point of negligence on to fire fighter's safety, that on my day, on the 10th of January at Murphy's Creek that a senior officer had the hide to change a radio channel, purely because it came under his band plan on a piece of paper, when he had personnel still operating in the field, which she was unable to contact. So once those persons were in range and were able to be contacted again, they would not be aware of the location or how to speak to anybody, any which way. Having said that, fire communications through the fire comm centre was still available, however it was very patchy to say the least. That's a known problem and I don't know how we rectify that. Possibly by not getting the people off the channel in the first place would go a long way to establishing their safety. I found inconsistencies with the swift water response for the notification and retaining the staff under the swift water rescue management plan, which the south east region puts out. And I've located a number of direct contradictions to the actions of the senior management on that day. Positive, things that I can say that are positive at this stage is the ability of the operational personnel on the ground, the fire fighters themselves to, in spite of being hamstrung by whatever means, be it senior officer's decision making or bureaucracy or lack of equipment, are able</p> |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>to persist and carry out their job to the best of their ability despite the shortcomings of the environment around them. Just for the record now I'd like to establish that the flood operations in Ipswich, I cannot speak highly enough of the management of Ipswich City Council in my time with the local Disaster Management Group. Not to, I'll try and not jump around too much, but I am obviously, is the swift water rescue plan, its pre-planning failed to identify shortfalls that may have occurred in the western districts west of Ipswich. Because our region goes to the bottom of the Toowoomba range. Yet there is little to know, reference in there to pre-planning in that area. The other situation is, is the manning of emergency response vehicles to, for swift water rescue strike teams is that there was insufficient communications and there is insufficient level of equipment to man those vehicles with the resources necessary to be able to complete their job. Suggestions is that potentially we could look at a, some sort of powered boat format to support our inflatable work platforms. Other than that at this stage, I cannot recollect anything or nothing comes to mind to mention at this stage. So I'll cease at 1540 hours.</p> |
|--|--|

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 7 |
| Others Present: | |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at (insert place of interview)
on (insert date).

