QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

On Wednesday, 9 November 2011, at 8.30am

At level 30, 400 George Street, Brisbane, Qld

Conducted by: Mr Nick Bailey, Mr Conor McGarrity, Ms Zoe Staines

Also present: Mr Alan MacSporran SC

Private interview of Bruce Grady, EMQ
MR BAILEY: Good morning. My name is Nick Bailey. I am a principal legal officer with the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. Today is Wednesday, 9 November 2011. Could all the people present in the room please announce their appearances for the record, perhaps starting with the Commission staff.

MR McGARRITY: My name is Connor McGarrity, principal researcher with the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

MS STAINES: My name is Zoe Staines, Researcher with the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

MR GRADY: Bruce Grady, Assistant Director-General, Emergency Management Queensland.

MR MacSPORRAN: Alan MacSporran, counsel for the State.

<BRUCE GRADY, interviewed:

MR BAILEY: As I have previously indicated, we have provided to you, Bruce, a list of questions signifying our areas of interest. The general plan this morning is simply to run through those, if we may.

Q. Starting with the General section, question 1: Explain the role of instructors or trainers in specialist fields such as chainsaw operations, traffic control and flood-boat operations, including how they obtain specialist expertise and what, if any, financial compensation they receive, and should they be compensated?

A. The role of trainers and instructors in the SES is to provide functional training to SES members. Members require that they are trained in those functions before they can actually complete those functions in an operation. For example, until you have completed your chainsaw training, you can't operate a chainsaw. That's primarily for safety reasons.

The trainers are required to have completed that functional training. They then are required to have completed a Cert IV in training. The cost of that is met by EMQ. Then they become an assistant trainer, where they...
are observed. Then when they have reached a level of competency, they are then able to train on their own.

I have some documents around policy. I am happy to make those available to the Commission, if you would like them?

MR BAILEY: All right.

MR McGARRITY: That would be good.

MR BAILEY: Q. For the record, could you just perhaps read the title of the relevant documents?
A. Yes. There is training policy, staff competence, appointment of trainer assessors, appointment of direct supervisors, appointment of core skills trainer, and I think - yes, that's it.

MR McGARRITY: Thank you.

MR BAILEY: Q. The trainers themselves, are they by and large SES volunteers?
A. Primarily, by volume, yes. EMQ does have a number of permanent training staff for the SES in each region, usually three to four in each region. They will assist in the train the trainer, they will assist in the accreditation process and they will also deliver specialist training when required. So, it is a combination of full-time permanent staff and volunteer trainers who deliver training.

Q. The expectation is that the volunteers who are qualified then go on and train people within their groups?
A. That's correct. That's something that they would - a pathway that they would pursue of their own volition. There is no pressure on them to do it. So, if people want to move into that training then they are supported with the Cert IV in training, which is a nationally accredited certificate so it can be used elsewhere, and then they will undertake that training. They are certainly encouraged to but there is no requirement.

MR McGARRITY: Q. At the end of the training provided by the SES members who have attained the Cert IV, do they then suggest whether a person who they have trained has reached a level of competence by which --
A. Yes, they will have to assess that person. So it's
either through training - and I think there are questions later on about recognition of prior learning, and so on, and there's a process there.

Q. That is a judgment call they make, though, based on --
A. Well, it's a judgment to criteria. There is a criteria that has to be met either through the delivery of a particular training course or through an assessment through the RPL process.

MR BAILEY: Q. Is there a view about compensation?
A. Again it goes to, really, a question of volunteerism. Now, there's a couple of issues here. We have certainly in the past taken on volunteers in a casual training role when there has been a specific need for it. If we have had to deliver a lot of training or deliver training in areas outside of the east coast, for example - more remote areas - and there aren't qualified trainers out there, we have on occasion taken volunteers, put them on either as casual staff or contract staff and paid them to go and deliver training. But that's not the norm; that would be for a specific purpose.

The question about should they be compensated, I think, goes to a - and compensation, I guess, is also a fairly wide reach. Should they be paid, is one question. Should they be compensated if they travel? They certainly are. If a volunteer trainer was to go from Brisbane to Roma to deliver a training course, then all of the costs associated with their travel, meal allowances - all those things - would be met by EMQ. They wouldn't necessarily receive payment for that unless that was part of one of those programs that I referred to earlier.

Q. Question 2: Is it possible to amalgamate SES training with other emergency services training; for example, the Rural Fire Brigade?
A. Yes, it certainly is and that is done. There are a number of courses where accreditation is joint, so if you receive the training in the Rural Fire Service then that is recognised in the SES and vice-versa. I can actually read you a list of what those courses might be: Communicate in the workplace, protect and preserve incident scene, maintain safety at an incident scene, provide service to clients, work in a team, follow defined occupational health and safety policy and procedures, work effectively in a public safety organisation, apply first aid, operate
communication systems and equipment, work as a team member in an emergency operations centre, map reading and navigation, trim and crosscut felled trees - it's a chainsaw course - undertake flood and inland waterways rescue boat operations, search as a member of a land search team, and conduct briefings and debriefings.

They're ones that if you were to receive that in the other service, then that would be automatically recognised. Other courses where there may be - that may have been taken externally to that, we would certainly look at the recognition of prior learning and apply that policy.

Q. One of those training areas that you mentioned, emergency operations centre training, what is that exactly?
A. That's an introductory course to working in an emergency operations centre. That is a generic term. There is a question later on about some conflicting terminology, and so on. EOC or emergency operations centre is a generic term to work in an incident coordination centre or a disaster coordination centre. It's an introductory course and then there are further courses that deal with specific elements of that.

Q. So, Incident Management Team training?
A. There's another course introduction to Incident Management Team. Again, that's a fairly short course. It's a generic "This is what an Incident Management Team is about, this is what it seeks to achieve". Then there's further training about the functions that would occur in there.

Q. The EOC one is directed to the latter?
A. Yes, that's an introductory course, yes. It's an overview, if you like, of an emergency operations centre. If that's delivered in Rural Fire or it's delivered in the SES, they are recognised across those two services.

Q. Question 3: Has there been any work by EMQ to consolidate the position of local controller in those local governments that have more than one unit? The Disaster Management Act seems to intend only one local controller per local government area. Perhaps we might deal with that question first.
A. Yes. I think the assumption in relation to the Act is a correct one. The Act is not absolutely crystal clear but I think when you read several parts of the Act, it tends to
infer one local government, one local controller. I guess
the conflicting issue arises post-amalgamation, when we
have moved from in excess of 150 local governments to 73.
That has increased the size, the scale, the scope of a role
of a single local controller in a very big local government
area. There are issues around span of control, how many
groups can a local controller - particularly a volunteer
local controller - reasonably be expected to manage. Then
there are issues of distance. If the next group is a few
hundred kilometres away, is there any reasonable
expectation that a local controller is going to be visible,
is going to provide regular oversight, assistance and
support to that group.

