

HELICOPTER SERVICES POLICY

COPY

**QUEENSLAND
EMERGENCY
HELICOPTER
NETWORK
TASKING
GUIDELINES**

Effective 6 MARCH 2006



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1. Overview

Application

This policy guideline applies to all emergency helicopter service providers' operating within the Queensland Emergency Helicopter Network and all Tasking Agencies using the network's services.

Purpose

The guidelines are the principal source document for describing emergency helicopter tasking principles in Queensland and agreed tasking arrangements between Tasking Agencies and Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network. However, the guidelines do not direct matters relating to clinical coordination, ambulance communications and patient care, which are subject to standard operating procedures, directives or practices established by Queensland Health and or QAS, such as:

- Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Communications Centre Standing Operating Procedures;
- Queensland Emergency Medical System (QEMS) Coordination Centre Standing Operating Procedures; and
- Inter Facility Transfer (IFT) agreements.

Endorsement

The guidelines were developed by Counter Disaster and Rescue Services (CDRS) in consultation with the Tasking Agencies and the emergency helicopter service providers in the Queensland Emergency Helicopter Network.

All proposed amendments to the guidelines will be developed through the Emergency Helicopter Network Advisory Group. Proposed changes to the aeromedical component of the guidelines must be endorsed by the QEMS Advisory Committee (QEMSAC) in consultation with the emergency helicopter service providers and the Tasking Agencies,.

Review Of The Guidelines

The *Queensland Aeromedical and Air Rescue Network Helicopter Tasking Guidelines* will undergo regular review by DES, in consultation with:

- QEMSAC Aeromedical Subcommittee;
- QAS;
- Queensland Health, through the QEMS Coordination Centre;
- Disaster Operations, CDRS
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service;
- Queensland Police Service; and
- AusSAR.

For Assistance Contact

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2. Policy Guideline

3. Interpretation

Activation means a Tasking Agency notifying an emergency helicopter service provider that a flight is authorised. Notification of authorisation must be through the QCC or RACC for aeromedical tasks, the FCC for QFRS tasks, the PCC for QPS tasks or AusSAR for search and rescue tasks and medical evacuations from vessels at sea. The final decision to undertake a flight is the responsibility of the pilot in command. The pilot must be satisfied that the flight can be undertaken safely.

Aeromedical Operations means support for aeromedical operations at the request of QAS or Queensland Health.

AusSAR means Australian Search and Rescue (Commonwealth search and Rescue Agency – a division of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority).

CDRS means Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, DES.

Clinical Coordination means the process where the following are provided by Queensland Health QCC Medical Coordinators, supported by QCC Nursing Coordinators:

- specialist level clinical management advice and determination of the clinical needs of the patient in preparation for, and during, aeromedical transport;
- the decision as to the appropriate clinical crew mix required to treat and escort the patient;
- advice regarding the appropriate mode of transport for safe and efficient patient transfer;
- determination of the most appropriate health care facility to receive the patient; and
- facilitation of critical care beds.

Clinical Coordinator means a medical practitioner, delegated by Queensland Health to perform clinical coordination on its behalf.

Counter Disaster Operations means support for counter disaster operations at the request of the State Disaster Management Group or a District Disaster Coordinator.

DDC means District Disaster Coordinator.

DES means Department of Emergency Services.

District Disaster Coordinator means a District Disaster Coordinator appointed under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (usually the QPS District Officer).

FCC means Fire Communications Centre.

Flight Paramedic means a QAS Paramedic who has undertaken specialist training to practice clinical skills in an emergency helicopter environment.

IFT means Interfacility Transfer.

Interfacility Transfer means (for the purposes of these guidelines) the transfer of patients between Queensland Health facilities and, in some circumstances, between a public and private hospital facility.

LSHRS means Life Saver Helicopter Rescue Service.

Monitoring means monitoring the location and availability of aircraft 24 hours per day. Monitoring is the responsibility of the QCC or RACC.

Paramedic means a QAS officer qualified as a Paramedic, Paramedic (Advanced Care) or Paramedic (Intensive Care).

Primary Response means a response to a patient who has not yet been assessed at a Queensland Health facility (e.g. hospital/clinic/medical aid post). Primary response could include motor vehicle and boating accidents or other emergencies where life is at risk.

PCC means Police Communications Centre.

QAS means Queensland Ambulance Service.

QCC means QEMS Coordination Centre.

Queensland Emergency Helicopter Network means:

- Queensland Rescue;
- CareFlight Queensland;
- Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service;
- Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service;
- Central Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service; and
- Torres Strait Rescue.

QEMS means Queensland Emergency Medical System.

QEMSAC means QEMS Advisory Committee.

QFRS means Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

QPS means Queensland Police Service.

RACC means Regional Ambulance Communications Centre.

RFDS means Royal Flying Doctor Service.

SAR means Search and Rescue.

SAR Operations means support for SAR operations at the request of QPS and/or AusSAR.

SDCC means State Disaster Coordination Centre.

SDCG means State Disaster Coordination Group.

SDMG means State Disaster Management Group.

SOLAS means International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974.

Task means helicopter support at the request of a Tasking Agency.

Task Notification means advice to relevant persons, e.g. Clinical Coordinator, Medical Crew, Pilot, Police Officer, of a potential task.

Tasking Agency means an agency as specified in Section 5 of these Guidelines.

TMAS means Tele Medical Advice Service.

Urgent QPS Responsibilities means responsibilities requiring action to respond to a life threatening situation or to alleviate a significant threat to the community.

Urgent QFRS Responsibilities means responsibilities requiring action to respond to a life threatening situation or to alleviate a significant threat to the community (i.e. water bombing, transport of personnel and/or specialist equipment and reconnaissance).

4. INTRODUCTION

Emergency helicopter services in Queensland are provided through DES, various Community Helicopter Providers and a contract helicopter service in Torres Strait.

Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network comprises:

- Queensland Government Helicopter Rescue Service (Queensland Rescue) at Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns;
- CareFlight Queensland at the Gold Coast;
- Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service (Energex Community Rescue) at the Sunshine Coast and Bundaberg;
- Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service at Rockhampton;
- Central Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service (CQ RESQ) at Mackay; and
- Australian Helicopters Pty Ltd (contractor) at Horn Island.

The helicopter providers listed above should be the first choice of Tasking Agencies to undertake emergency helicopter tasks. Should these providers be unavailable, Tasking Agencies may seek helicopter services from alternative sources.

However, only the helicopter providers listed above have been approved by the Minister for Emergency Services under the *Ambulance Service Act 1991* to provide ambulance transport in helicopters.

5. RANGE OF TASKS

The network of helicopter providers undertake the following range of tasks:

- Aeromedical Operations;
- SAR;
- Counter Disaster Operations;
- assistance with Urgent QFRS Responsibilities and non-urgent QFRS responsibilities. (Non-urgent QFRS responsibilities may involve cost recovery.); and
- assistance with Urgent QPS Responsibilities and non-urgent QPS responsibilities (Non-urgent QPS responsibilities may involve cost recovery.).

The final decision to undertake a flight is the responsibility of the pilot in command. The pilot must be satisfied that the flight can be undertaken safely.

Note: All tasks undertaken by the contract service in Torres Strait are on a user pays basis.

6. TASKING AGENCIES

The following agencies are authorised to activate Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network:

- Queensland Health and QAS through the QCC;
- QPS through the PCCs;
- QFRS through the FCCs;
- SDMG, through:
 - SDCC,
 - Disaster District Coordination Centre
 - Local Government Disaster Coordination Centre; and
- AusSAR.

Note: The NSW Health system also receives aerial support from Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network. All requests for cross-border tasking must be coordinated through the QCC. [Refer to Section 7.1].