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1. | HL | Just commencing the second interview involving [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED], this is Henry Lawrence speaking. I'll just get [REDACTED] to identify yourself. |
| 2. | MS | [REDACTED]. |
| 3. | GD | [REDACTED]. |
| 4. | HL | Thank you. Okay [REDACTED] go and if you, both of you can just have a look at those points on there and address them. |
| 5. | MS | Myself I was the C shift officer on Monday the 10 th at 45 station. I had been monitoring the weather. At approximately 0700 hours as my crew consisted of one swift water technician, and that was all I had in the whole ...[unintelligible - '(ui)]... command following the DMO to ask for additional staff. On our weather conditions and with the amount of rescues that we'd been conducting over the last between two to four weeks I knew that it would require more than what was resourced that day. I rang the DMO at 0700 hours and asked if I could have additional staff of a minimum of four fire-fighters and three swift water technicians. This would be to crew up a second truck and to allow swift water technicians, two on each truck, this would allow us, 45 Alpha to continue operations. I was informed that they would be having a meeting later that day where they'd discuss additional manning. I pointed out the swift water incident directive there to the crewing for swift water inturns. I was again told they'd have a meeting later. At 7:30 the rain was continuing to fall. I was monitoring the BOM site. I rang the DMO again, asked for additional resources, also asked if we could reposition the crews to 77 station as that was the area we done most of our rescues. |
| 6. | HL | 77 is? |
| 7. | MS | Gatton. |
| 8. | HL | Gatton, okay. |
| 9. | MS | Again I was informed there would be a meeting later today and they would make a decision probably about lunch time. At 7:45 I rang the South East regional technical rescue co-ordinator, [REDACTED] who was on annual leave at that time, seeking for additional crews as it was foreseeable that we'd have a bad day. I was not foreseeing what eventuated. He told me he |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>would ring the DMO or whoever he could to bring pressure there. At eight o'clock in the morning again I rang the DMO, asked for additional crews. Again I was told that there was no way we could do this before they had their meeting. I again asked if we could reposition our resources at present to Gatton or 77 station, if not Minden cross roads, if not Marburg station. As most of our rescues are out there, it gives a 15 minute to 20 minute head start even at Minden or Marburg. At 8:15 I rang again. Again was told there'd be a meeting. In frustration I rang the Acting Assistant Commissioner [REDACTED] Just stop tape for a sec.</p> <p>At approximately 8:30 my conversation with the Assistant Commissioner [REDACTED] I pleaded for more staff, originally I was allowed to bring in 10 rescue specialists and station officer [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and I had manned communications as he was the closest technical rescue specialist that wasn't already deployed to either Emerald or any other part of the State. I knew he would take approximately 20 minutes to arrive at station. Also informed the AC that he could bring in 10 rescue specialists, Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] at approximately 1200 hours that day, as that would constitute a split shift was far as he'd be getting 05 hours overtime which was under the Workplace and Health Safety Act okay. Station Officer [REDACTED] arrived at approximately 900 hours at 45 which is Ipswich station. At approximately 9:20 in the morning we were turned out to back up 71 station at a rescue in their area. We did that. Two technical rescue specialists on my truck were Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] and Station Officer [REDACTED]. We assisted 71 station in retrieving their vehicle and we ... (ui) Firecom finishing that we were turned out to Undallah Road, Undallah with 43 from Bundamba station, at which time 43 station's truck was isolated we were unable to retrieve that. The rescue, we were unable to gain access to that rescue. I was the incident controller at that particular incident and 43's truck was left on the far side of the creek as we were unable to get it back and the rescue specialists from 35 station including [REDACTED] was over and one with Station Officer [REDACTED] and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] were able to rescue the crew from 43 Alpha's truck.</p> |
| 10. | HL | Sorry mate this is on the 23 rd , Monday the 23 rd ? |
| 11. | MS | This is on the 10 th . |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 12. | HL | On the 10 th , okay. |
| 13. | MS | 10 th of the first. |
| 14. | HL | Okay. |
| 15. | MS | <p>On completing that job Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] was on duty, it was approximately 1200 hours, he came out of 6-45 Yankee to retrieve the crew, to them back to 45 station, this is 41st crew, as they had no vehicle, to crew up a different vehicle. On the way back between Undallah Road, Undallah which is just past the, oh not quite as far as the Ripley Rifle Range, we were turned out to Murphy's Creek to assist 78 Alpha in a swift water rescue. Four people stuck on the roof of a car, Murphy's Creek Road, Murphy's Creek. 6-75, 6-45 Yankee proceeded to take 43's crew back to 45 station and they also returned ... (ui). Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] was also turned out to this incident. On the way to this incident at Murphy's Creek, we received several other calls for assistance at Murphy's Creek. At one stage, 6-45 Yankee was to be responded alone to an incident however knowing we had 77 Alpha, 77 Echo and 75, they were, we operated a response to include those appliances and stations. Upon arrival at Murphy's Creek I transferred Station Officer [REDACTED] into 6-45 Yankee's crew, so that 6-45 Yankee now had Station Officer [REDACTED] and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED]. 45 Mike consisted of Station Officer [REDACTED] and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED]. We were in radio communication with 6-78 Alpha who had performed the rescue, as I said the people were able to walk out and they took them to high ground, they were in situ on high ground. We stopped on Postman's Ridge Road in Murphy's Creek Road intersection, discussing what would be our next course of action. Then the water came. Stop tape.</p> <p>Right I've just got decompress it mate.</p> |
| 16. | HL | Yeah take your time, take your time. |
| 17. | MS | Right, right, what happened next? Alright. |
| 18. | ?? | It must have been just frightening. What's that noise? |
| 19. | ?? | (ui) Yeah. (... (ui)) |
| 20. | MS | Once the water came, the water was rapidly rising. Myself and Station |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | Officer [REDACTED] had a very short discussion in which we decided to split the crews either side of the creek. I instructed Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] to turn the truck around and we were going to position either side of the creek to enable us to operate each side of the creek. I went back to inform Station Officer [REDACTED] of the radio channels. Once we arrived at the creek it was impassable. They put the third appliances without, there was no backup, there's no vehicles that can get to us. 677 Echo could approach but not get to us at that stage. Stop. |
| 21. | ?? | Again I'd probably it'd be worth noting that yes the creek was impassable but probably worth noting such severity that the vehicle that was actually, you know, virtually on the edge of being compromised. |
| 22. | MS | Yeah. |
| 23. | ?? | We had to go backwards that quick. |
| 24. | MS | Otherwise dead. |
| 25. | ?? | Yeah. |
| 26. | MS | Yeah. |
| 27. | ?? | Like the water hit, the water hit the bridge and they slammed into reverse and they drove the truck that fucking hard in reverse I've never heard anything, you could hear it. |
| 28. | MS | First it was ... |
| 29. | ?? | Cause the water was going like this. Running speed. |
| 30. | MS | Yeah. Like where we had the maxi brakes ... |
| 31. | HL | Just a wall of water. |
| 32. | MS | Well where we had the maxing brakes going down to it, I'm going stop the fucking truck, he's going I've got the maxi's on so it slid into it basically, but along this road, and it's come up and it's like reverse the truck, geez like, yeah we're reversing. |
| 33. | ?? | Screaming. |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 34. | MS | Okay. Being aware 6-45 Mike was compromised for a short amount of time as we attempted to get to the other side of the creek. However it was totally impassable. We reversed out of the creek with water rising rapidly on the cabin of the vehicle. Once we were isolated, Station Officer [REDACTED] had requested a rapidly deteriorating situation, a senior officer required. Station Officer [REDACTED] and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] they made a rescue, okay so you remember the name, the address on Postman's Ridge and Murphy's Creek Road, it was opposite the substation in which they rescued four individuals from a house. Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] was tasked with doing as much clearing of any houses that he could walk to, he had no vehicle and making sure that people were okay. 78 Alpha was in a safe position, I was in radio contact with them on channel 17 VHF. They were in a safe position, they could see the wall of water rising but there was no way the water could get to them, so we decided to leave them in situ. I was in radio contact with 77 Echo which the officer on board was Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED], but in his role then was ... |
| 35. | ?? | Captain of Gatton. |
| 36. | MS | Was Captain of Gatton. |
| 37. | HL | Just before you were saying you had to work out no truck. |
| 38. | MS | Where, because we had 45 Mike was there and there's no, you can't get anywhere in the fucking thing, so I left it there as my command vehicle and I said to Weir go down there and clear them houses. |
| 39. | HL | Okay. So it wasn't cause you'd lost it in the water or anything. |
| 40. | MS | No it was just. It's an inappropriate vehicle. |
| 41. | HL | Yep, yep, okay. |
| 42. | MS | Attached to Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] was an auxiliary fire-fighter from 78 station who was our rendezvous so we had in effect two teams, one was swift water level two, one was swift water level two and an auxiliary who had been in the job for approximately three months. Who were able to see houses. |
| 43. | HL | Sorry, yeah we'll go soon. You know how I like that, ... (ui). |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 44. | ?? | (ui)... |
| 45. | HL | Upstairs I think. It's hard on the bottom. |
| 46. | MS | <p>At approximately this time I was in radio communications also, telephone communications with 73 Alpha with [REDACTED] onboard. He asked me if there was anything they could do. I told him to block the highway at approximately McDonalds at Gatton. I was over-ruled from a distance from Area Director [REDACTED]. I told [REDACTED] that I would take full responsibility and he was to block the highway. He was also to drive down to the road and tell all the people travelling westbound to turn their vehicles around and go back to high ground at Gatton. There's, I have a fair of local knowledge where the water was going to run and it was going to compromise the highway, and we had to get all the vehicles off to ensure people's safety. [REDACTED] was able to contact the road crew who closed the road at Gatton at the overpass going to Gatton and on Beaudesert(ui) Road and he was able to drive down the road and tell all the people to come back on the wrong side of the road, but to get out of the immediate area. The guys performed numerous rescues. At one stage we had a vehicle that was professionally (?) challenged. Once the vehicle was released we sent them up Murphy's Creek Road to approximately 168 and 100 Murphy's Creek Road, to a report of a total of 11 people who were washed in two houses. The guys went up there, there was no persons, no houses. They went to another house approximately around 168, I can't remember, it might have been 148, and where the house was still standing and the, all persons were accounted for. I received additional rescue information that we had a person at Ossians Road, approximately Ossians Road in Murphy's Creek itself. I tasked Station Officer [REDACTED] in 6-45 Yankee to do this rescue. As we needed local knowledge we got a guy from the community who drives a bobcat and truck who hooked up with Station Officer [REDACTED] and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] in 6-45 Yankee and were able to perform a rescue of one female. I had an 18 year old, approximately 18 year old brought down to the command point where he informed me his parents had been washed away up in Murphy's Creek, Spring Bluff area. The people took him back to be with his family. I tasked 6-77 Echo with the task of going up there. 6-77 Echo up until that stage had done clearance of the houses on the southern side of the</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>creek. Once they got through I sent them up to try and gain access to Dianne Court, and they were unable to do that at first but managed to gain access with the help of an individual with a chainsaw. This brings us to a point of, we're technical rescue specialists who are trained in chainsaws on vehicles why would you not carry them cause in flood water debris is a major obstruction, we need chainsaws to clear roads to allow us to access to do our rescues. Once I ascertained that the people were safe up around Dianne Court, Circuit, they responded to Spring Bluff. At that stage we basically lost, most radio contact however I was able to ascertain that they had gained access to Spring Bluff and were performing a rescue. On debriefing the crew I found that they were able to retrieve two bodies, the parents of the child, and assist QPS with that. 6-45 Yankee, once securing the female casualty, was able to take that person to Murphy's Creek pub where a temporary evac centre was set up. Around this time, AB calling wanted me to change my radio frequencies from fire ...(ui) to channel 35, which we had channel one operate, sorry channel four operating, Firecom and channel 17. I informed him I would not change my radio communications while I had people out on the ground. I could have partial access to but were to remain on 17 until I had clear my site with them and could tell them verbally. Once they've done all these rescues I was going to reposition my vehicle to Murphy's Creek pub to assist with setting up a temporary evac centre and also to collate who was missing, where they were from and who was found. At this stage, I had approximately 22 people missing, unaccounted for. I was over-ruled by Inspector Cawley and ordered to report to Gatton where I was to form part of the INT. I followed that direction and moved to Gatton, myself and 6-78 Alpha were tasked to move to Gatton to form part of the INT in Gatton. On arrival at Lockyer Creek Bridge on the Warrego Highway, vehicles were stopped in both directions as no one was prepared to drive over the creek. 6-45 Mike and myself driving it, drove over the creek and were able to gain access to Gatton. Once at 77 or Gatton station I formed, I walked in to give a briefing of what had happened but I was informed that I was the operations officer for the floods running over the ICC at Gatton. Stop tape.</p> |
| 47. | HL | Okay. A question ...(ui). Is, what time of day was that? |
| 48. | MS | Approximately 1800 hours. |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 49. | HL | Six o'clock at night. |
| 50. | MS | Yeah. |
| 51. | HL | The incident occurred when? |
| 52. | MS | Approximately 1300. |
| 53. | HL | So you're saying over the five hours, did they not have an operations officer? |
| 54. | MS | No. |
| 55. | HL | In that time. |
| 56. | MS | No. |
| 57. | HL | Who was there? |
| 58. | MS | I can go into that cause I, I've ... (ui) information. |
| 59. | ?? | This guy had to do his job. |
| 60. | MS | Yeah. |
| 61. | ?? | This guys out doing his job, this guys out doing his job. |
| 62. | MS | ██████████ and ██████████ |
| 63. | ?? | What the fuck are they doing out there? |
| 64. | MS | They got told to go and set up a little INT but not to worry about it, it'll be over by about eight o'clock tonight. |
| 65. | ?? | Where's the senior officer that's in that area? I have to ask cause I honestly don't know. |
| 66. | MS | Okay. The senior officer was ... |
| 67. | HL | So sorry there was ██████████ and who? |
| 68. | MS | ██████████. |
| 69. | ?? | ██████████, yeah. |
| 70. | MS | So on the highway, at the Lockyer Creek Bridge, ██████████. |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 71. | ?? | Yeah but this, hang on, can you let me hear it out. It's six o'clock at fucking night. |
| 72. | MS | Yeah. |
| 73. | ?? | What the incident has transpired and we've just got the fallout effects of it now right.(ui), people unaccounted for, where's your inspector from area four. |
| 74. | MS | He was, now at 8-50 Lima, we had 76, that's Quarry Hill isn't it mate? |
| 75. | ?? | Quarry, yep. |
| 76. | MS | Alpha and [REDACTED] were parked on the highway, down at the bridge cause they weren't prepared to drive over it. |
| 77. | ?? | Righto so you went into Gatton. |
| 78. | MS | I went, fuck this I'll drive over that bridge. |
| 79. | ?? | Right you did. |
| 80. | MS | I drove into Gatton. |
| 81. | ?? | So what did he do? |
| 82. | MS | They went oh fuck the bridge is open (?), we can drive in there now. |
| 83. | ?? | Fair enough. |
| 84. | MS | So he followed me in, he was approximately half an hour behind me. |
| 85. | ?? | Righto. So you were given the operations role. |
| 86. | MS | By [REDACTED]. |
| 87. | ?? | Oh so there was a senior officer there. |
| 88. | MS | When I got there [REDACTED] was there. He was running around. |
| 89. | ?? | So you had ... |
| 90. | MS | Right. |
| 91. | ?? | You had [REDACTED], you had [REDACTED]. |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| 92. | MS | Yeah, [REDACTED] |
| 93. | ?? | So there's three inspectors. |
| 94. | MS | Yeah. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] come a bit later. |
| 95. | ?? | Yeah well take [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] out cause they're ... |
| 96. | MS | Yep. |
| 97. | ?? | They were there to set up. |
| 98. | MS | Yes. |
| 99. | ?? | So you had three inspectors. |
| 100. | MS | Mmm. |
| 101. | ?? | Can you, what functional roles did they, I just got ask the question cause I'm a bit confused. |
| 102. | MS | Inspector, [REDACTED] |
| 103. | ?? | [REDACTED]. |
| 104. | MS | He ...(ui). |
| 105. | HL | (ui) talk about this (ui)..... |
| 106. | | (ui) |
| 107. | MS | On arrival at the RMT in Gatton, present at that stage were Inspector [REDACTED] [REDACTED], he was the instant controller I was informed. He informed me that I was operational, that I ...(ui). We had Inspector [REDACTED] [REDACTED] fulfilling no role. We had Acting Station Officer [REDACTED] and Logistics Officer [REDACTED] were tasked with setting up. Inspector [REDACTED] arrived approximately half an hour after me. 6-35 Kilo were at that site so we had Station Officer [REDACTED] Technical Rescue Specialist [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was tasked with filling out some paperwork. We had Technical Rescue Specialist [REDACTED] who was answering telephones. My immediate conversation with Inspector [REDACTED] was where are the men, what are they doing. He informed me that he was unaware of where any crews were |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | <p>or what they were doing. 6-43 Alpha were standing by outside. I tasked, I got them in and tasked each of them with a scribing role or assisting role under the INT set up. The INT set up was [REDACTED], Inspector, incident manage, incident control and commander at that stage. We had myself as the operations officer, Station Officer [REDACTED] was logistics and Rural Operations Acting Inspector [REDACTED] was planning. When [REDACTED] arrived he fulfilled no role. The ... (ui) 43 were able to get the boards off 6-45 Mike and we had logistic boards set up in 6-45 Mike enabled us to make do. Appropriately identify where all vehicles are and what personnel are on the fire ground. Fire-fighter [REDACTED] was my scribe, I tasked him with this task. As this was imperative for the safety of crews on the fire ground. I also was in communication with, roughly at that stage, oh sorry I'll go back a bit. They were having trouble setting up the radios as the case that they got from Beenleigh was not complete. I only had one radio available to me which was VHF35, the second radio they brought up they had no antennae for. I asked would an antennae off a vehicle fit and I was informed that no, no antennas off a vehicle would fit this connection. So effectively only had one radio and the Firecom radio. Gatton Station is not really ideal for this and I asked could we reset the room, I was informed that this was only a small ICC and that there was a LD, local disaster management group set just up the road and which the fire service rep was rural fire service operations, a grade training officer [REDACTED] ...</p> |
| 108. | ?? | [REDACTED]. |
| 109. | MS | <p>... [REDACTED] was our representative at that local disaster management group. On finding out where all our crews were, I was handed, well while this was happening I was handed a list, approximately two to three pages of rescues to be completed. I prioritised these. At that stage [REDACTED] was there but all senior officers vacated the ICC for approximately an hour and a half to go and do a video conference with some form of management, like the fire service I presume. Grantham 9-1 contacted us on channel 35, I asked who they were and it was the crew from the Lima truck, 8-50 Lima which was in charge of Station Officer [REDACTED]. They'd been dropped into Grantham by helicopter and had a rural communications truck. I appointed them as technical rescue team one. I decided as I was apparently the senior in the</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | <p>room, that that's how I'd identify each of the technical rescue areas. Station Officer [REDACTED] from 6-45 Yankee contacted me to say that the Helidon Grantham Road was passable and he was making access to that area. He was to be known as technical rescue team two and I sent the appropriate resources to that area. On note, the T-card management was basically nonexistent until they were to find out who and where people were. I think it was by luck that we didn't lose anyone that day rather than by good management. It would have been very easy to lose fire trucks and not even know they were on the fire ground. Station Officer [REDACTED] informed me of his situation. I sent a second swift water team to his location to aide him and that he would be in charge of tasking. While developing a list of priorities in the rescue, I tasked Grantham 9-1 with rescues that they could get to as I had a couple of locals that I, assisted were in the ICC as they could give me good information on where people can get with what. I also talked to Station Officer [REDACTED] via mobile phone regarding all the rescues that were in his area. It was about this time an ambulance officer walked in to the ICC. He had come from the local disaster management group and informed me that for approximately one hour there had been a rescue to do with approximately 30 people stuck on the roof of a house in [REDACTED] area. It had not been transmitted down to the ICC, I had no knowledge of this up until that stage. However I immediately tasked Station Officer [REDACTED] to prioritise this rescue. Station Officer [REDACTED] contacted me by phone with a word message regarding ... stop tape.</p> |
| 110. | MS | <p>Station Officer [REDACTED] contacted me informing me that is there, if there is a senior in the room was the first question he asked. There was no senior in the room still at this stage, I'm unaware of the time. He told me he located a rural fire service truck, Grantham 5-1 with what he believed was three deceased persons inside. I instructed him to gain access to that vehicle as to ascertain if there was any signs of life. Which he did and was able to transmit to me that there was one female deceased and two children in that vehicle. Approximately 20 or 30 minutes later when the seniors came back into the room, I was able to tell them what had happened to that vehicle. Apparently at the LDMG they had the father and the son of that particular vehicle over there. I was not informed until that time that we had lost the</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | ...(ui)... vehicle. Stop tape. |
| 111. | MS | <p>For an update of the tape, at this stage we had four reported teams in operations. I had Grantham 9-1 operating alone in Grantham itself, from the school oval where the helicopter dropped them off. I had swift water teams two and three, Station Officer [REDACTED] commanding on the Grantham Helidon Road gaining access to the back of Grantham, multiple trucks in support. I had 6-77 Echo, commanding was Captain [REDACTED] who's also a senior fire-fighter and technical rescue specialist. He had his crew on there plus they had Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED], technical rescue specialist, they were known as squad team four. Around this time we were getting towards midnight and I had additional crews arriving for crew change-overs. I sent them out to relieve at Station Officer [REDACTED] location. This consisted of Station Officer [REDACTED], ...(ui) from Beenleigh, and two guys from Brisbane, aren't aware of their names right at the moment. They went out to relieve the tech rescue guys out at Grantham, and allowing them some time off. I tried to get through to them at this stage but unaware if it actually had got through. I sent them out with Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED], to give me a bit of a word picture as, consult with all the technical rescue teams and find out what was going on and give me a rough word picture of what was happening.</p> |
| 112. | HL | This is around midnight? |
| 113. | MS | Roughly. |
| 114. | HL | And you've been on duty since 8:00am that morning. |
| 115. | MS | 7:00am. |
| 116. | HL | 7:00am. |
| 117. | MS | <p>Yeah. Once 77-Echo arrived back at approximately 1:30 in the morning I think it was, or two o'clock in the morning, I was relieved by [REDACTED] SO3. [REDACTED] lasted approximately 10 minutes in the operations officer's role and he handed the role then to Station Officer [REDACTED]. And myself and Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] in Echo India 42 proceeded to try to get back to 45 station. We arrived at 45 station at approximately quarter to four in the morning it was. Just on the terms of reference ...</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 118. | HL | 45 is? |
| 119. | MS | Ipswich. |
| 120. | HL | Ipswich. |
| 121. | MS | <p>The terms of reference, the management did not listen to on-shift crews, slow to react, took a great deal of effort to be able to bring in additional crews, went against all the operating procedures. It seemed to be more about money than about service. Resourcing and the overall co-ordination, I do appreciate this was an extraordinary event and that we did what we had to do on the ground to one keep alive, and two perform and our job to rescue. Deployment of personnel and co-ordination of personnel, they seemed to have no idea where the crews were or what they were doing. This was later demonstrated by interviews that had to be conducted as they had no idea who did what, on what day. Communication systems, very poor. Communities response, community were not warned at either Murphy's Creek or Grantham, but it seems that the flow of water was such that it was impractical. One suggestion could be made is that we seem to have flood mapping that's available online and it predicts the areas that flood with a rise of water. With the advent of smart phones and internet it would be feasible that this would be accessible via a smart phone in a vehicle or a tablet in a vehicle. However the phones on vehicles seem to be very antiquated, there was no warning of a, I use in inverted brackets wall of water coming down in Murphy's Creek or at Grantham. Just on this particular day we're talking about debriefing, as of yet, today is the 18th or 17th ...</p> |
| 122. | ?? | February. |
| 123. | MS | <p>... of February, and this incident occurred on the 10th, there has been no operational debrief, no senior officer has spoken to me regarding my actions or my decision-making process. The support of PTSD has been nonexistent up until the stage where I asked for a peer supporter to attend to Fire-fighter [REDACTED]. Of my immediate crew at Murphy's Creek, I'm aware that Senior Fire-fighter [REDACTED] is the only has received any PTSD counselling. That was not received until a month after and only at my insistence. Stop tape.</p> |
| 124. | ?? | (ui) |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 125. | MS | Yeah I'll just. |
| 126. | HL | Stop. |
| 127. | MS | Yeah. |
| 128. | MS | <p>Just some outcomes. On the Monday morning, myself and Station Officer [REDACTED] asked if the area director from central west command would be attending the local disaster management group, apparently he had no intent on doing so. We informed that as that was already under, taking place that if we were in station we would attend the one at 3:00pm, as there were two scheduled for that day. As far as the senior officers who were at the DMA and the Acting Assistant Commissioner listening to a station officer who had been on duty for the last few weeks and had seen the rescues increase, maybe we need to listen to our guys on the ground cause they are operationally focussed on response and good response in their areas. My request to put the people out at Gatton was based on the fact that 90% of our rescues were done in that area over the last few weeks, so it was foreseeable to me that if we were going to have rescues, some of them would be in that location. Communications at Murphy's Creek were very difficult, they need to look at repeaters. Being told to change a radio channel. Oh first I'll deal with the traffic. Being over-ruled by someone who's approximately 20 to 30 K's away is a ridiculous thing, in that he has no perception of what is going on the ground. I would not take the decision to close a major highway lightly. And it was not made lightly. It was made to preserve life and protect property and the environment, which is our charter. Communications and the want of the AD to change our radio communications channel. We are trained that once a communications channel is in place you leave it until you can see the person or see all the people on that fire ground and tell them that you are changing radio channels. It is a basic workplace health and safety issue but more so is an operations issue. On arrival at the ICC, oh I'll deal with not being allowed to go to Murphy's Creek. Another decision that I think in hindsight we should have done, we should have provided them people with a meeting point and a person in uniform who could do something for them, and we had sat phone, we could actually make contact with other people. It would have allowed us also to ascertain who was missing, who was not missing, as that was a</p> |