Q. Are there any specific areas or local government
areas, post-amalgamation, where the issue of span of
control, as you have described it, is being specifically
addressed?
A. It has been addressed differently by different local
government areas. Some have agreed to deputy local
controllers. For example, Toowoomba Regional Council has
just moved to a model - and caused some anguish amongst its
volunteer community - where deputy controllers were made
group leaders. Some saw that as a downgrade. They
actually performed exactly the same functions at the end of
it, so it was, realistically, a title change only. So,
they have moved to a single local controller and then
deputies and then group leaders. They have a paid local
controller. There are others in North Queensland where a
number of local controllers have been appointed in a single
local government area.

Q. I think Central Highlands Regional Council may be one
where they are trying to move to a single local controller
with various deputies --
A. Yes.

Q. -- as I recall the evidence.
A. Yes. If there is going to be a suggestion of a
mandating of a model, then I think that there needs to be
analysis of what that actually means and then a relook at a
structure that would sit underneath that which actually
enables the intent of the SES to be delivered. I guess it
goes to a number of other questions about where the
Commission may seek to make recommendations in relation to
payment and professionalisation and a whole range of things
that seem to be intended in here. I'm not quite sure where
it's going, but I think we have to look at it as a whole package, rather than break it down into component parts.

Q. The process that you have described with Toowoomba Regional Council, is that process being driven by local government on an ad hoc basis or is EMQ actively involved in that in some sort of collaborative or supervisory role?

A. That's being driven by local government. There is no policy approach that EMQ is taking at present, simply because we are, I guess, waiting for the Commission to finish its work, understanding that it is going to focus on this particular area. So, we have made no proactive moves in that area.

Q. Do you see it as desirable for the practical arrangements to reflect the intent of the Act in this regard or what we infer the intent to be - because, as you have said, it's not made explicit but the inference seems to be that this is the structural arrangement that's intended?

A. The difficulty with having a single approach mandated by legislation is that the local governments have very different character. There are big, very well-resourced financially and otherwise councils, there are very, very small remote and regional councils. So, to have a single model that applies uniformly to all of those, without some recognition that there is either a variance that goes to the core of what it is that you might want to legislate or that there needs to be a recognition that there might need to be some practical approach to that, either a substructure that sits under local controller and recognise that through either legislation or policy, I think, would be the way that we need to approach this.

Part of the issue that both the State and local governments confront is that there is a single piece of legislation that has some quite simple intents in it; the application of that across the variety of scale, scope and viability - in some cases - of local government makes it difficult to have a uniform application of that.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Has there been any feedback through your area and regional directors from local governments as to how the current arrangements are operating, given that different local governments have different ways in which they operate?

A. Well, I think the different ways in which they're
currently operating answers that question. Yes, there are
different views and different approaches to how local
governments have dealt with that. We have taken an
approach where we don't believe that getting into conflict
with local government over this issue is of any benefit to
the volunteers. I guess what we have now is a set of
arrangements that are not uniform but they're delivering a
reasonably uniform outcome. It comes down more to the,
almost, nomenclature about what particular roles are
called.

MR BAILEY: Q. Is that all it is, just renaming people so
it accords with the Act and managing their disenchantment
if they think they have been demoted in some way, or is it
more than that?
A. No, I really don't think so. I don't underestimate
managing the disenchantment side of it. Volunteers
volunteer for a number of reasons and for some it is to
have a very visible role in their community. But I think
across all of the - what are seen as different models, if
we actually just call people common names across that,
we're probably able to map an outcome that wouldn't mean
terribly much change.

Q. I suppose that leads into the second part of question
3: Is there an anomaly here in relation to there being
potentially more than one local controller who is put in
charge of a disaster response in a local government area?
A. Just in terms of the language used in that, a local
controller is not in charge of a disaster. I know that is
probably not the intent of it but, just reading through the
questions, I think there continues to be a level of
confusion around the function of disaster management and
the function of disaster operations.

The SES is not involved in disaster management; it
doesn't have a role in disaster management. Disaster
management is the overall coordination of the event and the
response to the event, and that's a role undertaken by a
Local Disaster Management Group, a District Disaster
Management Group and a State Disaster Management Group.
They are responsible for disaster management.

The SES is responsible for one area of operation in
disaster operations. It has its functions and it basically
should be, and is, limited to delivering those functions in
a disaster event. The issues around its management or
command and control - however you want to characterise that - only relate to the delivery of those functions, nothing more.

What we are talking about here is should a local coordinator be in command and control - a local controller, sorry, be in command and control of his or her SES unit in the delivery of their functions during a disaster event. The answer to that is yes. The model that we have just, perhaps, talked about is would a deputy local controller or a group leader the same function for the people who sit underneath them. The answer to that is yes. So, then the role of a local controller would be around coordinating those SES for the delivery of their functions only in the area of operations; do they have the right number of people, what are our priorities here versus there, and so on.

Q. But are you aware of any difficulties where single local government areas still have multiple local controllers because there are multiple units, in terms of performing the SES responsibilities?
A. No, I haven't had any evidence of that.

Q. Question 4: Does the SES Doctrine state explicitly that there should be one local controller per unit?
A. Yes, it does.

Q. Which ODI?
A. That's BMA 8, 4.1:

Each SES unit must have one local controller appointed in accordance with the DM Act.

You can have a copy of that as well.

MR McGARRITY: Thanks. So that's valid from 19 November 2010.

MR BAILEY: That is business management directive BMA 8.0.

Q. Question 5: Is there a need for greater information sharing between EMQ and local government, particularly with regard to what training EMQ has provided to the local SES and information about the SES groups in their area?
A. The issue of need here, I guess, is the question. I'm
not quite sure what a local government would do with the information. It is quite low level, in terms of who is trained and what qualifications they have. So, I'm not sure that there is a need for the data to be transferred to a local government.