7. AIRCRAFT MONITORING AND DEMAND

7.1. Aircraft Monitoring

QCC has responsibility for monitoring the availability and status Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network.

RACC undertakes Flight Progress Monitoring and Flight Following.

For monitoring purposes, pilots must notify their RACC that they have been tasked. Notification must include the contact details of the requesting agency.

All provider's within the network must forward written notice of aircraft availability to QCC, their RACC and Helicopter Services Unit, DES on a daily basis.

7.2. Aircraft Demand

In the event of competing demands for helicopter support, the Tasking Agencies are required to consult and determine which task will have priority. While aeromedical tasks will generally receive high priority, Urgent QPS Responsibilities, Urgent QFRS Responsibilities, Counter Disaster Operations or SAR Operations may divert helicopters from aeromedical tasks.

8. TASKING AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Tasking Agencies have a range of responsibilities as described below.

8.1. Queensland Health and QAS

8.1.1. Types of Aeromedical Operations

There are two types of aeromedical operations:

- primary response; and
- IFT.

8.1.2. Primary Response

QAS has principal responsibility for primary response, supported by Queensland Health Clinical Coordinators in the QCC who can provide high level clinical advice and support and immediate access into major hospital facilities.

8.1.3. IFT

Queensland Health has principal responsibility for IFTs, and is supported in this task by QCC which provides operational coordination, aircraft tasking and monitoring.

8.2. Basis for Request for Aerial Support

The decision to request aerial support is based on clinical need, access to the patient, distance/time to the patient and the preferred receiving hospital.

8.2.1. Authorisation of Aeromedical Operations

All aeromedical operations must be authorised through QCC.

The requirement for Clinical Coordinator approval for primary response helicopter tasks is not intended to delay preparation for the task. Upon receipt of a call from a RACC, the QCC will access the Clinical Coordinator immediately, and the Clinical Coordinator will provide a decision at that time. Should there be a delay in access to the Clinical Coordinator, the RACC may activate the helicopter without Clinical Coordinator approval. If, after activation of the helicopter, the Clinical Coordinator provides a negative decision (clinically not approved), the task will be cancelled and the aircraft will return to base.

The activation of a primary response task without Clinical Coordinator approval will trigger an automatic audit of the task to determine the appropriateness of decisions made in relation to the task.

8.2.2. Role of QCC

QCC supports QAS regional operations and Queensland Health Area Health Services by providing a state-wide patient retrieval and aeromedical transport capability through:

- provision of consultant level clinical advice between referring, retrieval and receiving health facilities for adult patients;
- tasking of appropriate retrieval teams for adult patients;
- clinical and operational coordination of aeromedical transport services in support of the QAS road ambulance system;
- provision of clinical coordination and support for aeromedical primary response services;
- provision of aeromedical transport tasking and coordination in support of the existing Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Paediatric Intensive Care Unit emergency medical transport systems; and
- clinical supervision of the retrieval/transport services for adult patients.

8.2.3. Role of RACC

Regional Ambulance Communications Centres (RACCs) are established in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Brisbane, Southport and Toowoomba. These centres coordinate the allocation of ambulance resources in response to requests for ambulance services. With respect to tasking helicopters for aeromedical operations, RACCs:

- initiate task notification for primary aeromedical responses in accordance with QAS standard operating procedures;
- activate tasks on authority of the QCC Clinical Coordinator; and
- maintain operational cohesion with QCC for the duration of the task.

8.2.4. Aeromedical Tasking

Refer to flow charts: "Aeromedical System Relationships Diagram" on page 17; "Aeromedical Primary Response" on page 18; and "Aeromedical Interfacility Transfer (Public or Private)" on page 19.

There are four phases of an aeromedical task.

- potential task;

- task notification;
- task approval; and
- task activation.

8.2.4.1. Potential Task

- (a) a request for primary response via 'Triple Zero' (000), or, on the face value of a call, a helicopter response with appropriate medical crew is considered warranted by a RACC; or
- (b) an IFT request received at QCC.

8.2.4.2. Task Notification

The RACC notifies the duty pilot, duty clinical crew and clinical coordinator at QCC of the potential task providing relevant details.

8.2.4.3. Task Approval

The duty pilot advises that the nominated task is within the technical capability of the aircraft, and the Clinical Coordinator confirms that the task is clinically appropriate.

8.2.4.4. Task Activation

The RACC (or QCC in some circumstances) notifies all relevant persons that the task is activated on authorisation of the Clinical Coordinator and confirmation from the duty pilot that the task is to proceed.

If a negative decision is made by the Clinical Coordinator or duty pilot, the QCC or RACC will stand-down response staff from the Task and seek alternative response arrangements.

8.3. QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

For information and current QPS policy, QPS officers should refer to QPS Operational Procedures Manual, section 2.32, "Government and Community Helicopter Providers".

8.3.1. Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations

QPS has responsibility for the overall coordination of the following SAR operations in respect of the following target types:

- pleasure craft and fishing vessels at sea;
- unregistered aircraft;
- persons missing in a land or coastal environment;
- land vehicles
- persons and vessels on inland waters; and
- all non-military vessels in port.

The QPS will also provide and coordinate land SAR units in support of AusSAR in respect to the following target types:

- aircraft on the international civil, national civil(VH) and Recreational Aviation Australia (RAA) registers;
- manned space vehicles;
- vessels other than those for which the police and defence force are responsible; and

- unidentified distress beacon alerts.

The various SAR functions and responsibilities within Australia are outlined in Appendix B of the *National Search and Rescue Manual*.

Depending on locally available resources, overall responsibility for the coordination of any SAR operation may transfer, by mutual agreement, between QPS and AusSAR [Refer to section 7.5 of this document].

8.3.2. Urgent QPS Responsibilities

QPS will task helicopters for assistance with a range of urgent QPS responsibilities. Such tasks may include (although not be limited to) sieges, abduction, and restoration of urgently needed communication equipment when ground access to the site of the equipment is not practical.

8.3.3. Non-Urgent QPS Responsibilities

If QPS tasks a helicopter for non-urgent tasks, such as training or photography, the helicopter provider may choose to seek cost recovery. Where cost recovery is to be pursued, this should be agreed between QPS and the provider prior to the commencement of the task.

8.3.4. QPS - Tasking

Refer to flow charts: "Search and Rescue (SAR) – Qld Police Service" on page 20; "Urgent Police Responsibilities" on page 21; and "Non-Urgent Police Responsibilities" on page 22.

8.3.4.1. Coordination of Tasking

Tasking of helicopters for QPS responsibilities is coordinated through the PCC in the relevant region. The PCC will contact the helicopter provider directly. (Arrangements in place in some areas require the PCC to also contact the RACC for aircraft tasking and monitoring.)

8.3.4.2. Pilot Communication

The pilot will contact the Police Officer requesting the task for a full task briefing. In the case of SAR tasks, the pilot may contact RACC if QPS consider that a paramedic may be required.

8.3.4.3. Notification of RACC

For monitoring purposes, the pilot must advise the RACC that the helicopter has been tasked for a QPS operation. If possible, the pilot should also advise the RACC of the name and contact telephone number of the Police Officer responsible for the task. The pilot should also advise the RACC of the return of the helicopter when the task is completed.

8.4. QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

QFRS tasking includes Rural Operations.

8.4.1. Urgent QFRS Responsibilities

The FCCs across the State are responsible for dispatching aerial support to assist with fire spotting and suppression and the transportation of QFRS specialised equipment and personnel. Tasks can include the transport of fire crews and equipment, fire spotting, and water bombing.