muster point for that area. On arrival at Gatton, ICC was not set up or ready to take command upon arrival in any circumstance, however being put into that role I did the job to the best of my ability. I find it amazing that we did not leave seniors or a senior as the incident manager, he was the incident controller or the instant commander at that stage and for him to leave to the room for approximately an hour and a half meant that fell onto my shoulders. The INT set up or aimed to set up in the four functional officer reason (?) that is that the incident manager has overall command and control and the operations officer controls operations, planning, planning, logistics, logistics. Talk about the planning officer. [REDACTED] did a wonderful job considering she'd never received any training, is not au fait greatly with computers as most of operational people are and was asked for the first time to fill out an ... (ui) incident action plan. This failed totally. I don't think by the want of trying by her but the computer kept crashing. And I found it easier to fill out a SMEAC briefing form in my handwriting to fax it off. The EIOP took probably half an hour to prepare what she spent and it achieved nothing because the computer or program crashed and all was lost. Whether she was right to put into that role, I didn't choose her for that role, she was chosen by the Inspector. I would, seemed to be outside her scope of operations for a rescue. I know she was the Acting Inspector, they had lost, they knew that they had lost a rural family Inspector. Why they put the Acting Inspector of Rural Operations of this region in that role while she could fulfil the role of counsellor to the fire-fighter who had lost his family in Grantham 5-1, I do not know. The electric international plan very unuser friendly, same as OMS, far too many key strokes and nothing is achieved. The recording of the incidents that happened that day, notify of Firecom, very poor. On the fire ground at Murphy's Creek I received numerous phone calls from the ROC at Beenleigh and from individuals requiring updates. None of these were recorded, therefore all international plans or radio transmission from that area, most of them are lost. That's it for that part.

On Monday I arrived at approximately 4:00am, I was told I had to have the next day off. Approximately seven o'clock in the morning, I was awake, it was still raining heavily. Myself and Station Officer [REDACTED] were in communication, we decided to go to station 45 Ipswich Station. Met there at approximately nine o'clockish in the morning. We decided to wear our

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | <p>uniforms just in case we were required. Upon meeting Station Officer [REDACTED] at the station, we were met by the Acting Inspector of that area, being aware that this was his second day in that area. He asked for assistance. He had a flood map. We were able to provide assistance. I crewed up the vehicle that would go out to Leichardt as the flood map predicted that they would be cut off. This is normal operations for Ipswich station to send a truck out there. So Leichardt and One Mile. Upon getting the crew out, had a look at the flood map, detailed in notebook as to which areas I needed to evacuate. Went out in 6-45 Bravo to that area. There was no police presence, there was no QAS presence at that stage. We went around the areas that we knew would go under water as per the flood mapping and advised people to evacuate. This was done several times until the One Mile Bridge went under water. I was asked at one stage from the ICC as to a sit rep and I informed that we were assisting with evacuations. Also set up an evac point at the golf club, Ipswich Golf Club. Consulted with the management up there and they were more than happy to set up an evacuation centre. Later on I met with the local councillor in that area, I was unaware who was operating in that area, he had set up a different location that had to be moved as it was going to be inundated. He had a separate evacuation centre set up at the school on Toongarra Road, Sacred Heart I believe.</p> |
| 129. | HL | Is it normally part of your role to set up evacuation centres or ..(ui). |
| 130. | ?? | Fuck no. |
| 131. | MS | <p>No. But there was no other agency there, there was no council, there was no QPS, there was no one there. Upon arrival of QPS, I informed them of my actions and they said thank you. They were also overwhelmed as their work goes, when the water went over the bridge, we performed approximately 17 water rescues of people out of homes that would not evacuate. One person refused to evacuate, police staged on duty did have a QPS vehicle. They insisted on him evacuating and he told them no and he was left in situ and I informed him that no rescue would be undertaken for him, as I could not put a rescue in for someone who could have evacuated and even at the last minute in up to chest deep water. The evacuation centre was set up. It was running, I chose an evacuation centre that had a generator, it had showers, air conditioning, carpet and meals. Therefore I foresaw that we'd have</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| | | <p>approximately 200 minimum evacuees and this is the highest piece of ground in that part of the suburbs in that area. We continued evacuations, again I was asked by, we had no police presence anymore, I was asked by the ICC under who's authority am I evacuating and I informed them it was either evacuate or rescue which one do you want to do. This was probably a learning point that it doesn't really matter what we call it, we're there to protect property and whether we prevent the car accident by talking to kids in a classroom or whether we do evacuations by going and knocking on people's doors and saying sorry your house is going to be inundated, you need to move is irrelevant. All three services have to work together. And saying that it's not our role when there's no other service out there is, not exactly operational focussed on our mission statement. I was out there for the next two days, or next two evenings and which we were the only government agency in that location. There was no police, there was no QAS. We performed the role, all three roles. I was questioning people on the streets after dark to make sure they weren't looting. Providing medical assistance and triage. Running the evacuation centre and reporting.</p> |
| 132. | MS | <p>One fellow that gave you a hand [REDACTED], I know where he lives, apart from that I've got no idea of his fucking name, I know there was guy who's trying to get in to the fire brigade and he was helping the (?) truck as I was getting my fuel and stuff like that, (ui)... were good, cause they come and said mate we've got fucking 8000 litres of fuel down there and there was some other guy who come along who was excellent because I, on his mobile phone again to do, well attempt to rescue cause there was no one there, no horses, no wife of this guy and he was good cause I went back and I went this guys like just, he knows his wife is probably dead and all the horses are dying, I'm going fuck I can't concentrate on you right now. You, you, and that kind of thing is the (ui).. well there's no way to capture it. The lady that gave us fucking eight bags of food out of her house, there's no way to capture that.</p> |
| 133. | HL | <p>But if you're using people at the incident, you task them with something ...</p> |
| 134. | MS | <p>If we had appropriate ...</p> |
| 135. | HL | <p>... and it'd be competent now to follow up and ...(ui) is this all right or whatever afterwards.</p> |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| 136. | MS | No time. |
| 137. | GD | I instigated during our little sauté in the ICC at Gatton, the operation of the green key cards for anybody that came along and said I want to help. |
| 138. | MS | Yeah. |
| 139. | ?? | Yeah. |
| 140. | GD | And I say here fill one of these out, put your name and your contact phone number and what you, your offering to help, put it on there, and this was guys who were just sort of turning up with tip trucks and backhoes and things like that. This is in the recovery stage. I was putting them on to green key cards and then storing them and doing it, but I was pulled up by a senior officer in no uncertain terms and told that we are not managing outside personnel, we look after ... |
| 141. | ?? | Yeah you're not, you're just recording it and you pass it on to someone that can use it. |
| 142. | GD | Yeah, yeah. That's ... |
| 143. | ?? | (ui)... |
| 144. | GD | Yeah and that's what I was told we weren't, and I challenged the officer at the time and said well do we have green key cards, what is the purpose of the green key card. |
| 145. | ?? | That's for only other outside agencies. |
| 146. | GD | Other agencies, other personnel so. |
| 147. | MS | Apparently they enacted the, compulsory evacuation at approximately 7:00am on the Tuesday morning. It was not transmitted to the ground, that we could compulsory evacuate people, the police, ...(ui) us, any agencies should be able to do it, but until like 1500. In one final comment in the fact of my crewing that wasn't allowed, and I have failed to mention yet. In communications with 78 Alpha and also with the crews in Toowoomba. We found out that that they, South East region management and Toowoomba management, commenced evacuation, voluntary evacuation on the Sunday |