Local government and the State agree on the functions of the SES for that particular area and local government may well have an interest in do we have sufficient people trained in a particular function. I think that's entirely legitimate and I would strongly encourage the most frequent possible dialogue between local government, EMQ and the local controller around those strategic issues of do we have an SES that is sufficient in number and trained to respond to the risks that are in our particular local government area. I think that's a conversation that should occur and it should occur frequently.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Just on that, is it incumbent then on the local government to make inquiries about the relevant SES capability within their area or is it incumbent on EMQ to be proactive and provide that?
A. The question of incumbency is, I guess, a little fraught. There is no policy or no framework in which that occurs. What we have, certainly through our permanent staff, is an arrangement where frequent dialogue is encouraged with local government on a range of issues around both the SES and disaster management more generally. We play a significant supporting role and advisory role to local government in the development of their local disaster management plans. If there are issues identified in terms of gaps around capability or capacity, then that's where that conversation should occur. We would never withhold information from a local government if it was requested.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 6 arises out of one of the attachments to your most recent statement. I think that's the Brisbane SES debrief.
A. Oh, yes.

Q. There was a comment in there about RFAs for flood boats and the issue of three-way tasking between Surf Life Saving Queensland, SES and QPS. Apparently there was something done in that regard which was, I think, regarded as reasonably successful. Is there anything being done to promote that further or to develop that further?
A. I guess there 's two points that are relevant to that.
One is that since then we have actually executed a memorandum of understanding with Queensland Surf Life Saving, and the second is that there is a meeting on this Friday that will include EMQ, Surf and Police, where they will finalise the arrangements - well, I'm not sure that they will finalise them on the day, but the intent is that that meeting will progress the finalisation of any documentational protocol that needs to exist around there.

This is not an issue that I have heard raised by any other part of the State. The areas where it would be most likely would be on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, where there's very active surf life saving clubs. We would certainly undertake to make whatever protocol is developed out of the Brisbane arrangements available broadly, certainly to all those councils in the coastal regions where surf life saving has a presence. That would be handled under that memorandum of understanding. It's a heads of agreement, so it doesn't go to the detail that this will, but it certainly provides a mechanism whereby these things can occur.

Q. You said that MOU has been executed?
A. Yes.

Q. Are we able to see a copy of that?
A. You can have one. It will make my folder much lighter.

Q. Thank you. Moving on to question 7, RFA Online, could you just explain how RFA Online actually works? I understand that it's the mechanism for transferring requests for help that arise through 132500. That's the starting point?
A. Yes, that's its primary - the primary input into RFA Online is calls to 132500.

Q. If you can just explain how it works?
A. RFA Online is an SES tasking system, it's not a disaster management system. Its only purpose is to capture, record, manage and report on SES tasks. It can do that by categories, and so on. As I say, principally, a call from a member of the public for assistance will come to 132500.

Since the last sittings of the Commission, we have worked with Smart Service Queensland and we have actually
developed an onscreen interface. Previously there were about three steps to get a call into RFA Online. Now the operator can directly input the data into RFA Online. There's one step, so it's both efficient and it avoids duplication and opportunities for error.

That then comes into RFA Online and those tasks can then be distributed to particular SES groups, and those groups that have RFA Online - and not all have it as yet. Some don't have connectivity, some don't have computers. I will deal with that, if you like, at the end of the question. So, they can get visibility of that. If they don't have RFA Online, we can certainly deploy - it's a deployable capability. A group of people with laptops can go into a centre, connect in wirelessly, get the information and start then to manage RFA Online.

Q. How do you mean "get visibility of that"?
A. The number of jobs, the type of jobs. All of that information, if you like, helps to be able to assess do I have enough people to meet these tasks in a reasonable time, do I have the skills, do I need something else, do I need more tarpaulins, do I need more equipment of a certain type, is this something where we might need to deploy additional people with additional skills or additional equipment. So, to anticipate and get ahead, if you like, of what the demand might be on days two and three, we actually - by being able to analyse the tasks that are immediately being input - make some assessments about the future requirements, whereas if you've just got a pile of paper, it's a bit hard to undertake that analysis.

Q. That assists in the management of ongoing needs and resources --
A. Yes.

Q. -- once the system is up and running?
A. Yes.

Q. What about at the first inception, the first hit-out? A call comes into 132500 and the SSQ operator inputs it into RFA Online?
A. Yes.

Q. Where does it go from there?
A. Just in a normal environment where we are getting a few jobs, maybe overnight, it will come to the EMQ watch
desk. That's its first destination. That's manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Then it's distributed electronically or by telephone, depending on whether the unit has RFA Online, but it would be both, particularly if it's at night.

If there is a job going to Mackay at 2 o'clock in the morning, it will come through to the watch desk and the watch desk will make an early assessment of is it something that we need to do now. So, if it's storm damage, a damaged roof, we would make a phone call to the Mackay SES and alert them to the job. If they have RFA, they'd then be able to see the job online, otherwise we would either email, fax - or what have you - the job through to them.

MR McGARRITY: Q. That communication goes to the local controller?
A. Local controller or nominee. We have a number of - we have a call tree, if you like, and they might nominate someone to be on call, those sorts of things.

MR BAILEY: Q. With the call tree, presumably your local controller is the top of the list?
A. Yes.

Q. What, is it home phone, work phone, mobile?
A. Yes.

Q. Do they have pagers?
A. Some do, I believe, yes. Very rarely, yes, but some do.

Q. All of those options are available and that's the way you bring it to their attention?
A. Yes.

Q. They turn on their computer, log in - bang - there it is?
A. Yes. I guess if I can make a point or a comment at this juncture as well, the SES is not an emergency response organisation per se. This is not triple 0 calls for immediate threat to life or immediate threat to property. This is a service provided to the community and best efforts will always be used. We don't have, if you like - Fire, Ambulance and Police will have targets for response times, and so on. We are a volunteer organisation providing a service, so expectations need to be
commensurate with both the structure and the nature of the
organisation. I think it's quite important to make that
distinction in any analysis that's being done around any
potential changes to either the structure, the funding or
the nature of the SES.

Q. Fair enough. The EMQ watch desk is at Kedron, is it?
A. Yes.

Q. How many people staff that?
A. There's a rotation. Two shifts per day of three
people.

Q. Do you have the capacity to ramp that up?
A. Yes. This is, if you like, the permanent capacity.
What they are basically there to do is to be available for
warnings. The Bureau may issue a warning for a storm in
the middle of the night; they will then distribute that,
again through a call tree, electronically - that will be
through text messages, and so on.

Q. To SES local controllers or to --
A. No. This will be to a much wider variety of people.
This will mainly be local government, other emergency
services, and so on. There are no jobs yet, this is the
warning of some extreme weather event or severe weather
event. They do tsunami warnings, they do weather warnings,
earthquake warnings - all those sort of things. Hopefully
we never get tsunamis or earthquakes.

The other things they do is manage those requests for
assistance that come through 132500 and they will
distribute those. They undertake a range of project work,
and so on.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Could I just touch on something you
mentioned previously about the SES not being an emergency
service organisation, more of a community service
organisation?
A. Mmm.