8.4.2. Non-urgent QFRS Responsibilities

If QFRS tasks a helicopter for non-urgent tasks, such as training or non-urgent transport, the helicopter provider may choose to seek cost recovery. Cost recovery should be agreed between QFRS and the helicopter service provider prior to the commencement of the task.

8.4.3. QFRS Tasking

Refer to flow charts: "Urgent QFRS Responsibilities" on page 23; and "Non-urgent QFRS Responsibilities" on page 24.

8.4.3.1. Tasking Approval

Tasking of helicopters by QFRS must be in accordance with QFRS Incident Directive 1.1 Aircraft Operations, Activation.

8.4.3.2. Coordination of Tasking

Tasking of helicopters by QFRS must occur through the appropriate FCC or QFRS State Air Desk.

8.4.3.3. Pilot Communication

The helicopter pilot will then contact the QFRS Officer requesting the task for a full task briefing.

8.4.3.4. Notification of RACC

For monitoring purposes, the pilot must advise RACC that it has been tasked for an operation by QFRS, and provide the name and contact telephone number of the controlling officer from QFRS. The pilot should also advise the RACC of the return of the helicopter when the task is completed.

8.5. STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUP

8.5.1. Disaster Response and Recovery Operations

8.5.1.1. Role of SDMG and SDCC

The SDMG is responsible for managing a whole-of-government integrated approach to disaster management. The SDMG operates through the SDCC operated by CDRS. The SDCC is activated as required to manage the impact of disasters such as cyclones and flooding. This coordination centre, together with the SDCG, assists local governments in

supporting their communities to plan, prepare, respond to and recover from disasters. The SDMG Duty Officer is responsible for providing a detailed pilot briefing through Helicopter Services Unit, CDRS.

8.5.1.2. Role of DDC

When an area is affected by a disaster, the DDC is authorised to approve the tasking of local resources, including helicopters. Requests for assistance that cannot be provided from local resources must be directed to the SDCC in Brisbane. For example, if a DDC requires a helicopter to be deployed to a disaster affected area, a request for aerial support must be made to the SDCC in the first instance. Subject to SDCC approval of the deployment of a helicopter, the DCC can then approve tasking of the helicopter direct. The requesting DDC is responsible for tasking locally available aircraft and for providing a detailed pilot briefing.

8.5.1.3. Role of Local Government

Local government is responsible for forwarding tasking requests to the DDC. If the tasks are approved by the DDC, local government will then provide detailed pilot briefing(s) for the task.

8.5.1.4. Queensland Rescue Helicopters

Queensland Rescue helicopters deployed to Disaster Districts remain under the control of DES.

8.5.1.5. State Disaster Relief Arrangements (SDRA) and Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA)

If the Minister for Emergency Services activates SDRA or NDRA for a particular area, the tasks undertaken by the helicopter (including costs of relocation) are undertaken on a cost recovery basis through the appropriate fund.

The following tasks are eligible for reimbursement if SDRA/NDRA has been activated:

- the cost of relocating an aircraft to an area and return to base;
- food drops/resupply of essential supplies to isolated individuals and communities;
- transportation of personnel, equipment and materials for public safety and counter disaster operations, including medical needs;
- the activation, coordination and administration of SDRA/NDRA relief measures including damage assessments; and
- tasks for the protection/safety of life, health and public/community property.

8.5.1.6. Notification of RACC

For monitoring purposes, the pilot must advise RACC that the helicopter has been tasked for counter disaster operations and provide the name and contact telephone number of the controlling officer. The pilot should also advise the RACC of the return of the helicopter when the task(s) is completed.

8.5.2. Disaster Response and Recovery Tasking

Refer to flow chart "DES Disaster Response and Recovery Operations" on page 22.

8.6. AUSTRALIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (AusSAR)

8.6.1. Civil Search and Rescue Activity (Marine and Aviation)

AusSAR is a division of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. AusSAR is immediately responsible for marine and aviation incidents (defined below). AusSAR coordinates the incident, including the tasking of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters to assist in the searches over land and water. AusSAR may request local Police to coordinate activities on its behalf e.g. surface search coordination, coordination of land search and rescue units for land or coastal search. Once location is established and a Police On-scene Coordinator arrives, AusSAR may then seek to transfer overall coordination to QPS.

8.6.1.1. Marine Incidents

A marine incident is:

- an incident that involves the searching for and rescue of persons from any SOLAS vessel (e.g. Merchant vessel); or
- an incident involving the searching for and rescue of persons at sea, which is outside of Police capability to respond.

8.6.1.2. Aviation Incidents

An aviation incident is an incident that involves the searching for overdue civil aircraft and military aircraft on request from a military authority.

8.6.2. Civil Search and Rescue Activity – Tasking

Refer to flow charts: "Civil Search and Rescue Activity (Marine and Aviation)" on page 26 and "AusSAR Medevac" on page 27.

8.6.3. Pilot Communication

In most cases, AusSAR will contact the helicopter provider directly. AusSAR may request the pilot to contact RACC if AusSAR consider that a paramedic may be required.

8.6.4. RACC as Contact for AusSAR

The RACC in a given area may be listed in the AusSAR database of contact telephone number for a helicopter provider's contact number. The RACC officer who takes the call should ensure that AusSAR and the helicopter provider are connected promptly.

8.6.5. Notification of RACC

The pilot must notify RACC promptly if a helicopter has been tasked directly by AusSAR.

9. OTHER TASKING ARRANGEMENTS

9.1. AMBULANCE SERVICE OF NEW SOUTH WALES

9.1.1. Aeromedical Operations

Queensland Rescue, CareFlight Queensland and Energex Community Rescue are authorised under section 23 of the *Ambulance Services Act (NSW) 1990* to conduct ambulance services in NSW.

Aeromedical tasks into NSW may be undertaken on a cost recovery basis. However, the task must be first approved by the Ambulance Service of NSW via the Medical Retrieval Unit (MRU) at St George Hospital, Sydney, NSW. The NSW hospital requiring the service is responsible for obtaining the requisite approval from the MRU.

Subject to approval, aeromedical tasks are then coordinated through the QCC. [Refer to section 7.1.4 of this document.]