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | night, the night of the 9 th at approximately 20 hundred, eight o'clock in the evening of all the low lying areas at Grantham. This would seem to indicate to me that they had an awareness that the next day could be potentially bad. And would flood affect numerous people. You have to ask then why the problems with getting extra crews or relocating to Gatton if they considered evacuation at Grantham. Grantham's only like 10Ks away from Gatton. Why do one thing and then not the other. It has to be asked. |
| 148. | PP | ██████ asking you a question. Is, if they, it's not just that, that they knew full well the conditions that existed prior to the events that happened on Monday the 10th, they were aware of the flooding situation that currently existed prior to that. |
| 149. | MS | Yep. |
| 150. | PP | And failed to act. |
| 151. | MS | Yeah I have no, I don't know why or why they didn't act. Why they didn't have nearly every off-duty fireman in for that day, and even if they couldn't get them on vehicle, at least this would allow for rapid crew change-overs for feeding, and for rest. It seems incredible that we just let it go. Some of the ambulance officers I was talking to worked 72 hours straight. There was no worry about paying them. Here we seem to be more worried about oh this is going to cost money to bring them in. If you do the evacuation and you know the precursor to it, why is there a consideration of money? What' is a life, one life worth if, if we potentially by our neglect endangered one? |
| 152. | HL | Yep. Alright we might just in conclusion of this, just look at those points again, there's nothing that you think you may have forgotten or that you need to add. |
| 153. | MS | No but I'd say that the senior management's lack of talking to their crews really needs, they need to look at themselves and go did we do the best by our blokes and crews that day. And change it so that next time it happens it doesn't, we get a better response. And it's all to our team management for some reason, we have grass fire level three days, we call in additional crews straight away. There seemed to be nothing with swift water rescue at all. Just fly by the seat of your pants. |

| | | |
|------|-----------|---|
| 154. | HL | So take more notice of the people on the spot and not try to make decisions from bloody 50, 60 or whatever kilometres away. |
| 155. | MS | There's no point trying to do that and the person on the spot has a good sight and a good appreciation of what's happening. Don't try and over-rule them. |

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Fire fighter 8 |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted at Toowoomba
on 24 February 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | HL | This is Henry Lawrence. I'm speaking interview number four with [REDACTED]. |
| 2. | DW | Yeah my name's [REDACTED], I'm a Senior Fire-fighter at Kitchener Street fire station in Toowoomba. I was working the night of the 9 th ... |
| 3. | HL | Sunday the 9 th . |
| 4. | DW | Yeah Sunday the 9 th , as a fire on the back seat of 3-11 Alpha and we responded to a swift water rescue in Grantham that night. I worked all night down in Grantham. So basically about, approximately all the times I'll give you today is only approximate times. Approximately 9:30 we were responded to a swift water rescue in Grantham. The initial call come over from Firecom that they required only two level two technicians, but previously on our shifts we decided for safety of our technicians that 3-11 Alpha will respond with the technicians for level one support. So we responded down to Grantham. SO Goose was the officer on 3-11 Alpha at the time. On route to Grantham, Helidon fire appliance radioed in that they could not reach Grantham from the western side, which is the old Warrego Highway way. So they redirected us to come in from the Gatton side. So we proceeded all the way through to Gatton, we drove through Gatton under lights and sirens and through to Grantham. We made it as close as we could to Grantham from the eastern side and that was approximately two kilometres from Grantham, and the road was cut due to flooding. So we decided to stage there and the 3-11 was it Yankee or the swift water vehicle, arrived five minutes after our arrival. On that was Fire-fighter [REDACTED] and Station Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] took over as, met up with a rural fire officer there. SES were there putting a boat in the water when we arrived and [REDACTED] got out of the truck and started to ascertain what the situation was. Then he directed us to get the flotation devices and that out of the appliance and set up for assistance for the level two technicians. That night we only had one qualified level two technician on shift. So once [REDACTED] ascertained that there was a fair walk into Grantham, he asked for more technicians, level two technicians to be paged and respond to this incident. The big thing that was ... |
| 5. | HL | Sorry Darryl, did those level two technicians authorised and come or? |

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| 6. | DW | They did eventually come. |
| 7. | HL | Right. |
| 8. | DW | <p>Yeah but that was an hour and a half later by the time they responded. The big thing we all asked each other when we got there was where was Gatton auxiliaries and where were the level two technicians from Ipswich, as we were under the understanding that they were responding as well. So if in hindsight if we didn't respond to the initial call of just two level two technicians, they would have been down there by themselves to try and conduct this rescue and I don't know who made that decision from South East. Why the only wanted two level two technicians, and to this day I still don't know the answer to that. [REDACTED] took over as basically as incident controller. Oh well he did but he didn't. As far as I was concerned [REDACTED] was the incident controller but I'm led to believe that he left the rural fire-fighter as the incident controller because of his knowledge of the area and location of streets and that. But as for myself all my directions, I was going through [REDACTED]. The situation was that there was a family that required rescuing. There was the level one technician and [REDACTED] and us all decided basically that there would be two level ones go with that level one technician as the, we weren't at this stage aware that, how long the rest, the other level two technicians would be, and water was rising pretty quickly. For the first half an hour we were there, I'd say the water would have rose two feet, it was coming up that sort of quick. On two occasions during the night we had to remove the appliance back as the water was still rising, relocate the appliance. Those swift water guys, the two level ones and the level two technician, we inflated the work platform and they walked, the plan was to walk into Grantham and remove the family that required assistance. At the same time those crews, the swift water guy, they were going to check out other occupants of Grantham, see if they wanted to come out as well. From where we were the water was, was not fast flowing, it was just sort of, it was a floodway there but it wasn't the main stream. When the boys left, they had portable radios, not in cases, the issue was them getting those wet, so we wanted to try and keep communication somehow. That was one of our big issues as the crews were going to be out of line of sight, as they had to walk over, through a floodway, up over a hill, a small rise in the road, and then back down into flowing water</p> |

over in towards Grantham, and we'd lose sight of them. At this stage I, [REDACTED] asked me to take all radio communications and be the link for him to the crews in the water. So I position myself in 3-11 Yankee and I used those radios and I was in contact with the urban auxiliary appliance on the western side of what the situation with, they were doing over there. Relaying these messages to [REDACTED]. Pretty well, as it was a fair walk in for the boys they, they were up to breast height in some occasions with water depth. It got to, later on when they come back out I found out that the, the water was that hard they were struggling to walk with the flotation platform so they actually tied it off to a hundred K sign outside Grantham. By this time the SES boat was in the water and we directed the SES boat to go to those fire-fighters and grab them. They made their way into Grantham. Meanwhile back on, on the staging area where we were on the eastern side, we were trying to ascertain where everyone was and what roads was, and get maps and things like that so we could actually plot out where we were going. By this time the Mayor of, Mayor of Gatton area, I don't know what they call that Shire down there, I'll just call him as the Mayor of Gatton, he arrived. There was police, there were SES people and there were rural people all at that staging area. We couldn't communicate with SES boat, so I had to have one SES with their vehicle beside my vehicle and use their radio to communicate with the SES boat, so I was virtually jumping from one vehicle to the other sort of thing. Half way through the incident, it started raining so [REDACTED] was the other fire-fighter with me, he had a battle board up and running. It all started getting wet so we had to sort of try and climb into trucks and operate out of trucks. Whiteboard pens were rubbing off in the rain and that so it wasn't ideal. Basically to cut a long story short, this went on for several hours. The crews in the water was finding it very difficult to get to their location where this family wanted to be, well you could say rescued I suppose is probably the word. And by this time they were talking to a lot of other residents in Grantham and asking that do youse want to come out and they were saying no, no, it's not that bad and all that sort of stuff. Fire-fighter [REDACTED] radioed to me asking was it a forced evacuation situation. So I jumped out of the truck and went to [REDACTED], he was in a discussion with the Mayor of Lockyer Valley or Gatton whoever it is, there, by this time there was a police officer of a higher rank that had turned up, and they were in a