Q. Is that something that's not well understood in the
community or is there a misperception that the SES does
provide emergency services?
A. Well, there is still a misconception around the SES
that it is an entirely volunteer organisation. It's
lessening. I think some data - I'm guessing here, but I
think it was around 30 to 40 percent of people recognised that the SES was a volunteer organisation, so the balance thought they were paid. I think that drives then a misconception about their role and performance expectations. So I think, yes, that's shifted.

Again, on my understanding, one of the insurance companies has done some research and I think that recognition is now over 50 percent - raw numbers again - in terms of the recognition of volunteering.

MR BAILEY: Q. You mentioned that some SES units have the IT capacity to operate RFA Online. In percentage terms, what are we looking at there - unless you have some more specific information?
A. Look, I don't - that's current usage (handed). I guess one of the issues here is around the ability to actually connect, and the State's response to the interim recommendations from the Commission have seen some additional money flow to us for that specific purpose. We have $500,000 per annum recurrent to look at specific issues of connectivity. So, can units actually - do they have a business rate internet connection. Because the money is recurrent, if there are ones that don't and we need to fund that or need to negotiate a funding arrangement with a local government, then we have the capacity to certainly continue to fund that on a recurrent basis.

In addition to that, there is another $500,000 a year around development of application systems/software to support operations and administration. So, there is an ability now to start a program to respond, to improve the connection of RFA, for example, to all groups.

Q. You have provided us with a table, thank you, dealing with RFA use as at 7 November 2011. There are just a couple of terms in here that I would like you to explain, if you could. You say "the number using ICCS". What does ICCS stand for?
A. That's an instant coordination software of various types. Guardian is one that you have referred to previously. Other councils might be using other types of software.

Q. I see one here called Contego. That's another --
A. Yes. I'm not specifically aware of that one. I'm
certainly happy to answer if there are any particular questions that come out of that.

Q. We have jumped around a bit here because I think we've probably touched on questions 8 and 9 already. We have received some feedback that some councils are not so interested in RFA Online because they have Guardian up and running and they are happy with that.
A. Yes.

Q. They have some reservations about double-handling information by having the RFA Online as well. Is there some sort of interface between these two systems?
A. Yes.

Q. Can they operate together?
A. Maybe if I just make a comment about question 8, because I think that is still relevant around access to RFA. The intent of RFA is that it is made available. It's not a system that we are seeking to protect. Clearly it's containing information around properties that are damaged, and so on, so there's an element that we do need to provide some security, so it's password protected but within the disaster management environment, it's made freely available. There is no intent to limit its use other than to protect the privacy of people who have their details entered on it. It's available to councils as well. It's available via the web, so you can just log on, put your password in and access the information.

The question that you have just posed around any conflict between RFA and Guardian - certainly Guardian can do some of the things that RFA does. It's a system that captures information around tasks. But Guardian is principally a disaster management system, so it's around capturing information on all of the aspects of damage, of impact, of consequence that a disaster event may cause. Damage to the roads infrastructure, bridges, culverts; what are other assets that have been damaged; calls from the public around perhaps a nursing home that has been impacted; all of those sorts of things.

I guess the power of Guardian is that it is designed to link into the back end of councils' systems, so systems around their rates base and all the data that they would hold around their community and the infrastructure within their local government. RFA is specifically a system
designed to manage the tasking of the SES, so it is very, very specific, it is very, very narrow. It is not to do anything else, not intended to do anything else.

I think the second part of your question was about the movement of data. We are working - and we have provided some funding to the developers of Guardian - to have an interface between RFA and Guardian so that summary data can move across, so that information on jobs that have come through RFA can be displayed geo-spatially, so we can put them on a map. We can provide applications to councils to do that if they don't have the capability, a program called TOM, Total Operations Mapping. So either through that - we don't really care how they use it, but we are working towards making that information available both electronically and in reporting format, if that's needed.

MR McGARRITY: Q. What sort of timeframe would you be looking at for that compatibility to be --
A. This would be our next wet season outcome.

MR BAILEY: Q. 2012/2013?
A. Yes.

Q. Job completion for RFA Online would be logged by the SES on the ground?
A. Yes.

Q. It goes back into the system --
A. Yes.

Q. -- that is monitored by EMQ?
A. Mmm.

Q. And presumably --
A. Well, may or may not be, depending on the nature of the event. There are some events where EMQ has no need and no expectation that we would become involved. That can be a reasonably sized but localised event. The local controller and his or her team will manage that and provide the reporting of all that information. Major, complex events, that's when we start to get into providing some level of assistance and oversight.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is that decision made when the initial RFA goes to the watch desk, whether or not EMQ wants to monitor the situation or perhaps get involved at a later
date?
A. There would be two ways of managing that. Again, there is a question later on about duty officers. If we were receiving a number of requests for assistance in a particular localised area, we would provide those to the SES and we would also advise the duty officer that there is an event of some substance occurring. Then the local controller or the executive of the SES and the duty officer would work out how they wanted to manage that; is there a need, is there some assistance required from EMQ, is the SES happy and capable of managing that on their own. That would be a negotiated outcome.

Q. Now might be actually opportune to just get some more information about the role of the duty officer and where they fit into the picture?
A. That's pretty much it. It's an on-call - they are our staff, so our permanent staff; they are on-call, so they have a mobile phone with a consistent number for each region. There is a State duty manager at the moment. We are looking to perhaps move away from a State duty manager. Now that we have additional resources in the watch desk, there's probably not a need to have that. They are there really for the specific purpose of managing out-of-hours operations.

MR BAILEY: Q. Just getting back to the use of RFA Online, this document provided to us is a static snapshot of where we are at?
A. Yes.

Q. What encouragement, if you will, is being given in terms of the take-up or the roll-out of the system? What is being done to promote it and how far do you expect this to go?
A. My objective is to have it in all SES units and groups. Whether that is achievable or not, that's a stretch but certainly a target. Now, there are some issues. How much effort do we need to go through for a Paroo or a Bulloo Shire Council, with a population of 350 in 90,000 square kilometres, to put a complex IT system in. They can probably manage their events on a whiteboard with post-it notes very effectively.

So, that would be an assessment that would be made. Is there actually a benefit in going down that path? There's certainly a benefit to EMQ because every bit of
data helps and the more quickly we can gather the data and
be able to use that in the disaster management framework,
then that is beneficial. But we certainly wouldn't want to
impose an onerous obligation onto a small remote council
when there is no benefit from it. So, that would be, I
guess, a determining factor.