10. LIFE SAVER HELICOPTER RESCUE SERVICE

10.1.1. Emergency Helicopter Operations

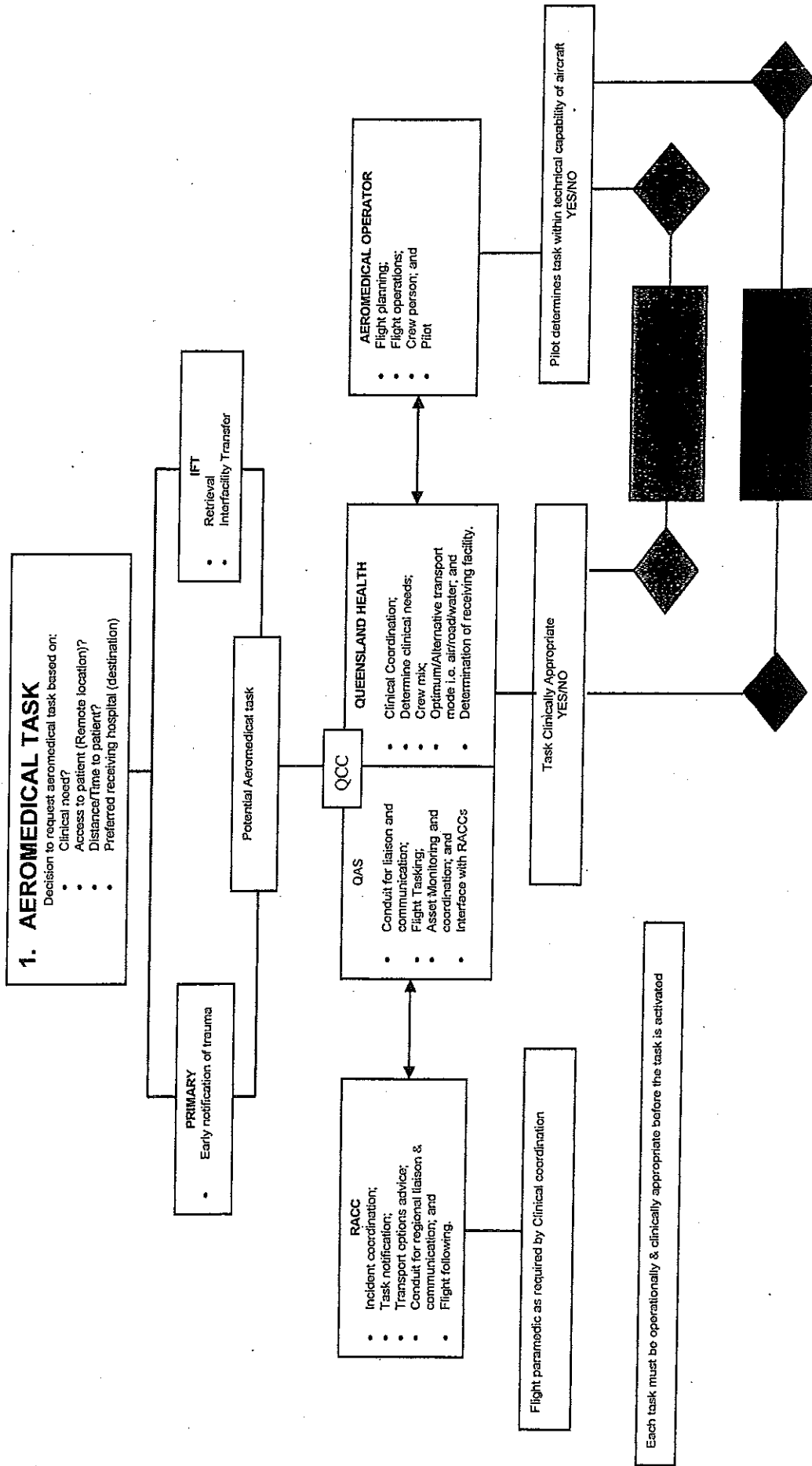
The Life Saver Helicopter Rescue Service (LSHRS), operated by Surf Life Saving Queensland, provides surveillance and rescue services in the white water/surf environment.

In circumstances where Queensland's Emergency Helicopter Network is unavailable, Tasking Agencies may approach LSHRS for assistance with emergency tasks that require use of a helicopter. LSHRS does not have Ministerial approval to provide ambulance transport.

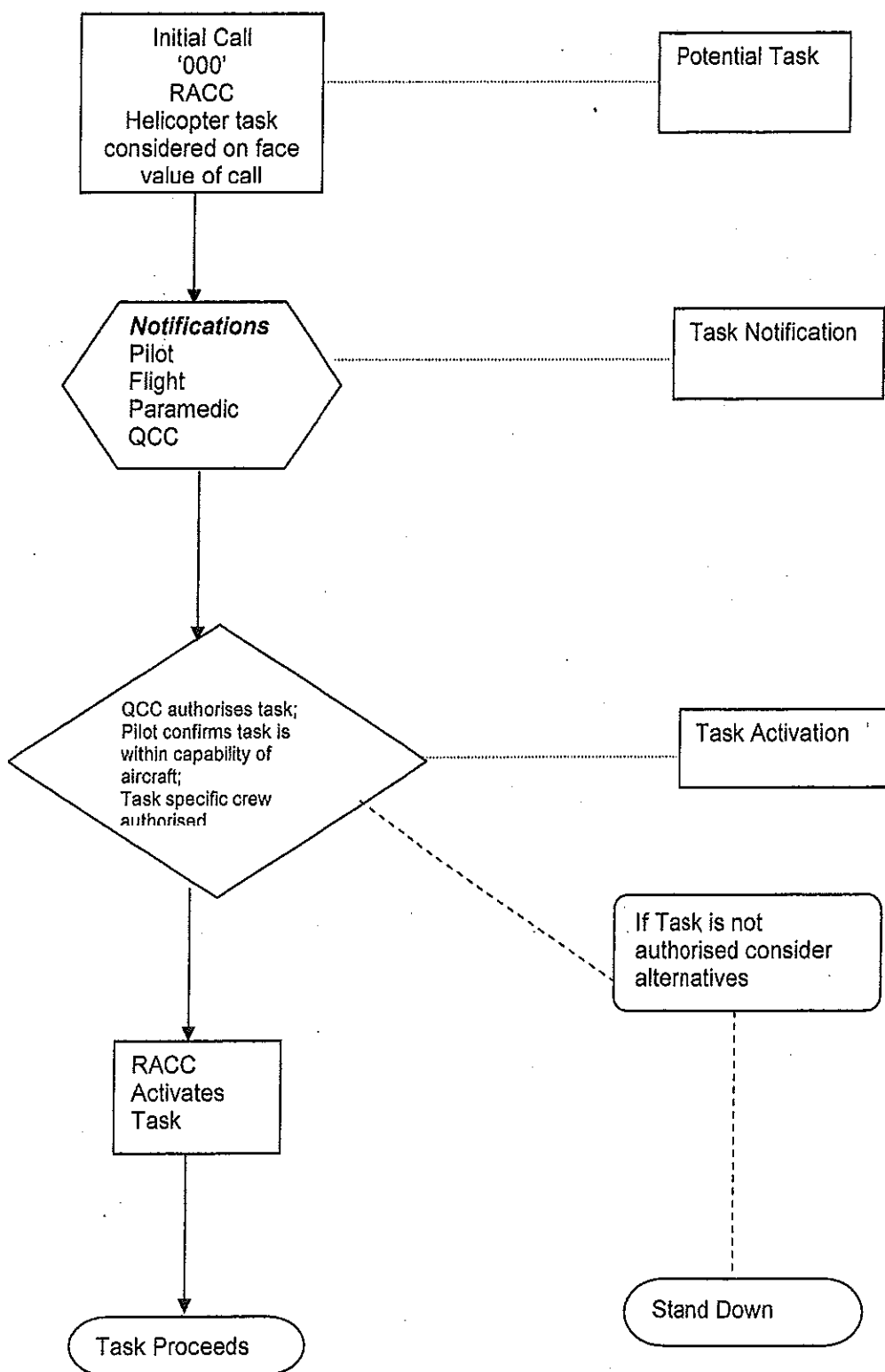
Note: Tasking Agencies are responsible for all charges from LSHRS for use of the LSHRS helicopter.