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>discussion, I don't know what they were talking about. I butted in and said [REDACTED] the swift water guys, [REDACTED] wants to know is this a forced evacuation situation. They all looked at me dumbfounded, they looked at each other, the head police officer that was there, said wait, wait a minute I'll make a phone call. He walked away, made a phone call, come back and said no this is not a forced evacuation, if they want to stay they're entitled to stay. So I went back to the truck and radioed this through to the swift water team, and they confirmed that okay. By this time we called the SES petrol boat back. It got stuck a couple of times, our swift water guys had to help them free it up. So we called it back to the staging area and the other level two technicians had arrived, so we needed to get them to that location where our, what you say team one of the swift water team one, to their location. So we used the SES boat. That was swift water technicians [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], were the three technicians that, level two technicians. They went in the SES boat to the location of swift water team one, was how I, we staged it. The first team went in was rescue team one and the three level two technicians were team two. By this time team one, they were getting pretty fatigued walking through fast flowing water and well they'd been in the water for quite a few hours. So the level, team two took over the attempted rescue of the residents in Grantham. I forget the name of the street, but I can get that later.</p> |
| 9. | HL | That's alright. |
| 10. | DW | <p>They made their way, basically they got to there, done the rescue. It was quicker for them to take those people out the western side to the urban pump are on the, which was Helidon pump, on the western side, so that's where they took them to. By this time the Mayor and all them were thinking about, okay we've got to start setting up evacuation areas from Gatton and all that sort of stuff so that's what the big discussion was apparently. On the, on the night I just found it, it was only because of our forward planning in previous shifts that we'd roll with 3-11 Alpha would support the level two technicians, 3-11 Kilo with that. I was just dumbfounded that they wanted just two level two technicians that night without anyone, no support. The big question I'd asked them and that night, the Sunday night was where was Gatton auxiliaries, even though they weren't level one technician trained, they should</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | have been responding to there and why wasn't Ipswich responded as well, technician, level two technicians from Ipswich. During the night I don't know the exact time, [REDACTED] and I were in 3-11 Yankee doing the battle board, make, talking to [REDACTED] and them, checking on their wellbeing, swift water team one. [REDACTED] received a phone call from whoever the AC or Inspector for that region was. They were having a very lengthy and heated phone call. I found out later on that night that he was, this Inspector was questioning [REDACTED] decisions from his house, he was at home, wanting to know what was taking us so long. [REDACTED] got very frustrated and actually threw the phone inside the appliance and said the words to me, if they want to question my decisions they can get out of frigging bed and come and do the job themselves. So there was no support, that was telling me there was no support from management, they're obviously thinking of the dollar value and what we were doing in our, in his region, that's probably the better way to say it. And I felt for [REDACTED]. I had to go to [REDACTED] ... |
| 11. | HL | Sorry [REDACTED] the Inspector was from which region sorry? |
| 12. | DW | I don't know who it was. |
| 13. | HL | Right but [REDACTED] is from South West. |
| 14. | DW | Yeah. We're all from [REDACTED], we're all from South West. |
| 15. | HL | Yeah. |
| 16. | DW | I don't know who it was that [REDACTED] was talking to. I felt sorry for [REDACTED] at the time so I grabbed him to his side, to the side by himself and said let's just worry about what we're doing now, we can deal with management after the incident. To try and just reassure [REDACTED] cause he, at that stage I think he felt that if they're questioning my decisions am I doing the right thing and as far as I could see and I've been involved in a number of swift water rescues as a level one, and we were doing everything we possibly could with what we had at the time. And that was, to cut a long story short, we completed the rescues. I think there was one more family decided to come out and the boys, they took them out the western side as well. And everyone else that was asked they all wanted to stay, they didn't want to evacuate at the time. So it was approximately four o'clock in the morning when we rapt up down in |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>Grantham and started making up the appliances and heading back to Toowoomba. At no stage did we get support from that region. Not one appliance come from Gatton. I thought, after [REDACTED] was talking to that Inspector or AC of that region, there would have been additional resources come to assist us, but there was no more resources came, not even from Gatton, not from Ipswich. It was only our own South West technicians that come down. I thought that night, I said to another technician that night, what happens if we've got a swift, swift job up Toowoomba, where are we going to get our swift water, cause once they went in this water like walked two kilometres in, it'd take them an hour to walk out before so, it was going to be a very delayed response. Okay. There was a couple of spare technicians that were still in Toowoomba apparently. So that was, a point to be brought up is we're depleting our own region supporting another region and we get no support from that region. It's a bit, the impression I get is that we're up the top of the range, you look after your patch, we'll look after our own patch. Bit of us and them sort of thing, instead of being a united service. That's how I felt at the night. You come down in here, you look after yourself sort of thing. Okay so we worked all night down at Grantham. We come back up then basically knocked off at seven o'clock in the morning. I just informed the other guys oncoming shift of what we'd been done and I virtually told the other fire-fighters be prepared to go to Grantham today for more rescues, as the creeks were pretty swollen down that way. And that was it, I went home at this stage.</p> |
| 17. | HL | Alright. Okay. |
| 18. | DW | <p>So the next one was I spent three days at the Oakey floods, that I want to talk about here ...[unintelligible – '(ui)'].... Yeah with the equipment, probably to summarise it, the equipment for down at Grantham, portable radios, two of those got wet and were non-functional. We had no protection for the, for us to control our battle boards, we were working out of trucks, in and out of trucks due to the rain conditions. At one stage there we had snakes coming out of the water and everyone heading for the hills cause snakes coming out of the water, obviously seeing the lights of all the trucks thought it was a good place to hide. So there was pieces of, I was in constant communications with the swift water guys as on numerous occasions we seen lengths of irrigation</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | pipes, tanks, things like that you know, thousand litre containers, you know chemical containers, chemical drums all floating down the river, not the river the floodway where we were, so obviously there was a lot of debris coming down and I kept radioing in be wary of things coming down. As I found out later they were getting hit by, you know talking after the incident on the way home, they were getting hit by pumpkins, sticks and branches and that, so it was very difficult for them. Yeah so equipment side is just the radio communications was poor. Yeah no, limited lighting, yeah, we didn't have a command pod or anything like that so we were working out in the rain. The guys that went in, one level one technician borrowed [REDACTED] booties as he was a swift water technician but he's qualifications lapsed so he handed his gear in but he kept the booties, he had them in the truck. And the other level one technician that went in, he just wore his turn out boots in, zip-up ankle boots in, so and life PFDs so. Yeah. |
| 19. | HL | What did he have turn out trousers on? |
| 20. | DW | No they all dressed down. |
| 21. | HL | Good. |
| 22. | DW | Yeah they all dressed down from turn out gear. That, actually fire-fighter [REDACTED] used one of my QFRS tee-shirts instead of his blue station wear shirt to make it a bit easier. I had one of them in a bag, got a spare bag that I carry. |
| 23. | HL | Okay. |
| 24. | DW | They'd got that. Yeah so that's pretty well it down there. Communication was a big issue between services down there, between the SES, the SES boat once basically we did have radio communications but if there phase radios, the third radio got wet, we would have no communications with those swift water team and if they got swept away we wouldn't even know that they were gone sort of thing. Two radios failed and one didn't, luckily we had good radio communication. |
| 25. | HL | Okay. |
| 26. | DW | They were out of line of sight. Yeah so that was that, that Grantham job on |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | the Sunday night yeah. |
| 27. | HL | Okay. So you want to talk about Oakey now? |
| 28. | DW | Yep. |
| 29. | HL | Okay. |
| 30. | DW | <p>I had, while the tapes going, I had very little to do with the Toowoomba flooding. I heard, the only reason I knew what was happening is the Oakey auxiliaries, I have two brothers out there, they rang me and said are you going into Toowoomba and I said no I worked last night. They, and I said what's going on. And he said it's flooding in there and they're just getting smashed. So I jumped in the car and drove down to the fire station, Oakey fire station, auxiliary station and I was listening to the radios. I was going to self respond in there and I thought no they'll be calling people in, they'll need a nightshift tonight so because I worked all the night previous night, I thought I'd stay out of it and then I'd be available for that night, trying to manage me own fatigue. I did suggest to the Oakey Captain, [REDACTED] to jump in his truck, well first ring Toowoomba and ask the ROCC or Firecom did they want their assistance in there. We decided not to ring Firecom because they were just getting smashed with radio calls. Tried to get hold of the ROCC and as far as I know he could not get hold of anyone at the ROCC. So I just said to that Captain, I said why don't you jump in the truck and go for a drive to Kingsthorpe as all the Toowoomba water comes out Oakey's way, it doesn't go through the Oakey township it goes to the southern side of Oakey and that meant that Oakey would be cut off from Toowoomba. So we may, there's several bridge crossings there, once that water got out to Oakey there could be swift water rescues in our, Oakey area. So he went for a drive to Kingsthorpe on the back road checking the water levels and it was luckily enough they did because they got a report of a swift water rescue in Kingsthorpe and Oakey were already there. So they went and investigated. Without entering the water they noticed it was not a car in the water, it was only a poly tank that smashed up against the tree. So that, that had freed up those swift water technicians in Toowoomba to keep going with their job. I was listening at the station still in Oakey, just listening to all the radio calls. Toowoomba were getting smashed big time. There was at one stage there in</p> |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | the height of it all there was Firecom asked for any available units to attend a structure fire, reported a structure fire on the western side of Toowoomba out Wilsonton area. They were all tied up and most of the officers said I can't get there we're cut off, we're cut off. So I rang [REDACTED] on the Oakey appliance and said can you get across Gary Creek Bridge and he said yeah I think I can. I said well get on the radio and ask Firecom do they want us to go to that structure fire. But just couldn't get there, couldn't get the radio communications. |
| 31. | HL | Okay. |
| 32. | DW | Yeah. So I then went back home and a bit concerned I rang around, a couple of other fires were making their way in, self responding because they heard the same thing, that the boys were getting smashed, they needed a hand. At no stage was there permanent crews called back during that day of Toowoomba's floods. The only ones that got called back were the level two technicians. All other off duty fire-fighters were not contacted so it left the, I felt it left the fire service vulnerable to additional incidents, the day-to-day incidents, we had no coverage. And no doubt by the sounds of the radio messages on that day, the on shift crew would have been fatigued immensely by that afternoon with the amount of water they were going into. There was none of that thought of, and obviously there was no management to make those decisions. There was minimal management in the management roles to make those decisions and consequently fire-fighters were doing, making those decisions on the ground sort of thing as they were running. Yeah so, very poor in management's behalf I thought on the day. So that was about it for the day. I went back home, tried to get a couple of hours sleep in that afternoon. Late that afternoon me brother rang me again and I said what's going on. He said oh the creek's coming up here out at Warrego Highway, which is all the Toowoomba water was starting to come through by this time. |
| 33. | HL | About what time was this? |
| 34. | DW | Oh that would have been 3:30, four o'clock I suppose. |
| 35. | HL | This is on the Monday? |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 36. | DW | On the Monday afternoon, yeah. |
| 37. | HL | So it's been through Toowoomba. |
| 38. | DW | Yeah it's gone through Toowoomba yeah. |
| 39. | HL | Flattened Toowoomba. |
| 40. | DW | Flattened Toowoomba and now it's all heading ... |
| 41. | HL | On its way to Oakey. |
| 42. | DW | ... on its way to Oakey. And I thought it was, I said what crews you got out here and he said no nothing we're on our own. It's about to cut the Warrego Highway and I said we should get some, some of those technicians out of here cause if it cuts the highway you're on your own, you're not going to have any technicians that'll be able to get through. And that didn't happen. I actually grabbed my kids, jumped in the car and went for a drive out to the Warrego Highway, the Oakey Biddeston Road where all that water goes. We took photos, showed the kids the flood water and everything and it's the highest I've ever seen it you know and I've lived in Oakey for 42 years. Yeah. So I made me way back to the station, just had a yarn to the Oakey boys and that, just talked so nothing more was sort of said. I listened to the radio and it was all quieting down in Toowoomba a bit. And I went home. The next day, this would be the Oakey floods, the day of the Oakey floods which would be the ... |
| 43. | HL | Tuesday the 12 th . |
| 44. | DW | ... the 11 th , 11 th . |
| 45. | HL | Oh yes the 11 th , yeah. |
| 46. | DW | Eleventh, cause the reason why it was the 11 th , cause it was the 11/1/2011 Oakey flooded. |
| 47. | HL | Right. |
| 48. | DW | Me brother rang me at approximately 7:30 and he said grab the kids, take them down to the Oakey Creek, the main car bridge through Oakey is just about to go underwater. I thought oh that's pretty high cause in my 42 years |