Is there a strategy in operation today to roll it out,
other than active encouragement by our regions? The answer
to that is no. Will there be, now that we have been able
to secure some funding so that we can actually be much more
proactive in saying if the reason you're not using this is
because you don't have the infrastructure, we can solve
that problem for you. So, post- this wet season - we won't
be doing anything probably until March but come next year,
we will be actively working with local governments and SESs
to promote the use of RFA where it is not currently used.

We are starting to - with all new things there is
always a bit of resistance. The fact that we have now used
it very, very effectively and a number of people on
deployment, particularly for Cyclone Yasi and to Townsville
and Cairns, have seen how effective it can be in making the
management of tasking much more efficient.

Q. Moving on to question 10, again this arises out of the
Brisbane SES debrief note. There was a comment there about
radio channels and radio equipment in Far North Queensland
being different from what was in use by SES groups deployed
from South-East Queensland, and compatibility problems. Is
that being addressed?
A. What I understand occurred there is Brisbane City
Council has issued digital radios to a number of their SES
units. That's not a standard practice, so that's not the
standard for the SES. Digital radios don't work on UHF
channels and never will. In the rest of the State, any UHF
radio will work on those repeater sites in Far North
Queensland. It was really an issue of some non-standard
equipment having been issued.

Are digital radios better than UHF? The answer to
that's probably yes. We don't have them Statewide, so we
do need a Statewide solution to be able to provide
consistent outcomes when we move people around, and that's
a very significant issue for the SES.

Q. Is that to be regarded as an isolated incident?
A. I think it's an anomaly, an isolated case.

Q. Can it readily be solved by issuing UHF equipment on deployment?
A. I think they have the UHF, they have just chosen, of their own volition, to issue a different type of radio. I think the reason for that is they actually have a digital network for their own council staff, so they actually have the infrastructure and they have made that call. It's an issue that we will need to be aware of in any future deployments either into or out of Brisbane.

Q. Whose responsibility would it be for additional UHF radio equipment? Would EMQ provide that to a Brisbane group?
A. That's equipment that we provide through our funding stream, yes. But, again, I don't think the issue was that they didn't have enough equipment; the issue was that they chose to use different equipment.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Just on that point, could EMQ staff, in the instance of that employment, direct those people who are on deployment to use UHF as opposed to trying to stick with the digital equipment?
A. That's what would have happened. I think what you've got is some volunteers who said, oh, we were deployed to North Queensland and our radios didn't work.

Q. This is just an observation, effectively --
A. Yes.

Q. -- from those people?
A. They would be immediately issued with UHF radios and connected in. It's probably somebody has seen it as you know.

Q. As a problem that doesn't really exist?
A. As a problem - yes, that's right.

MR BAILEY: Q. That is easily addressed?
A. Yes. We certainly wouldn't want to see more instances of individual councils making individual decisions around equipment because that then flows back to a whole range of issues around management and support. Training is based on an equipment profile. Radios are not related to - well, they are related to safety in the instance that if you're not in communication, then that can be an issue, but it's
not a direct safety issue. But different equipment can bring with it safety issues, particularly when the training and the equipment are not aligned. So, there's a whole range of things that flow back and it comes back to the dilemma always about standardisation provides uniformity and efficiency. People can always identify that in this particular circumstance, this other piece of equipment would be better or, more often, "I like this particular piece of equipment so why can't I? Why don't we use it?"

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is Brisbane City Council the only council you are aware of at the moment that supplies digital equipment?
A. Yes, it's the only one I'm aware of.

MR BAILEY: Did you want to deal with question 11?

MR McGARRITY: Yes.

Q. Question 11. I think this was an attachment to your statement. There was some suggestion of an SES supporters website for businesses and I think that was a means of saying thank you for allowing your employees to attend SES business, perhaps during work hours, and so forth. Has there been any movement on that or any --
A. It's a great idea. I can't find where I said it.

Q. I think it was attachment 12.
A. Oh, okay.

Q. It might have been in part of the debrief, actually.
A. Yes - no. This is a - yes

Q. So it's not an EMQ --
A. No. But, look, it's something we attempt to do on a regular basis ad hoc. We always take the opportunity to publicly thank employers. We offer certificates so employers can have a visible - you know, identify that they have supported the SES. I think the issue raised is a good idea and we have looked to put something on our website or on the volunteer portal. It's not something that I have actively turned my mind to, to this point, but now that you have raised it, I will.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 12: If you could just describe the role and functions of taskforces and how they are selected, including a brief overview of their deployment?
A. Yes. A taskforce for the SES is established when it's identified that there is a resource requirement, a particular skill set that might be required or in anticipation of those two things. Now, there are two ways that a taskforce could come about; one is through a specific request from the receiving group, so either through the local controller or the Local Disaster Management Group there, or if, for example, the district or the State Disaster Management Group, based on data available to it, was generating a concern that something might be going to happen in the future, it could anticipate and say, look, we need to be ready, so we might look at either pre-deploying or having a deployment ready in anticipation of a need presenting itself. They're the two ways in which a deployment might be mounted.

The selection is - there's a couple of stages to that. One, we would go to an area where they have no activity or little activity. So we wouldn't be - you know, if there's a flood coming to Brisbane, we wouldn't be looking for Ipswich or the south-west region, we'd be saying, okay, we need to go to our central northern or far northern regions to select those taskforces. It's based on a risk assessment of what potential there is for an event to occur in the area where we might be selecting people from.

The participation in it is voluntary, so an individual SES member - we will put the call out through the local controller and group leaders that we need this sort of taskforce. They will receive a document that says this is what the taskforce is for, this is the sort of skills we want, this is where it will be, this is the duration; all of the details that would reasonably be expected that people should know. That's documented.

They will then talk to their members and people will volunteer. They will come back to Kedron and say we have two, three, five, ten volunteers willing to be part of the deployment. We'll then manage all of that, select people and then the deployment will occur.

They get briefings before they go, before they are to leave. They will get a briefing when they arrive. So, they will be told what you are going for, what to expect, etc. They will then get a briefing when they arrive about what's actually happening on the ground, any particular issues, the conditions they are likely to be working in,
the sort of tasks they will be looking at, what the coordination management incident control arrangements will be, etc.

They will then stay for - what is it? A day there, a day back - it's usually three days on the ground, to manage fatigue. They always want to stay longer. Then they will get a debrief when they return and an opportunity to present any issues they might have encountered, to make suggestions for improvements, and so on. Those things are captured.

Q. Question 13 --
A. Sorry. And they will be accompanied - and I think 13 might go to this, about EMQ's role in that? No.