Flow Charts

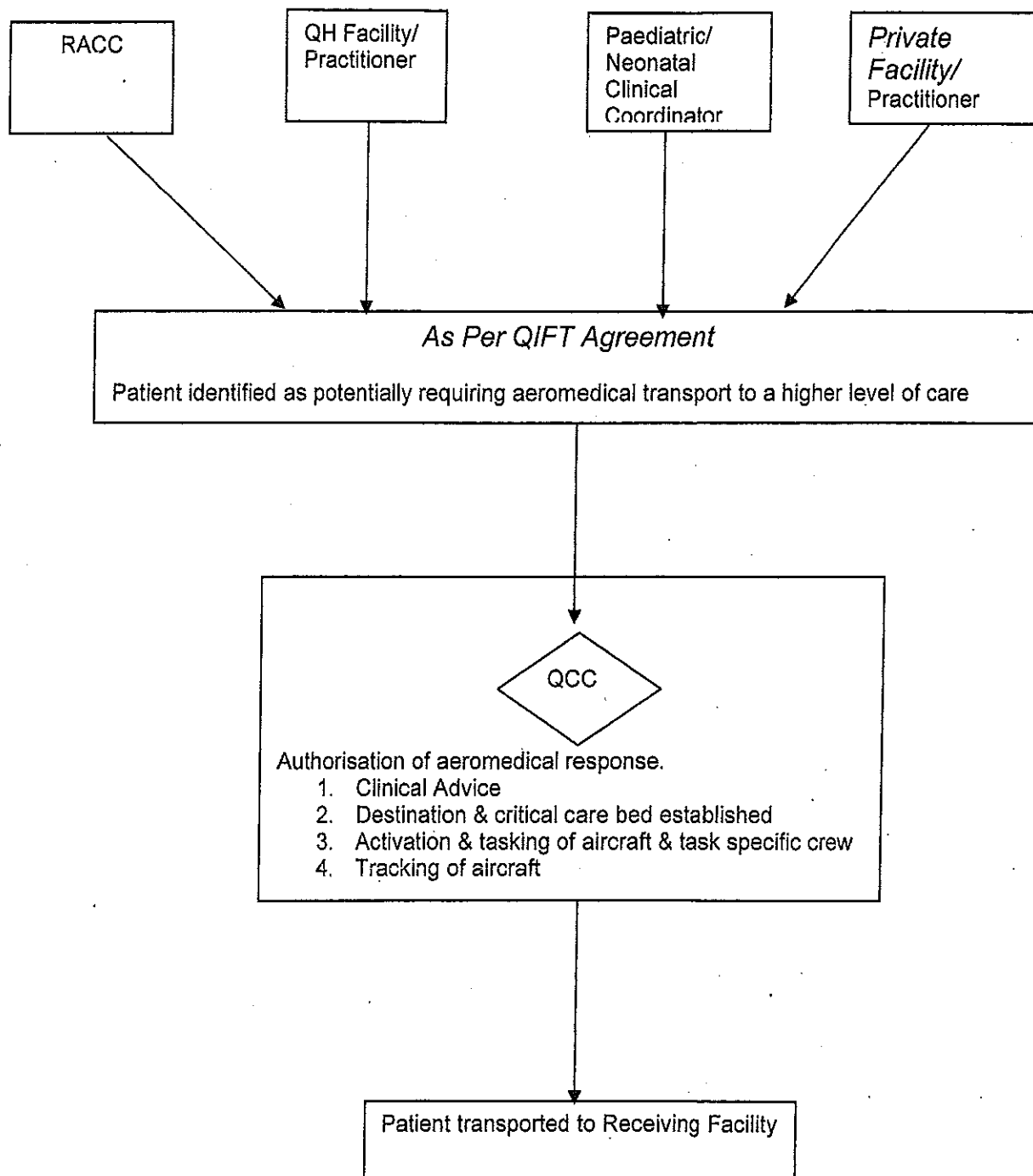
AEROMEDICAL SYSTEM RELATIONSHIPS DIAGRAM



AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART AEROMEDICAL PRIMARY RESPONSE

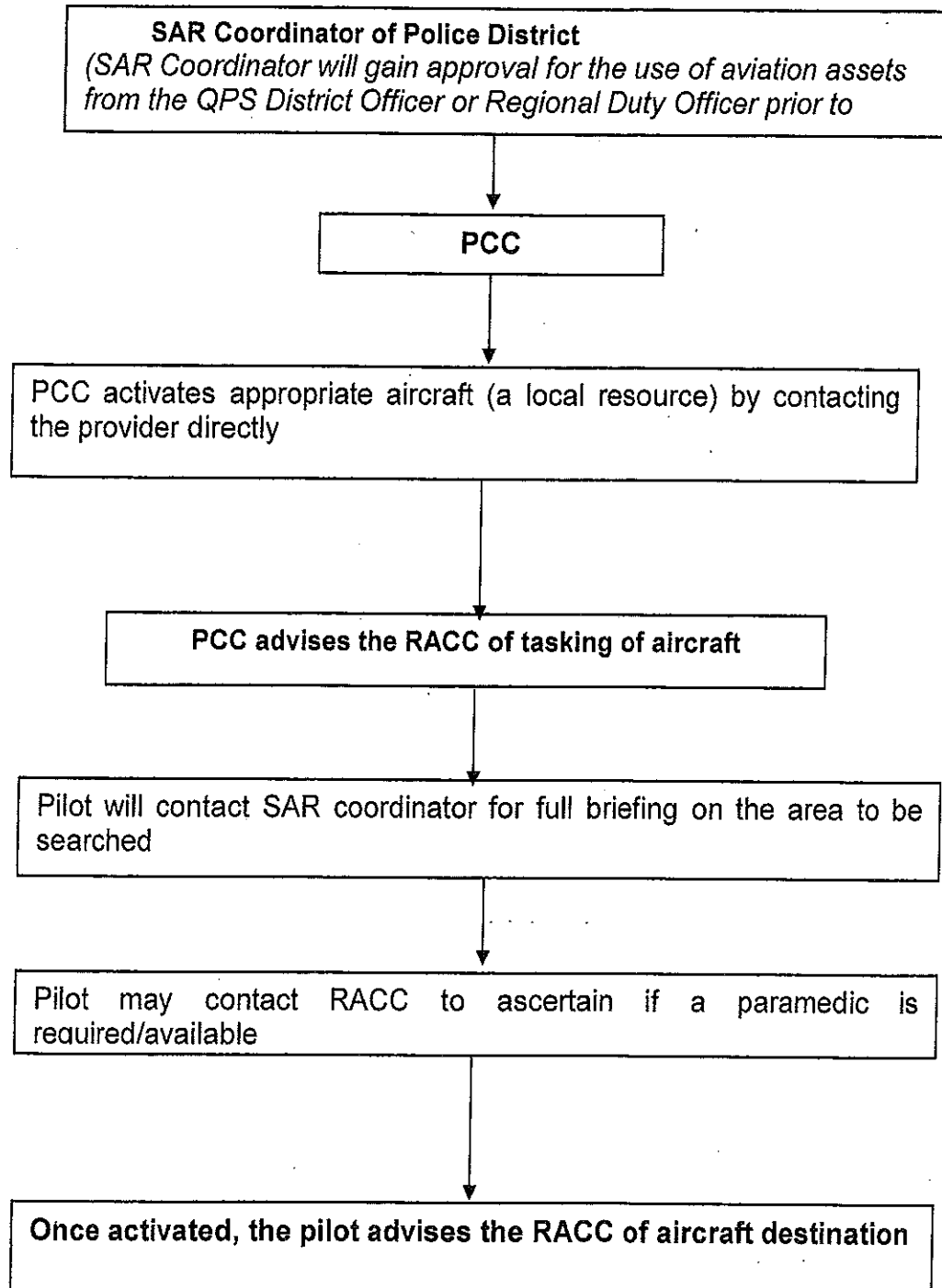


AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART AEROMEDICAL INTERFACILITY TRANSFER (PUBLIC OR PRIVATE)