of the floods I've only seen it go around the end of the bridges, you know about six inches over the end of the low parts of the road leading onto the bridges. I've only seen that happen twice in my years. And I thought this will be, probably a good opportunity for my kids to see it, so I took them down there, took a heap of photos. We went for a drive around Oakey taking photos and then I called into, called into the station, past the station, the Oakey boys were there. And I noticed a swift water team of two swift water guys were sitting in the station as well. They were two Brisbane swift water guys cause I know the local swift water guys cause I work with them so I thought I'd make myself, introduce myself, so I went into the station, introduced myself to these two Brisbane swift water guys. And I said how long have you been out here and he said we were rang at 5:30 in the morning, they were, they come up the day before from Brisbane, they were asleep in the motel and got a phone call at 5:30 in the morning to come to Oakey straight away. I thought that was strange how they've sent two swift water level two technicians to Oakey without you know level one support. And I thought something must be happening because they've put swift water technicians out here, out in Oakey. So I informed those swift water guys that none of the Oakey auxiliaries has got level one trained, that you're on your own and I just told them would you like, asked them, would probably be a better way, would you like to see if, if I can stand up and crew the appliance with you as a level one. And they said that'd be a good idea. So I turned to the Oakey Captain at the time, [REDACTED], I said you try and get onto Firecom or the ROCC and tell them, or ask them is it okay for me to do that. [REDACTED] couldn't get onto the ROCC, no answer to the ROCC or the senior on call at the time, couldn't get any, no response from both of those locations. So I said I'll ring station 11 and get onto a station officer, Kitchener Street station. And I was talking to Station Officer [REDACTED], he was the on, the officer on that morning. I told him of the situation out in Oakey and what do you think, should I stand up with the level two technicians. He said yeah I would be. He had no idea there was two level two technicians out at Oakey so there was a breakdown in communications there. He said he'd try and get onto the ROCC or the senior on call, call to confirm that it was okay. And I said righto well I'll go home now, take me family home and I'll get some gear and come back to the station in 15 minutes time and we'll see where we go

from there, and I'd ring him back and find out what's going on. So I did that. I thought to myself I need PFDs, if I'm going to be within three metres of the water I'll have to have a PFD, so I grabbed my own personal PFDs off my fishing boat, grabbed two of them and some wet weather gear, raincoat and that and went down to the Oakey, back to the Oakey fire station. I then rang [REDACTED] back, I asked Captain [REDACTED] had he got onto anyone, he said no. I rang [REDACTED] and he said he couldn't get onto anyone. So we made the decision that I'd stand up with the level two technicians out at Oakey. Okay. So trying to be a bit proactive, I notified Firecom by radio that I am now on Whisky India One was the call sign with the two level two technicians. And I thought to myself by doing it through the radio if the ROCC was up and running or the ICC was up and running someone would be monitoring the radios that they'd hear what's going on. They might have been too busy to answer phones, give them the benefit of the doubt that way so I'd thought that'd be a good way of doing it. Okay so that was all good. We didn't know what the situation was in Toowoomba. I said to the Oakey Captain let's be a bit proactive here, obviously something's happening and no one's letting us know, if, for them to send two swift water guys out here. So we need to show these swift water guys the layout of the town, the layout of the creeks around the area. So we started, we actually went into the computer at Oakey station and Google mapped Oakey and talked the swift water technicians through where there could be catchment points, where there might possibly have to be rescues, where roads cross, showed them the layout of the creek, where it bends, so if they did have to do a swift water rescue and they did get washed away they knew the bends in the creek and where we could put trucks for catches sort of thing. I got onto the Council, at this stage I rang the local council as my future brother-in-law works for the Council in, as the caretaker of the community centre, and I rang him and I said we'll be coming down shortly get some maps printed of the location, cause it looks like this is going to turn pear shaped out here. The reason was that because there was water flowing over Cooby Dam. All the water that goes through Oakey comes from the Cooby Dam and the Cooby Dam catchment area. It doesn't come from Toowoomba. The Toowoomba goes around the southern side of Oakey. Okay. So I then said, suggested to [REDACTED] and the two level two technicians to jump in their truck and

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | <p>██████ and the crew from the Oakey auxiliaries were to take the swift water guys around and show them the layout of the creek and all that. So they, while they went off and done that I went to, me brother and I went to the Council Chambers and were talking, the only people at the Council Chambers was the caretaker bloke of the community centre, one admin girl and another gentleman that luckily knew how to use the mapping machine to print off maps. So we got ...</p> |
| 49. | HL | <p>So everybody in town had stayed home for the day?</p> |
| 50. | DW | <p>Must have yeah I don't know what was going on. And so basically we got maps of all the area maps sort of thing of the Oakey area. I got them in A3 size and then we got some in poster size, wall size, I don't know, pretty big ones for the station. So we sort of started up a mini-ICC I suppose or a forward control at Oakey station, cause I thought to myself if this goes pear shaped we're going to have a lot of appliances out here, we'll need maps for those trucks and those crews that come out. We got them. We got the little A3 maps pretty well straight away. But they said the bigger ones would have to come off the plotting machine, and once they're done they'll bring them down to the station to us. At this time we went back to the station, me brother and I and there was another auxiliary at the station waiting and they left him at the station to look after the station in case someone called in. And I got a phone call from the Oakey boys on the appliance saying it's, it's nearly over the bridge at Oak-, down at the car bridge is the indicator. And so we jumped in the car and went down there for a look to see how bad it was. At this stage there was probably, it was probably six inches of water coming around each end of the bridge. There were people standing on the bridge taking photos and to give you an idea of the depth of the water there, it'd be six metres deep from the creek bed to the car bridge, that's how sort of deep the creek is there. I then, the local copper was there, I don't know his name he's only a new fellow to Oakey. He was standing there and I said to him do you think we should shut this bridge off. He said, he looked at me dumbfounded and said do we have to? And I said well we don't know what's hit the base of this bridge, it was really fast flowing and then you've got people standing on there taking photos. I said all it takes is a tank or something to come down the creek, hit the handrails, jump over the handrails</p> |

and you've got all these people washed away. And he looked at me again oh, oh, really dumbfounded, didn't, he could tell he was only a new police officer and, and I said to him okay I'll put it this way, I'll take full responsibility of you closing this bridge off, I'm now ordering you as the highest ranking fire officer here to close the bridge off due to the safety of the public. I said we'll close the traffic off so the traffic doesn't go over it, we'll only leave it open for emergency services only. And he said oh will you do that? And I said yes, and he said righto we'll close it off. So that was the point where we closed the bridge off. That was, that was probably 9:30 or quarter ten approximately you know. We did that and then we, I was talking to Captain [REDACTED], he was there. I said well, we took a heap of photos as usual, I said well there's no sense, no sense in us hanging around here, let's get back to the station and get hydrated, get ready, cause this is still coming up. Within that 20 minutes or so we were at the car bridge it had risen six, what was it six inches yeah, about 150mls on the depth gauge on, at the bridge okay and that was about, it was at, it was at 7.1 when we left I think by that gauge on the bridge. And we went back to the station, we had a drink, got some food into us, yeah and drink and that and at, we were sitting around and we were talking about maps, showing them, I showed them all these other maps, we put them up on the wall, showed the swift, swift guys from Brisbane where everything was. Showed them the way back to Toowoomba if, if were cut off, they could get back through Kingsthorpe, that way. And we're sitting there and then it come over the radio, station 14 and then [REDACTED] the Captain got on it. They, Firecom said can you get to 3 Tyrrel Street and he said no the Oakey car bridge is cut off, we'd have to go out around the bypass around the long way around. What have you got? They said we've got a swift water rescue at 3 Tyrrel Street. At that point everyone in the station said shit, if we've got water there, we've got half of Oakey flooded. Okay cause the, that's on the western side of the creek. We bolted around, around the highway, we had to go through the main street near the pool there. There was a gully that runs into the creek, it had cut the main street, we could just get the appliances through. So we got through there and went around to the western side. On the way around the western side fire-fighters were ringing, sorry earlier in the morning someone from HR had rung and said that if any of your fire-fighters are in a flood prone area or look threatened, he's to be released from the

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | station now and to go home and remove their families and that to a safer area. Two of those fire-fighters were in that, those flood prone areas so they left, so that virtually took the manning down to seven fire-fighters, plus the three of us from Toowoomba so ten fire-fighters. At that stage when we got that phone call, and, and I don't know who made the phone call that rang us, I thought something's happening here and they're not letting us know. And that's when we sort of ramped it up a bit, you know if we're getting phone calls like that from ... |
| 51. | HL | So when you say ramped it up, how do you mean ramped it up? |
| 52. | DW | You know get prepared for it sort of thing. |
| 53. | HL | Okay. |
| 54. | DW | And that's when we started doing all the maps and all that sort of stuff. Yeah. See the prediction was that all this water from Cooby Dam was coming down, was going to be there ten o'clock that night, but as it turned out, it turned out to be ten o'clock the next morning. Twenty past ten. That 3 Tyrrel job we got at twenty past ten, so that's when it burst its banks and flooded. On the way around there, [REDACTED] got the phone calls from these two auxiliary fire-fighters that they were both on the rooves on their houses with their family and, and that, and they were flooded in you know pretty deep water. So I, so I was talking to [REDACTED] on the phone from truck to truck, appliance to appliance. I said you take Beale Street, that's right Firecom radioed in that they were getting multiple calls of assistance for Beale Street. I told [REDACTED] you take Beale Street, I'll take the swift water guys and go to Tyrrel Street and have a look over that way, as that was our first job. So that's when we split up and went either way. Listened to [REDACTED] on the radio who was receiving multiple calls of assistance from Firecom were receiving multiple calls. I only got as far as Cunliffe Street down Cory Street, that'd be approximately 500 metres from our 3 Tyrrel Street where we were trying to get to. I said to the swift water guys you're on your own free here. So they got dressed and started heading into Tyrrel Street. I give them a basic rundown. There was fast flowing water coming along Tyrrel Street, across Cory Street and into houses and the blocks over that way. At this stage and I radioed to [REDACTED]. I said how's your, how are you going |