Q. No.
A. All task forces are accompanied by an EMQ liaison officer. There are a couple of reasons for that. Having permanent staff with deployments is a good thing, and they also hold a credit card so they can pay for accommodation, pay for meals, meet any incidentals. You know, if a chainsaw breaks, they can go and buy another chainsaw at Bunnings, or whatever it is we need. They can take care of all of those issues around support and welfare, and so on, for the volunteers.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is it the liaison officer who conducts the briefing and the debriefing sessions?
A. It may or may not be. It depends. I've done it on occasion, the people who are raising - who are managing the coordination of the deployments might do it, a regional director could do it, an area director could to do it.

Q. But it's always an EMQ officer?
A. Yes. I've not seen one - I mean, I can imagine a circumstance where it might be a local controller who's given the information. There's no reason to say that it couldn't be. But in all the instances I have seen, it has been EMQ, simply because we have been the organisation actually managing all of the logistics, so we have all the information, pretty much.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 13 I think we have touched on already in the context of question 2, although I think question 2 dealt with cross-recognition of RFB type training.
A. Yes.

Q. I suppose we are asking there is there any scope for broader recognition?
A. If you like, that's our applicant guide for recognition of prior learning (handed), so that's how we approach it. I guess I have a couple of observations. From a policy position, we certainly recognise prior learning; we have a predisposition to ensure that we do that. Being a very widely distributed organisation with a volunteer executive, over which we exercise a level of control but not a management type control, there are certainly, I guess, around the State some variations in interpretation of the policy.

I know of instances where people have indicated that it is very difficult in the local environment to get recognition of prior learning and they are retrained in things. That's certainly not something that we are supportive of. Through our training team, we are working through our regions to provide as much information, encouragement, support for RPL as an instrument for people to get skills.

Having said that, very clearly we won't compromise standards. The safety of our volunteers is always our primary objective and we won't resile from that. If that creates a conflict, and so on, then I will always err on the side of providing a safe working environment and ensuring that I can demonstrate that safe working environment. So that's, I guess, our position.

Having said that, it has been raised sufficient times throughout the course of this Inquiry and in the noise that an Inquiry of this nature creates in the community, so I think that there is certainly an issue for volunteers around the ease of access to a recognition of prior skills, prior learning.

What we will do after this wet season is I will have an independent assessment conducted around our training environment, its appropriateness, focusing primarily on the delivery. I don't think there is any issue with the programs themselves. That's never come into question. It's around how are those training outcomes delivered. We will be undertaking that from around March next year and that will be a - I haven't actually let it yet, I haven't
written the terms of reference for it, but it will
certainly be broad-based and volunteers will certainly be a
primary source of information for that.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is it in some respects an issue of
awareness, in that EMQ has this policy and these systems in
place for RPL and perhaps the volunteers are just not aware
of it or they haven't been informed about its existence?
A. No, I don't think so. I'd be very surprised if
volunteers weren't aware of the availability of an RPL
process - very, very surprised. I think the issue is in
its application and in the processes that need to support
it. I think there's too many steps at the moment. It
comes from the volunteer to the trainer to the local
controller to EMQ to our training group. I think, by
design, it is a complex and convoluted process.

MR BAILEY: Q. There is no one sticking point; it's an
elongated sort of process?
A. That's right, yes. It is a process issue, in my view,
and probably a performance issue across the service around
ensuring that there is a consistent and common application
of the policy intent in all areas of the SES.

Q. When you say this process is involved, going up
through the volunteer, the trainer, the local controller,
where does the process stop? Who signs off on it?
A. It gets signed off in our training unit. They are the
people who are responsible for ensuring our registered
training organisation, compliance, and so on.

Q. Are they the ones who will give or provide
acknowledgment of prior learning?
A. They will assess the documentation that has been
prepared at either the group or unit level, it's gone
through the region and then comes to us. In my opinion,
there are too many steps in that and each one of those
steps - given that transmission of information from
volunteer to paid service is often slow. Paperwork is not
something that people who volunteer sign up to do. So, I
think in each step of that process there is an opportunity
for delay, impediment, misunderstanding. It moves up to
the next stage, they haven't met this part of the standard,
it goes back and then people throw their hands up and say
this is all too hard. That, I think, is a legitimate
concern and certainly one that we will be moving to
overcome.
Q. The review that you talk about implementing next year is designed to --
A. To streamline that process. If there are issues of marketing in that - if we go out and poll the volunteers and I am wrong and most of them say "I didn't know we had access to RPL", then that will obviously be an issue that we will need to address.

MR McGARRITY: Is now a good time to take a break?

MR MacSPORRAN: That would suit us for other reasons.

MR McGARRITY: We will take five minutes.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR BAILEY: Q. Moving on to question 14, it's just a query about swift water rescue. Is there any place for SES volunteers receiving some level of training in that regard?
A. I don't believe so. Swift water rescue is a Queensland Fire and Rescue Service function. It's governed by an internal policy called State Rescue Policy, which is a policy internal to our department. It simply seeks to identify roles and responsibilities for rescue functions so that we are not doubling up, and so on. Swift water rescue, I think, is a specialised function and should remain within the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

Q. Can you envisage any situations where there is a fine line between flood-boat operations and swift water, because the definition of swift water is, I think, anything moving faster than about 2 kilometres per hour. There is, potentially, that line between when are you operating in floodwater and when are you operating in swift water?
A. The difference, I guess, is we don't enter the water to pull people out. We will, in a boat, pull people into the boat, and we have procedures and people are trained to do that. They are not trained to go into the water to retrieve someone. That's Fire and Rescue.

Q. That training is covered as part of flood-boat operations?
A. Yes, the taking somebody out of the water into the boat, yes. If you are interested, that is a copy of the -- (handed).
MR McGARRITY: Thank you. That is a document titled
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, State Rescue Policy.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 15: The possibility of providing
incentive payments to SES members for attendance at
training exercises or courses, is there some value in that
suggestion?
A. I think it goes to the heart of volunteering and
volunteerism. Certainly there is a very strong view
amongst the SES membership that they hold the fact that
they are volunteers extremely dear to their heart; they do
it as a sense of community. If you shift it to some form
of payment - not compensation. If someone is out of pocket
for something, that's different and, yes, they should be
compensated for that. That's a very different set of
arrangements than people being remunerated for an activity.
It then, I think, shifts the nature of why people
participate in it.

It then also brings a significant overhead, in terms
of administration and governance, because we're talking
about the public purse. So, if we are starting to move
into an arrangement where most volunteers receive a payment
that is a remuneration type payment, then I think we are
fundamentally changing the nature of the organisation and
the way we have to administer it, manage it, report on it.
Those things then become subject to Queensland Audit Office
and that brings then a whole new level of - so I think that
it's starting to move on to quite dangerous ground for the
SES to move into a remuneration model, particularly one
that's ad hoc.