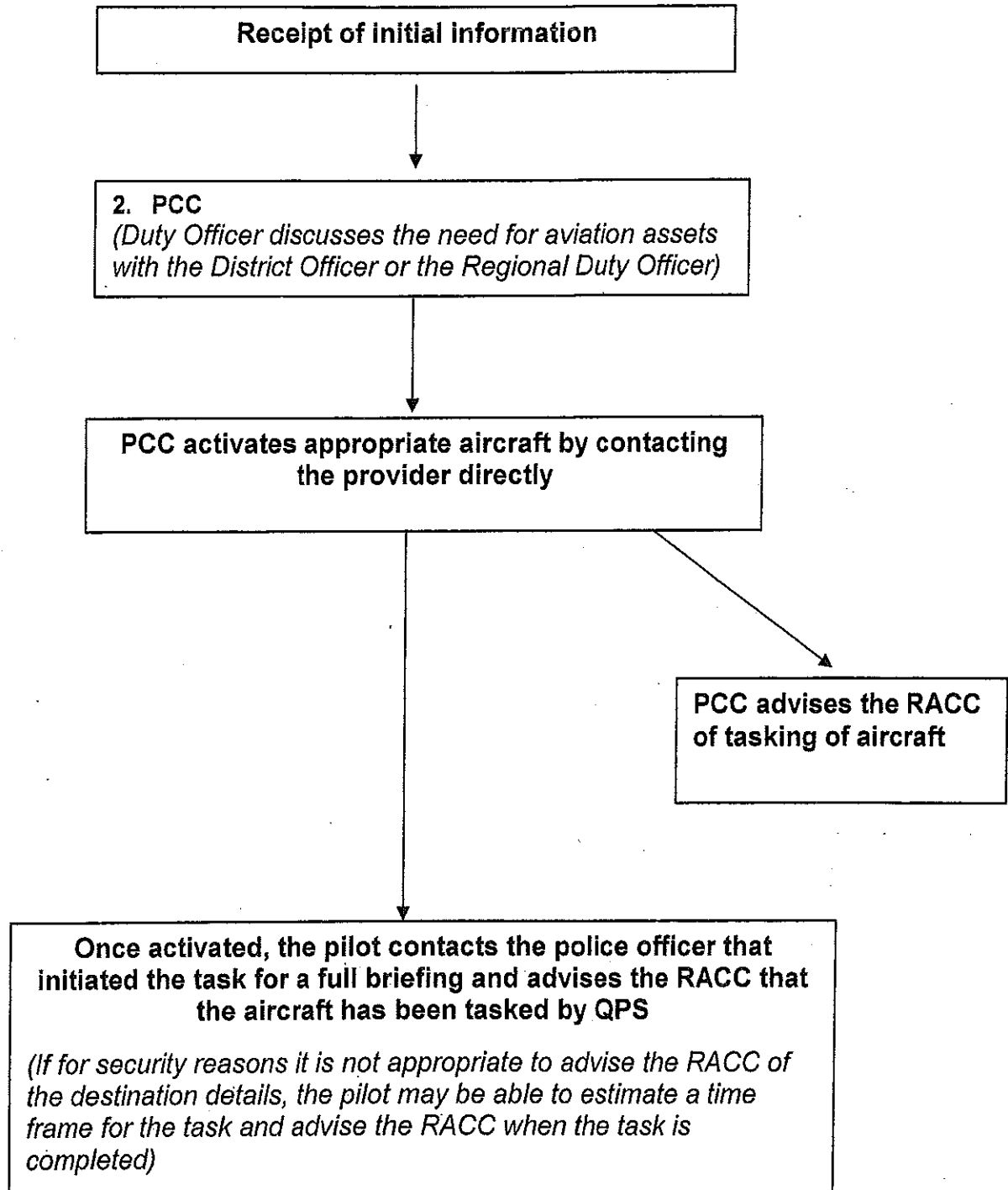
AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) - QLD POLICE SERVICE



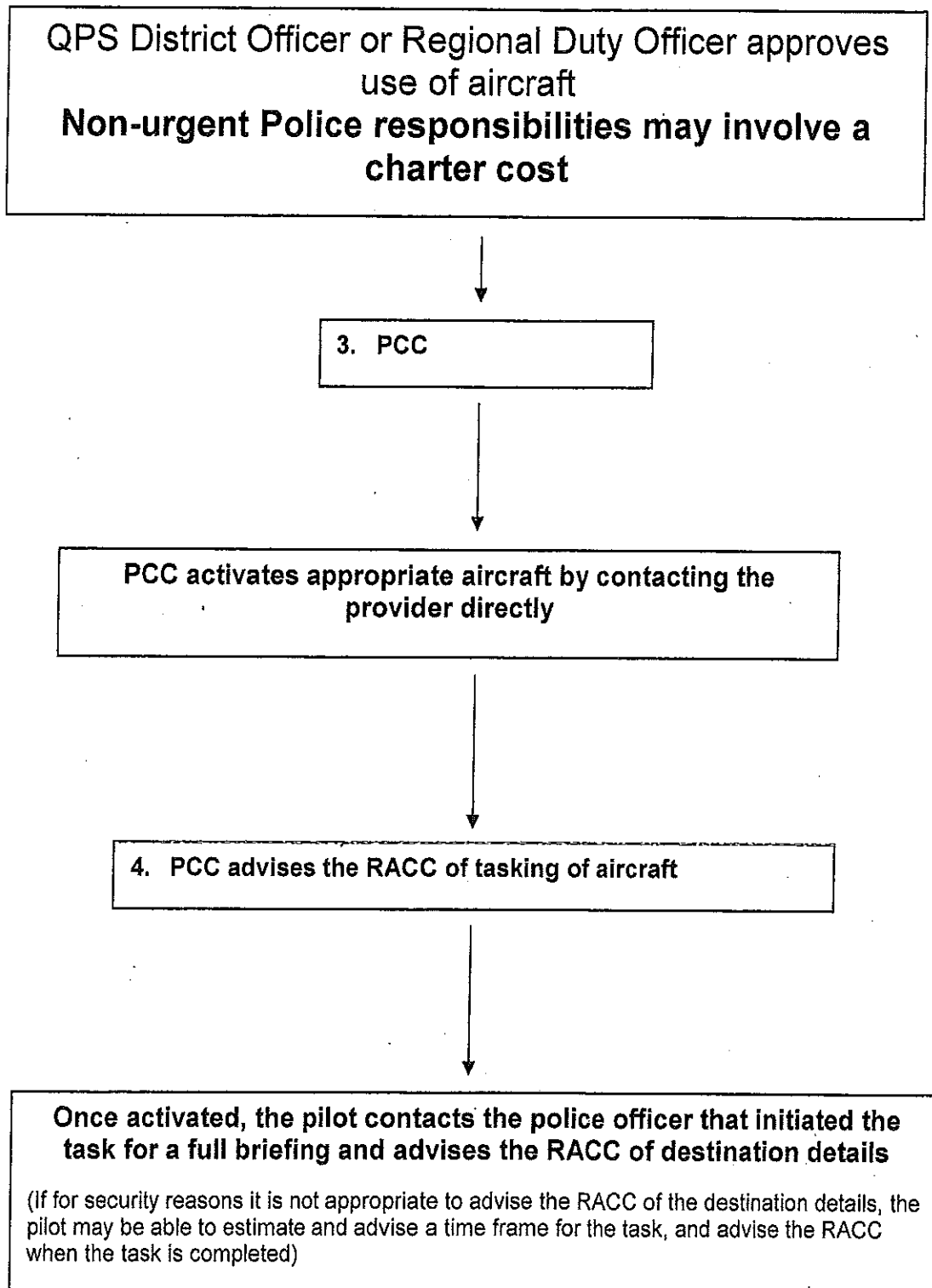
AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