over there. We were using VHF-69 so we didn't tie up the Firecom channel. He said yeah I've got every house flooded over here, over this side. So I said to [REDACTED] will have to start sectorising this. [REDACTED] was calling for air support to get people off roofs. They couldn't give us an answer for air support until later on. I requested at least another three urban appliances and three more swift water teams. The first urban appliance to come to me, my location. And the first swift team responding to go to [REDACTED] location. That would give us one urban pump and swift water team at each, each location. Then I said to [REDACTED], we're going to sectorise this. We'll use the creek to sectorise the town east and west, cause the creek runs through the town. All the flooding or 90% of the flooding was on the western side. And then I said let's use the railway line that runs through town to split it north south. So we virtually divided the town into four sections. [REDACTED] was in the north-west sector, in charge of that as the sector commander. And I was the south-west sector commander. By this time there was pretty heavy radio traffic over Firecom. 3-17 Alpha was on its way out. I knew that was [REDACTED]. I informed Firecom to, all responding appliances to stage at the Oakey fire station. I had two, no three Oakey auxiliaries stayed back at the station when we got the initial call. And I asked them to, one of them to go to the Oakey CWA as where I was I could see that there looked like a metre of water had gone through the CWA home, to check that that area there, if there was any assistance required there. Well they did that in their private vehicles. They reported back to me. He had a fire ground channel one, he was talking to [REDACTED] because I didn't have any portable radios on my appliance and by that time he reported that everyone was okay, they were all just standing watching sort of thing, they had evacuated the CWA earlier. At that point there I heard [REDACTED] on the radio responding that they could make it through for Oakey-Kingsthorpe way. I asked him to go to straight to the Oakey station and start setting up a, a ICC at Oakey station and he'd be the incident controller and would be the sector things. So basically we started setting up our own ICC as we were not aware that the area one ICC was not set up. And [REDACTED] confirmed that to me by phone later that day because he's the Captain of station 17, he was at station, he was told to go to station and get it set up, they only set it up it wasn't to be manned by station 17, they just get the gear out of the

cupboards and set up projectors and all that. And they heard the drama happening at Oakey so they tried to make their way to us, with confirmed it with Toowoomba. And luckily it did because we had a number of appliance come out that day. Yeah so we had multiple rescues. In my location there we probably rescued 20 or 30 people in the south west sector. The swift guys were walking them out, the elderly out and the younger ones that could walk by themselves walked out with them to my location. At this stage, I was getting quite a few bystanders and people that were evacuated from their homes. So I got onto the Oakey station to arrange for buses to come and pick everyone up and get them around to the community centre, cause when I was around at getting maps I said to the gentleman there if this turns pear shape we'll send them all to the community centre, so he was preparing the caretaker to open up that and get chairs out and tables and things like that ready. By this time, [REDACTED] is there and set up a forward control I suppose you could say, mini-ICC and a number of appliances from Toowoomba were coming. And it just flowed on from there. Basically to sum it all, summarise it all, there was no preparation before this incident from management. I find it very difficult that the management didn't know this was coming as the day before Oakey Army Base was evacuated at about nine o'clock on the Monday, and I thought that was very strange that the army base evacuated and nothing, something must have been happening, they knew something. Also on the morning of the, what is that, the 11th, when the Oakey boys were showing the swift water guys around, they run into the [REDACTED], he was out near the CWA and he was talking to the [REDACTED] and said to [REDACTED] what would happen if this rose another metre. And [REDACTED] said well we're going to lose half the town. At that point he got in his car and drove off. So that makes me suspicious that he knew the water was coming but no one, at no stage informed us on the ground that, what the situation was. The other thing I'd like to point out is Captain, the only way we knew the situation, how much, cause we were getting a number of people asking, how high is it going to rise, how much more water is coming, we had no idea. Captain [REDACTED] was talking to his cousin that lived about 10kms upstream on a property and we were talking to him saying what's the situation and he said no it's still coming up here. So we knew the water was still rising. It wasn't until approximately one o'clock

that his cousin rang [REDACTED] and said it's starting to go down here now. So then we, why we were getting that information we were forward planning, okay this is still rising, these houses are going to start going under, we need to start evacuating these ones. And we kept sort of forward stepping that way until we got information that it stopped rising, so we were looking at probably another two hours of water rising and then we were sort of in the safety zone I suppose you could say. We were very short staffed. I know talking to the Oakey boys later on afterwards, they were in water conducting rescues up over to their armpits. At one stage there the Oakey truck was over its wheels in water, so they had to back out. Multiple children were evacuated from their location. They commandeered a little blow up raft, put the children in that. The parents walked along beside it and the Oakey boys walked them out. And I reckon all up oh there would have been 60, 70 rescues done over that side of the north west sector. By this time you know everyone started coming, all the trucks started coming. During this, all this we had two alarms to Oakey Abattoirs that early in the morning. The Oakey boys had been up since four o'clock that morning, they'd had rescue, not rescues, powerlines down and they had a house flooding in York Street that they had to pump out underneath the house, so fatigue management was going to be an issue. Yeah. But there was no communications with management and what they were doing, what was happening sort of thing, which was very, I felt very disappointed in because I was a permanent fire-fighter out there talking to auxiliary fire-fighters and tried to show some leadership with those auxiliaries but we were getting no feedback from management, sort of the ROCC or anything. Yeah. So basically the water height, there was a metre and a half coming over the spillway at Cooby Dam and that, all that sort of water hit Oakey. The, we'll pause it there.

On the 12th, I was around helping a mate clean out his shed and they rang me at eleven o'clock and said are you available to go to Oakey as a standby crew cause we've got to relieve Oakey from fatigue. I said yeah, no dramas. I said you grab all me gear when the boys come out in the truck and I'll meet them at the station so I[END OF RECORDING]

WILSON PROJECTS PTY LTD TRADING AS



ACN 086 377 040

ABN 86361375884

Ph. 07 3376 3557 Fax 07 3376 6046

Mob. 0416 285707

Email: btstranscription@bigpond.com

Web: www.btstranscriptionservices.com.au

IN CONFIDENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| FILE NUMBER: | |
| Interviewee: | Communications Officer |
| Interviewer: | Henry Lawrence (HL) |

Interview conducted on _____ 2011.