MR McGARRITY: Q. But currently members who do attend
training and have out-of-pocket expenses are compensated?
A. If they had to move to another location to attend the
training, then in most cases they would - if they make a
claim, then that would be covered. Someone going to
deliver training who is out of pocket, yes, but they don't
receive any payment for attendance at training.

Q. If a member had to travel 50 kilometres to attend a
training session in use of a chainsaw, could they then
claim for a fuel reimbursement?
A. Yes, strictly speaking, they could. Very few that I
am aware of do.

Q. But the mechanism is there if they want to avail
themselves of it?
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. And they are aware of that?
A. I would assume so, yes. I mean, it's not something we're out there promoting every day of the week. What I hear is it's more the commitment of time than the actual cost - than a direct cost.

Q. Going to your most recent statement, attachment 1 is Approved SES Functions. I take it that is a complete list of SES functions?
A. Yes, the one that you have got is, I believe.

Q. As opposed to it being referable to any particular unit?
A. The one that has been added in recent times is fundraising, so as long as it has that on it. It's at the very bottom of the blue section. I will give you the document Approved SES Functions (handed).

MR McGARRITY: Q. What is the date of this document?
A. It is current. It's an attachment to a doctrine but I'm not sure what dates, but I can assure you it is current.

Q. So that's current, Approved SES Functions, one page?
A. Yes. The issue of fundraising I think you have referenced a couple of times and I might just give you a very quick background as to why fundraising has been added. The SES are covered for the purpose of insurance whilst they are conducting an approved function. SES, on many occasions, are given opportunities to fundraise in their local communities, running a sausage sizzle or doing traffic control, and getting some compensation for that.

This was almost an administrative purpose for adding this. They're doing it and there were some occasions where they were asked "Do you have public liability insurance?" So if someone trips on the corner of the BBQ table, were they covered. This was simply included in the functions to make sure that they had appropriate insurance coverage in the conduct of those. There was no other reason for doing it.

MR BAILEY: Q. We might just move on to question 18. You stated in your evidence in the first round that you did not
consider the SES should be a completely State-run service with a definite command and control structure as exists in New South Wales. Can you expand on your reasons for why such a model may not be suitable in Queensland?

A. Can I just say at the outset that I don't think that's actually what I said. I was asked a specific question about did I agree with the New South Wales - something around the New South Wales model, and I said it's not a model that is directly transferable and applicable because there's a range of differences. What I was alluding to was it's fraught to just say we can simply take a model from another jurisdiction and overlay it in Queensland and it will be effective.

The reason for that difference - and the two models that are, I guess, most applicable are those in New South Wales and Victoria. That's more because of the population density and the size, and so on, of the SESs in those two States compared to the others, which are quite small. The first is that in those jurisdictions, the SES does have a direct role in disaster management. They have a concept of combat agency. So the SES for flood and storms is the combat agency, so it is responsible for disaster management, i.e. the overall coordination of the response to the event or series of events and to the response activity itself.

Q. This gets back to the distinction you were drawing before --

A. Yes.

Q. -- between disaster management and disaster --

A. Operations.

Q. Discrete operations?

A. Yes, yes. That brings with it an overhead and some of their funding is related to disaster management and some of it's related to disaster operations. Now, EMQ, as an organisation, covers both of those, so there is some comparison but there would be a significant body of work to be able to unpack the models and start to get some direct comparisons between the three jurisdictions and where the money actually goes, because we all do something a little bit different and we all fund things slightly differently.

In both New South Wales and Victoria, there is a separate office of emergency management. That's combined
here in Queensland. EMQ does all of those things. We run a helicopter rescue service, so that would have to be backed out. Some administer grants, some don't. There are a whole range of costs that are not necessarily apples for apples comparisons. If we are to make those comparisons, I think there is a body of work that needs to be done - and it hasn't been done, as far as I am aware - that actually starts to do some analysis of the jurisdictions.

The other aspect of it is the role of local government and the role of local government in Queensland is fundamentally different to in the other two jurisdictions. In New South Wales and Victoria it's a relatively passive involvement; in Queensland they are actually acknowledged in the legislation that they have a role in both disaster management and the SES. In the other jurisdictions there's some legislated responsibilities of local government; ours, there is probably less clarity around them. There are a lot of differences there, so I'm just cautioning that it's not simply being able to take one model and then overlay it onto a different jurisdiction.

MR McGARRITY: Q. I think we probably touch upon this later on in the questioning but it is related to what we are talking about presently. Is there anything within either the New South Wales or Victorian models that you think could perhaps work in Queensland that perhaps currently isn't being done with respect too SES?
A. The arrangements in those States, I think, provide a level of clarity that is absent and the cause of some of the lines of questioning and the focus of the current Commission and its work. To say that there is nothing we can learn from those jurisdictions, I think, would be wrong.

However, what I would strongly encourage is that if we are going to make recommendations around that, that it be based on a much more detailed analysis than has been available to us at this time. Without wanting to make any suggestions as to where the Commission should go with its recommendations, I think the authority that a recommendation would bring to a detailed analysis of the benefits and disadvantages of opportunities that may be presented from other jurisdictions would certainly be an outcome that would be beneficial to the SES. Making a recommendation to simply apply something because it --
MR BAILEY: Q. Sounds good.
A. -- looks like it - or it sounds sensible, without
taking the time to actually map through both intended and
unintended consequences of that to funding, membership,
culture, is fraught to either underestimate or misrepresent
the importance of culture to a volunteer organisation. It
is the only reason that people join and if we have an
unintended consequence that goes to the heart of that
culture, then we will disenfranchise a huge number of
existing volunteers and a huge number of potential
volunteers, because I think the reason why new ones are
going to volunteer is pretty much the same reason why
current ones volunteer.

I think there are lots of good things in the
legislation, the policy frameworks and the operation of the
SES in other jurisdictions. Whenever they have come here,
we have been terribly impressed with their approach, their
professionalism, their levels of training - all of the
things. There's nothing there that I can point to to say,
well, we don't want to touch that because they are not a
good organisation. Far from it. They are excellent
organisations and we are always happy to learn.