URGENT POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES

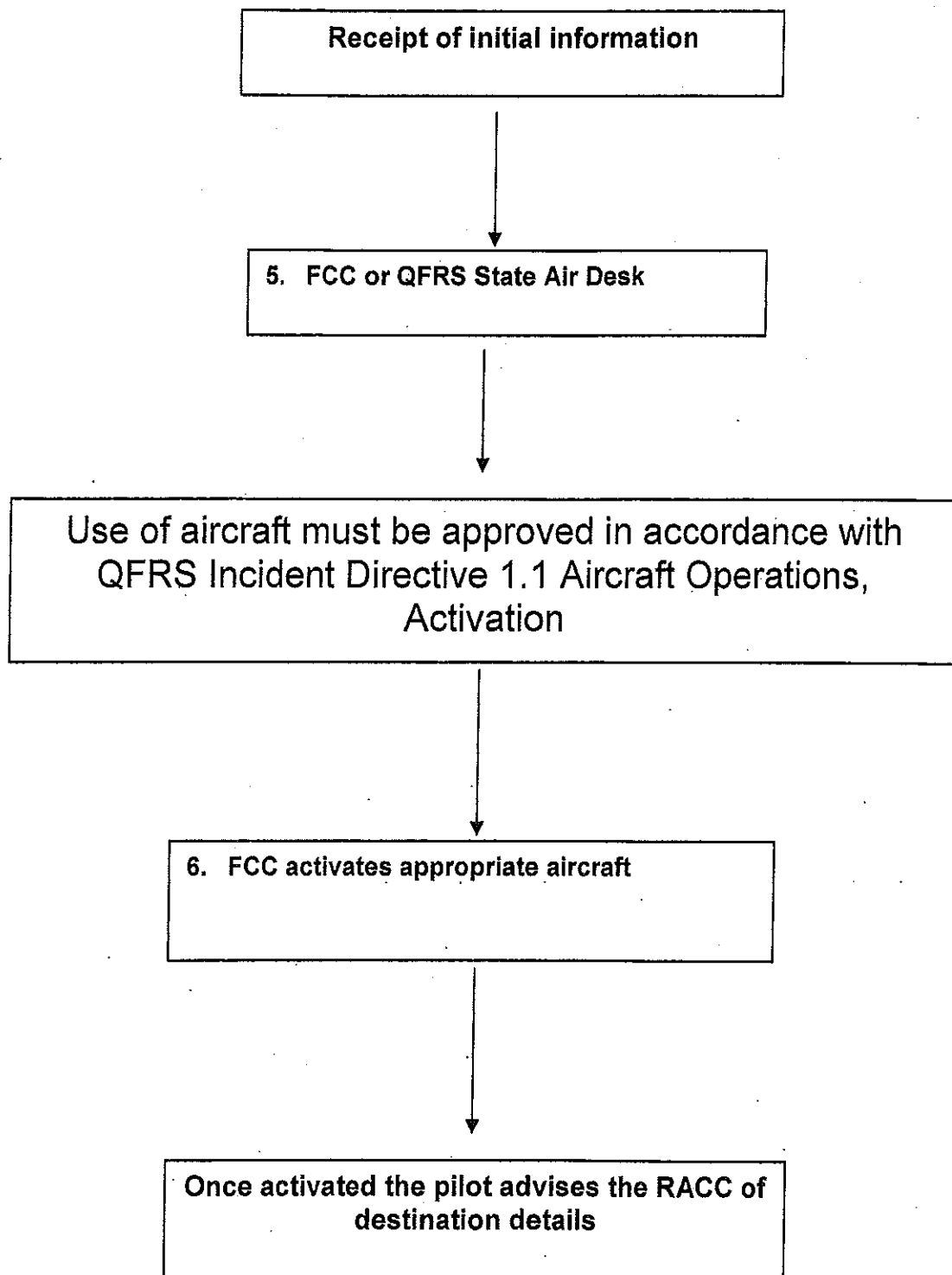


AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

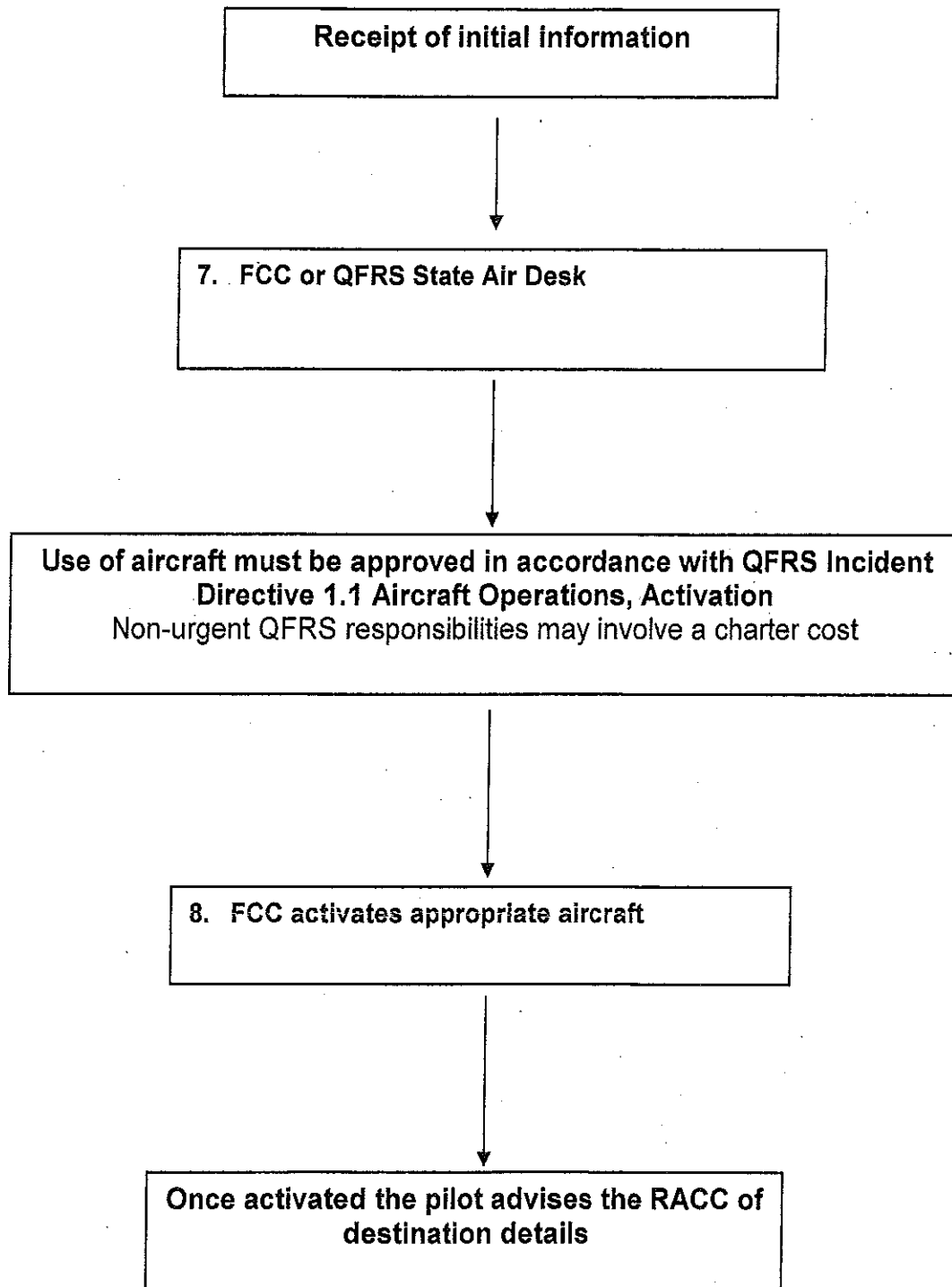
NON-URGENT POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES