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 1. | HL | So this is Henry Lawrence with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] you're a Communications Officer from the South West Region Communications Centre commenting in regard to the events in Toowoomba on the 10 th of January 2011. |
| 2. | GT | Yeah my name's [REDACTED], Fire Communications Officer, South West Region, Toowoomba. Yep. |
| 3. | HL | [REDACTED] do you have any specific comments in regard to point A in the terms of reference, preparation and planning by emergency service agency, being the QFRS? |
| 4. | GT | Yeah look in regards to the preparation and planning by QFRS for the events in question, I don't believe we have a specific plan or any actual preparations for the flooding events. It was quite a, a reasonably immediate emergency that sort of come up on top of us, the, I think it was more an overwhelming incident numbers to the actual Firecom centre but effectively the Firecom centre really wasn't coping with the volume of calls that were coming through and also the movements of the appliances and the dispatching of appropriate resources to the area. I don't know of any specific plans that are in place to deal with floods of that magnitude in QFRS or our Firecom centre. |
| 5. | HL | But there are procedures or plans in place for swift water, flood water rescue generally? |
| 6. | GT | That is correct yes, yes we do have our local and state procedures to follow in regards to the call taking processes and the minimum dispatch of appliances and types of rescue vehicles to that type of incident. |
| 7. | HL | So the minimum dispatch in a fire communications directive 3.13 says an initial assignment of one pumper on turn out with one special rescue appliance and turn out. |
| 8. | GT | Yep. |
| 9. | HL | What's your comment in regard to that? |
| 10. | GT | Yeah look that's, I concur with that, I believe the south west region doesn't have anything different to that in terms of its initial assignments. On my arrival at the Firecom centre, I was actually due for the nightshift at 1700 hours start that evening, but I received a call at about 14, or 1430 hours from a colleague not in Toowoomba advising that there was heaps of rescues going on in the Toowoomba area. As I'd just woken up from my sleep for the nightshift I actually got my gear together and started heading off to work early |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | cause I could see straight away that yeah the creeks were well and truly up and if things were going sideways well then I'd go and help as best I could. As I got into Firecom it was a little bit of bedlam and chaos, there was plenty of resources out but certainly there were crews calling on the radio heavily for additional equipment, manpower, even additional yeah resources that we just couldn't supply. We only have one specialty rescue in the Toowoomba region and it was engaged on its own so basically it was almost crews to themselves pump or rescue crews. I know there were outlying crews had come in, we had Pittsworth, I think even Oakey and Highfields working in the town as well. |
| 11. | HL | So they were an auxiliary brigade. |
| 12. | GT | That's correct yeah. |
| 13. | HL | And the auxiliary brigades, to your knowledge are they trained or equipped to deal with swift water rescues? |
| 14. | GT | No, no well to my knowledge they aren't specifically trained in any way to deal with it, they don't even typically have the basic level one swift water rescue which means they won't even have float ropes or life jackets in the coach of equipment on their appliances. I know we do have one crew in the south west region, it's an auxiliary crew that has some personnel trained but they're at Warwick, whereas the Toowoomba area is not, as far as I'm aware. |
| 15. | HL | So the one crew, excuse me, in Warwick are trained to level one. |
| 16. | GT | Yes. |
| 17. | HL | Do you know if they have equipment on their truck? |
| 18. | GT | They do yes. |
| 19. | HL | Right okay. |
| 20. | GT | Yeah they do have, cause we have a, cause there's a duty crew permanent shift there as well, they are fully level one trained, they do have the gear. |
| 21. | HL | But only one crew in the south west region, auxiliary crew... |
| 22. | GT | Yes. |
| 23. | HL | ...which would incorporate Grantham or is Grantham in south east region? |
| 24. | GT | No that's south east region yeah. |
| 25. | HL | South east region. |
| 26. | GT | Yeah. |
| 27. | HL | Were any of the other areas close to Toowoomba that were involved in south west region on the day or the days of the big flood event? |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 28. | GT | No not to my knowledge. |
| 29. | HL | Okay. |
| 30. | GT | I, certainly from south west perspective we had no south east crews working in our, in our region or our part of, our geographic area. |
| 31. | HL | So as far as the south west region is concerned where would crews have been responded that fall within the south west region? Toowoomba city? |
| 32. | GT | It was Toowoomba city. |
| 33. | HL | Just Toowoomba city? |
| 34. | GT | Just Toowoomba city. |
| 35. | HL | Okay so Postman's Ridge, Murphy's Creek... |
| 36. | GT | No they were, I do understand that south east crews were trying to respond into that area. |
| 37. | HL | Okay. |
| 38. | GT | But I know one of my close colleagues lives at and works out of Rosewood and I remember him telling me that his pager said head for Withcott, it just had no specific address it was just respond to the Withcott area. |
| 39. | HL | Okay. |
| 40. | GT | (Unintelligible – "(ui)") many rescues but that was all they got. They couldn't actually get through because of the road cuts. |
| 41. | HL | Is Withcott in south west region? |
| 42. | GT | No, no it's outside. |
| 43. | HL | Postman's Ridge? |
| 44. | GT | South east region. |
| 45. | HL | Okay so anything from the bottom of the range in is south east region. |
| 46. | GT | Correct. Yeah that's right, generally east to the bottom of the range, yeah that's not to say that south west won't respond into that area... |
| 47. | HL | No. |
| 48. | GT | ...you know we are often the quickest and the closest crews physically, oh well by distance, but on this particular event on the Monday the 10 th , it was all concentrated in Toowoomba city. Specially, specifically around the Grand Central area, Dent Street and the Chalk Drive area, they were dealing with those rescues. |
| 49. | HL | So had a lot of off duty officers been recalled to duty? |
| 50. | GT | Yeah my understanding was that the tech rescue crews were paged in, typically the off duty personnel. But in talking to some of those individuals on |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | occasion since I've found out that quite a few of them actually couldn't make it to the station to their meeting point to gain their gear or to meet up with their other members of their crews. And a lot of them, I actually heard one story where one fellow, one who was actually running down the side of the highway because of the road blockages and ended up hitching a lift with a policeman into the city to try and help out. Another two fires couldn't make it to the station and ended up just going to work at a flooded crossing and rescuing at least ten people, that pair together. |
| 51. | HL | So [REDACTED] we're talking about aspects of response to the flood events, particularly measures taken to protect life and private property and I think what we're talking about here is immediate management response and recovery, and resourcing and overall co-ordination and the adequacy of equipment and communication systems. So if you'd like to address those points. |
| 52. | GT | Okay and in relation to point C, as I said before I did arrive some time through the initial or after the initial flood event had commenced and obviously the recovery operations or the response operations had already commenced for there. On the immediate management, response and recovery, it was more to do with pretty well so you just co-ordination from the Firecom perspective. We did have senior officers that had come up to Firecom, it was I believe two inspectors and a chief superintendent were on the scene with Firecom and were providing some limited or some assistance in regards to a decision that they'd be making from a Firecom perspective. |
| 53. | HL | Yep keep going sorry [REDACTED]. |
| 54. | GT | You're right. Yeah so they were at Firecom and they were to provide direction if we required it. There was some noise factor with relation to their, to their mobile phone activity which was making it a little bit difficult to actually work within the Firecom centre at that time, just due to the volume of workload that was coming through. In terms of incident or immediate management and response, you know the resources were very stretched and there was certainly a time when at one point most of the crews actually had completed the, the major priority responses and at one point they were actioned to unfortunately body recovery which was taking some considerable time just due to the, obviously the police, I think it was to do with the police investigation side of it. But the crews, my understanding is that the crews |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | were then directed back to the Anzac Avenue fire station for a somewhat of a debrief and a diffuse given they'd been working for a number of hours under stressful situations. From a Firecom perspective, myself and my shift partner, we were actually trying to go through the jobs and figure out what still needed to be attended to on a priority basis and what jobs were effectively pending and what could be delayed as resources were available. Unfortunately in an issue with communication we actually weren't advised that the crews were returning to station for a diffuse or a debrief and we were trying to turn them out to these additional jobs and weren't getting any reply until we later found out that, a short time later that they were actually not actually at the station they were down the back of the co-ordination centre. |
| 55. | HL | So what was the breakdown in communication then do you think? |
| 56. | GT | I believe a senior officer made a decision to pull the crews back for the diffuse but my understanding is that was never communicated to Firecom, to advise us of that so that we could book some crews off and continue others working, from my understanding is that most of them went back to the station and yeah just Firecom never got told. |
| 57. | HL | Was that quickly overcome? |
| 58. | GT | It took us about 20 minutes to work out what had actually happened so there was a duration of time where actually no work was really undertaken whilst that occurred. But once that was sorted out and figured out and a few choice words were used we were able to then start redeploying our operational crews, whatever we had left, what was available, and started moving them back through the city to tidy up or at least attend each of the jobs. Like my goal out of Firecom was to at least go to every job, irrespective of whether it was half an hour after the initially call or even four hours after the call was at least to attend and see what the crew could offer in any way of assistance on a priority basis. |
| 59. | HL | So these would have been rescues? |
| 60. | GT | Yeah or effective rescues. |
| 61. | HL | Yeah. |
| 62. | GT | Or at least you know issues that people had called through on triple-0, it could have even be a you know water inundation or you know just concerns they had with water coming into their properties. The one that comes straight to mind was, it was one job that we actually found that had ten people |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | <p>reported in a building and we only discovered this sometime into the evening, it was, it had been given a <i>priority four status</i> which is a low rate incident and unfortunately because of that it was not found until a later time, it wasn't given the highest priority and our fingers were crossed when we found the job that the crew did get onsite and actually confirm that people actually got away okay and were out of the building. But on this particular one it was some hours later and the best the crew could do was call out, shine torches through the building and hope that if anyone was hurt or injured that they would call out. The SO rang me and said we haven't had any response, they treated it then as a cleared building that everyone must have made their way hopefully and didn't get swept away. The police were ringing us to try and ascertain whether each call that they had given us, we had actually attended to. And they were also trying to go back through their logs in co-ordination with us to see if there were any jobs that had been missed. They also requested fire personnel or fire crews to go and clear each vehicle that had been through the flood waters, particularly in the Dent Street and Victoria Streets area which were right in front of Grand Central or that area. They had numerous vehicles that had been swept away and they wanted fire crews to go and clear each one of those cars which again was a use of resources but we were able to manage that just by I think it was a couple of crews just went out in fire service utes and were able to deal with that which was, which sort of saved the, the big red trucks for other duties that were needed. So look in terms of overall resourcing it was very much all hands on deck, from a Firecom perspective we had, we're only equipped effectively for two officers on duty at any one time, we have a half console, I call it a half console at the back of the main two consoles, that computer only is a, is a CAD system, it has a phone system attached to it but there's no voice logger, no radio and only some of the computer applications work on it. You can't turn out of fire station on it and you can't page anyone on that console. Which is a known limitation of that console and it's something that at this point the CAD administrators have not been able to resolve. When I come into work a third operator was there trying to use that console.</p> |
| 63. | HL | So that third console is meant to be a fully operational console? |
| 64. | GT | The original design of it was to, what they actually wanted to do was they spent some money a couple of years ago to give us two additional consoles |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | downstairs in what they call they the overflow room. And it was two training consoles that could actually be reconfigured to operational production consoles. Our phones were connected to each of those, again no loggers and only some of the applications work, not, they're not full sweep consoles. But from a, there was an opportunity back in 2009, 2010 season during grass fires to actually have one of those consoles moved upstairs as a more manageable process to basically we start with additional person upstairs and then as it starts to really grow and ramp up even further, then we move downstairs rather than just having one person working on their own downstairs which is really a security issue and if something happens to them you may not know about it, should they fall ill. The idea was to start upstairs with the third and if we grow to a fourth person required well then the third console gets moved downstairs. And there was even a possibility of actually moving to a fifth console should we need and the OC actually agreed to that and, but money was made available to be able to provide that third console upstairs in its limited format, a replication and basically what was downstairs. |
| 65. | HL | So the third, fourth and fifth are they all not operation, fully operational or is it only the third? |
| 66. | GT | That's correct, it's the third, fourth and fifth are not effectively fully operational but in looking back some time last year, late last year the two consoles that are downstairs were sent back to Brisbane, they were training consoles I understand that they were shipped back, which effectively meant that downstairs there's nothing but two desks and two chairs. |
| 67. | HL | Okay. |
| 68. | GT | Really, so therefore our ability to ramp up even on an immediate basis really doesn't exist. We have another CAD system which has phones attached to it at our redundancy centre which is the regional operations centre at the back of Anzac Avenue fire station. However it's really only set up for one at this stage. I believe they are trying to get a second console in there but at this stage I still believe it's only set for one and effectively given the flood situation in Toowoomba, there's no way we would have got there because the creek is 500 metres to the west of Firecom and that was fully over every bridge and known roadway. The crews were even having trouble trying to get to some of the jobs because of the access around, so I don't believe we would have even got to the redundant centre had we needed to move to that site or put |

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| | | an extra person in. So look in terms of resourcing it would have been an idea maybe to have additional personnel and I would have liked to have seen additional personnel. Unfortunately though our centre is not physically big enough to cater for it. |
| 69. | HL | And it would have been useful if the consoles at Anzac Avenue were functional? |
| 70. | GT | Yeah correct yes, yeah. |
| 71. | HL | And the redundancy consoles... |
| 72. | GT | Yes consoles worked. |
| 73. | HL | ...at the com centre. |
| 74. | GT | At the com centre had... |
| 75. | HL | Functional. |
| 76. | GT | ...had actually been functioning or even physically there. I mean there was certainly a need to replace the on shift crew and give them a break, they'd been going at it for quite a few hours and they were obviously, and there were different signs of distress to some degree, it's not very often that we take emergency calls and can't actually send anyone. And that was really the case of what we were dealing with. The radio traffic was heavy given that most of this happened in Toowoomba. We have two repeaters in Toowoomba and it was fairly constant radio transmissions. Now we have splitting of channels which is able to, you know you can isolate a particular radio or a number of radio channels to a console, but given that this was all in Toowoomba, it was very diff-, it's, that's just not really possible to do, and given that we had two consoles going flat out. I know we lost calls to Brisbane, and I say lost calls that they overflowed to Brisbane which is exactly how it's supposed to work. But I, just looking at some of the jobs there, on some of them seemed to have a reasonable lack of information on the job and I'm in two minds as to why that may have occurred. Yeah on this particular day in question a feature of the system that caused a concern within S-CAD is what they call the duplicate call warning which works when there is more than one incident created for an address within a 200 metres of the original address and the system identifies these additional calls as a possible duplicate call and gives the operator a choice of closing the additional jobs effectively writing them off or creating a new one for that same address or a near address within the 200 metres of the first address. A |

concern that I have with the, with this is the possible missed rescues and then the nagging doubt as to whether this feature may have impacted on a loss of life. In my view each call should be treated as a separate or a new incident until proven otherwise. Yeah an additional thought just in relation to deployment of personnel and equipment is just the issue that oncoming shifts actually had getting to work, in particular myself, just trying to get to Firecom event though I went in earlier the amount of road closures and other issues and the intersections that were under police control, it took considerable time to get to work. If we had had the additional consoles up and running even at the redundancy centre, and with some co-ordination, even movement with QFRS lights and siren vehicles may have made it easier for personnel to be able to continue and conduct operations even from redundancy sites. In terms of adequacy of equipment and communication systems, look the radio traffic was heavy. There's no, no two ways to put that. Most of this was occurring in Toowoomba and there's no ability to split channels because of the volume of workload that was coming through. From an equipment point of view we are using only really two consoles and a bit of a console. The, we were basically at a reasonable overwhelmed situation in terms of what we were able to do and how we were able to function. The volume of telephone calls that were coming through and also the lost calls to other Firecom centres certainly attributed to the stress on the day and into the evening. And of course the amount of people that were ringing in wanting to know information was really clogging up the system as well. There was certainly general business calls and also just movement of fire crews around and we were trying to track them as well, crews that were booking on and off and where they were going and what jobs they were doing, it was certainly adding to the, to the volume of workload. These issues really highlight the need for Toowoomba Firecom to have additional capacity, the ability to ramp up. We've seen a major natural disaster event, the precedent's set, we can see more of this and even other types of incidents in the same magnitude. And if we had that additional capacity of equipment consoles, radio systems and CAD programs we will have a capacity to ramp up within a very short space of time and meet the expectations of the community in providing fire and rescue services.