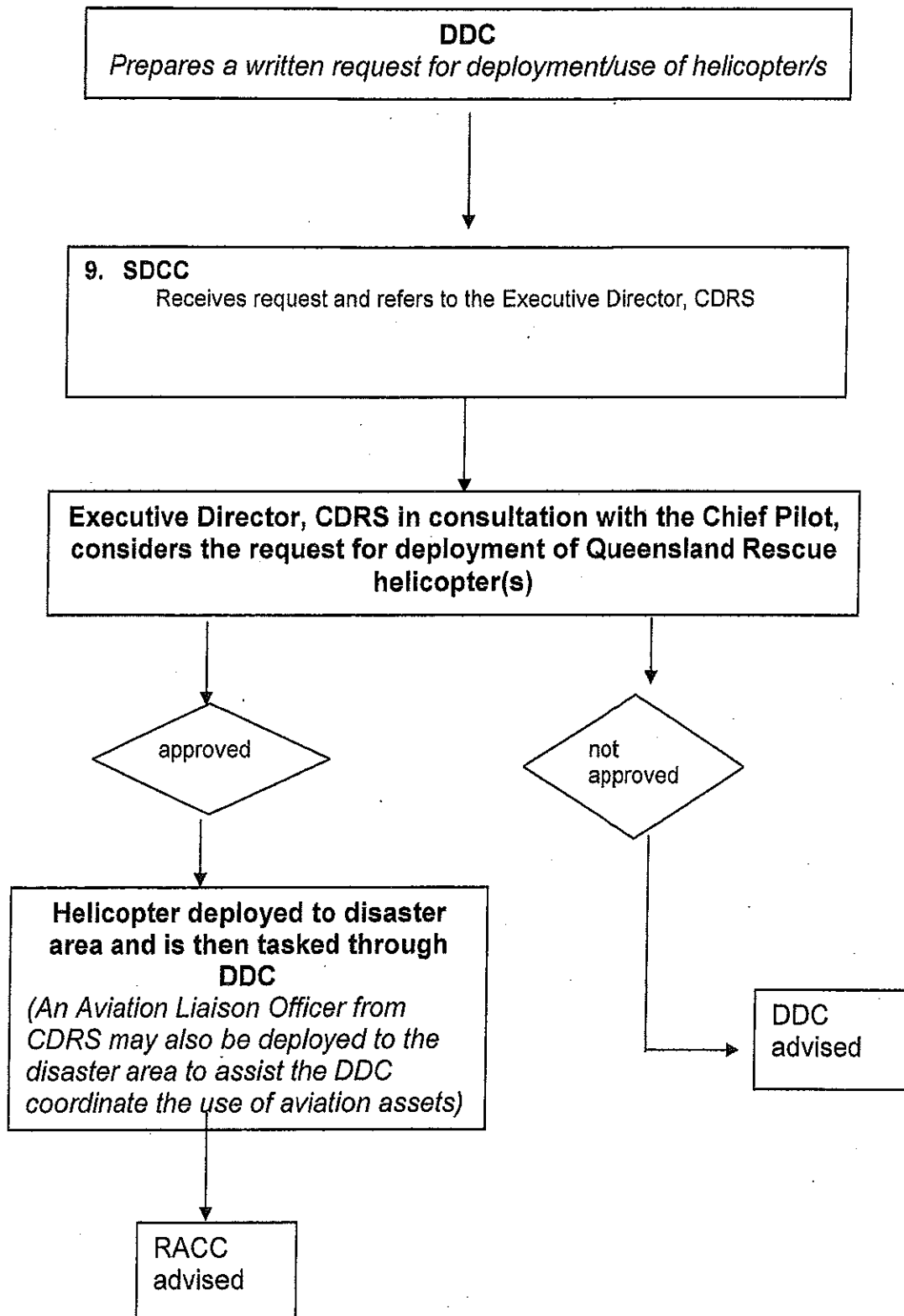
URGENT QFRS RESPONSIBILITIES



NON-URGENT QFRS RESPONSIBILITIES

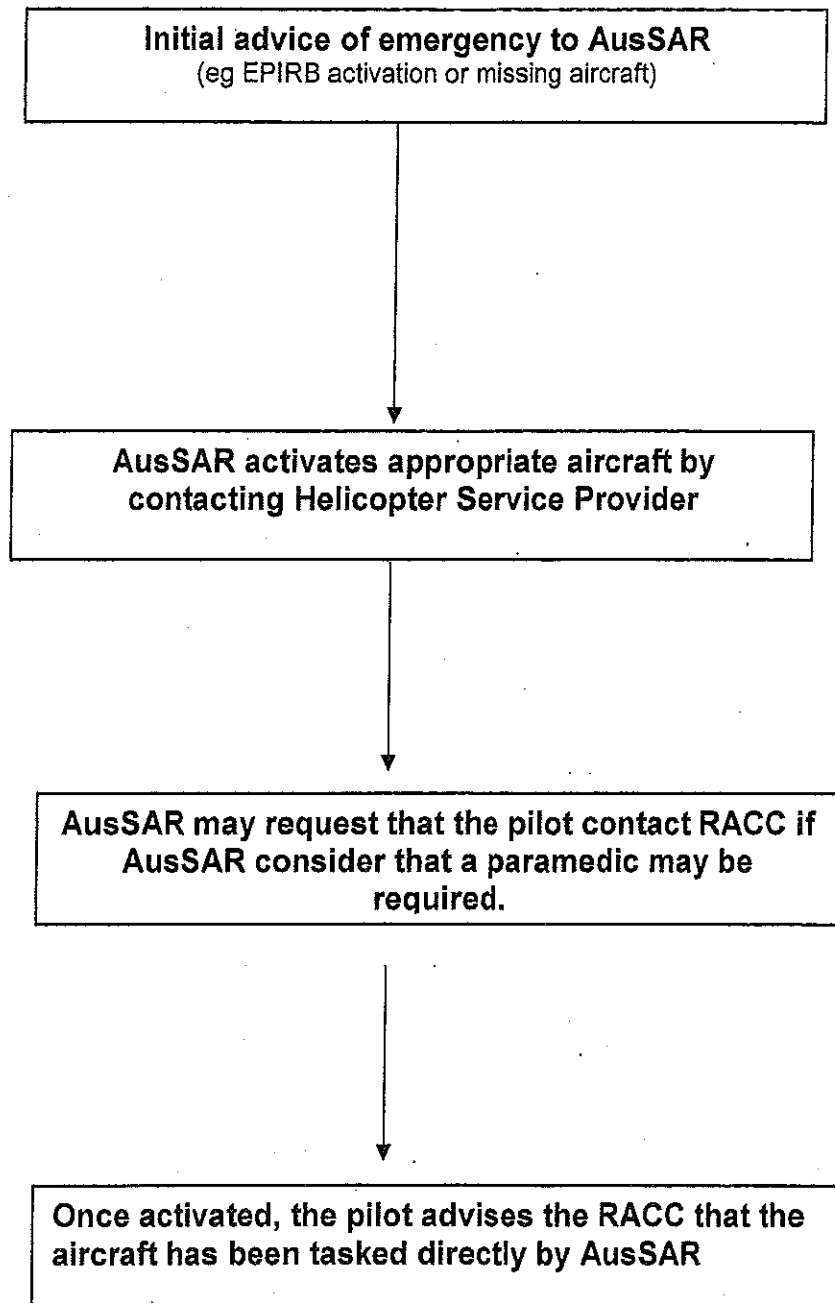


DES DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS



AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

CIVIL SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITY (MARINE AND AVIATION)



AVIATION TASKING PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

AussAR MEDEVAC