Q. If a review or an analysis of the type that you have
mentioned was to be conducted, who would be the best person
or organisation to do it?
A. I believe there would be an advantage in a level of
independence but I think it would also need to be
controlled with some sort of a governance arrangement that
had key stakeholders. I think those key stakeholders would
certainly need to include the Department of Community
Safety and EMQ, would certainly need to involve local
government, probably at the peak body level - the LGAQ - as
well as a couple of representative councils - maybe a large
one, a small one and a remote one, something along those
lines - and would absolutely have to include volunteers.
There would have to be some level of volunteer
representation on that, in my opinion, and again it would
have to be broad based. So, whatever the recommendations
were, I think, would need to be tested through the
volunteer, local government and State government.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Would there be any role for a
Commonwealth agency - for example, Emergency Management
Australia - to play in any part of that review or is that
not something that --
A. No. The Commonwealth play very little role in the SES. An organisation like AFAC, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Council, has an interest in the SES. It has an SES group that are full members of AFAC, with all jurisdictions represented, called ACSES, Australian Council of State Emergency Services. That would probably - now, it's a non-government organisation but it is independent and its only purpose is to serve its membership, which are all jurisdictional emergency service authorities through Fire and the SES. It has a level of independence but it also has some equity in the outcome, some interest in the outcome and some expertise to offer. So, it might be an organisation that we could include.

MR BAILEY: Q. Could I just step back to the idea of approved SES functions for a moment?
A. Yes.

Q. In the material that we have sourced from various entities - I cite by way of example a response from the Gladstone Regional Council where they talk about their particular approved functions. They have listed those in a document for us. What I am interested in is the detail to which they descend, in that they have a unit and eight subsidiary groups and they have the functions listed for each one of those groups, just by way of a table. You're welcome to have a quick look at that, if you like. It's just that table there.
A. Mmm.

Q. They descend to a level of detail in terms of what each group can do by way of approved function. Is there any sort of register held by EMQ that documents all of this information on a Statewide basis?
A. I don't believe I have it in aggregate - you know, it's in table - but certainly the functions are approved through, or the role is assigned to, our chief executive but delegated. So, we can certainly create one.

Q. Are you aware of whether the approved functions are listed on a unit level, or does it descend to the level of individual group approved functions, as that document --
A. If it's at a unit level, then those functions are applicable to all groups within that local government area. If there is a desire to limit it or include an additional one for a particular group, then that would be a variation. So, if we only had six functions for a unit, then every
group in that unit would have all six functions.

Q. That is the way EMQ looks at it?
A. Yes.

Q. The council comes along --
A. But it's quite appropriate for that council to limit, if they wish to, the way they have there. That's entirely appropriate.

Q. That is up to the local government --
A. Yes.

Q. -- rather than EMQ?
A. Exactly.

Q. If they do this, do they --
A. It's by agreement. We approve the functions but we are required by the legislation to consult with local government. Basically, we ask them what functions do you believe you need; we'll then agree on that. If our region comes back and says they've actually got a flood-boat risk, we then have to start a negotiation around, well, why isn't flood-boat a function of your council. But it would be by negotiation.

Q. The approved functions, from your point of view, operate at a unit level and if the council wants to be a bit more discriminating about particular groups --
A. Absolutely.

Q. -- that is a matter for them?
A. Yes.

Q. Independently of the --
A. That's right. A classic example would be road crash rescue, which is a function that very few SES units or groups have because it's primarily a function of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. However, if there is a gap in their coverage, we can provide that. So, there may be a group that is trained in road crash rescue but the whole unit doesn't require it because they are not in an area that needs road crash rescue.

Q. How often, if at all, are the agreed functions reviewed or updated as between EMQ --
A. There's no requirement for a review period. It's as
often as they're needed. If everybody is happy with the
current functions, then they remain static.

Q. But at any time a council can turn around and say --
A. Yes.

Q. -- we would like to rejig this a bit. No problem?
A. No problem.

Q. Is that an easy process?
A. Yes. I mean, it would only be difficult if there was
a dispute and I can't imagine a circumstance where it would
be, unless it was something around highly specialised and
expensive equipment that was required that wasn't able to
be funded. If there was a very low risk - and some units
would love to have a flood boat but they haven't got a real
risk. It's $70,000 for a flood boat, there's lots of
training required for flood-boat operators. If they are
never going to use the flood boat then it's a poor
allocation of scarce resources. So, that might be an issue
where there could be a level of - I wouldn't quite put it
in terms of conflict, but there could be a difference of
view, but we'd just have to negotiate through that.

Q. Who within EMQ conducts a negotiation?
A. Regional director or area director. It's done at the
local level because they know the circumstances best.

Q. Any approval to a change of functions can be given by
a regional director?
A. The approval can't. Certainly we would take the
negotiation, in terms of we and they agree.

Q. And they would make a recommendation?
A. Our agreement would be based very much on the
recommendation of a regional director or an area director.

Q. Does the final sign-off come down to you, does it?
A. Yes.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Can I just ask - this is probably
descending into the technicalities of it. We talked
earlier about local governments perhaps having more than
one SES unit within their regional boundary, but the
agreement as to functions is between EMQ and the local
government; basically, the council. Is there then an
expectation that it's the council, rather than each unit
within that council area, that can perform the agreed list
of functions? I'm thinking here is there perhaps a risk
that where you have four units, two of those units can
effectively perform the functions that have been agreed
upon by the council and there may be occasions whereby the
council and EMQ has come to an agreement as to the
functions that they can perform but when it gets down to
the ground level, a particular unit can't actually perform
the functions?
A. That would be one of the prime considerations that our
people would have in that negotiation with council. If a
unit has three people and they want to have flood boats,
they can't because they need four people trained in
flood-boat operations - so those very practical elements.
We would be talking to the local controller or the group
leader around those negotiations as well.

MR BAILEY: Q. They would have to produce some evidence
that the capacity they are seeking can be fulfilled?
A. Yes, that's right. It goes to risk. Again, if you
don't have a creek in your patch then having a flood boat -
I mean, it's really about a very practical set of
arrangements that deal with the risks that present
themselves in a particular area.

MR McGARRITY: Q. In practice, for example, the local
government - the CEO or whomever - would discuss with the
local controllers within the council what can we do, what
can't we do, because we need to sign this agreement. Is
that effectively how it would work?
A. Yes. It comes both from the ground up, an SES unit
wanting to do something or believing they should, and local
government and EMQ saying, well, is that reasonable, is
there a risk to address, what are the consequences of that
in terms of cost, in terms of training, in terms of all the
issues.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 19: The SES operates an exit
survey process for members who leave. Can you describe
this process, including how surveys are administered, who
does it, how it is marketed or made known to members and
what happens with the results?
A. Yes. I guess the first observation to make around
this and without wanting to be flippant, when I asked them
about this, most of my people said that most SES members
fade away rather than - so, it's a function of age, or what
have you, and they just simply decide that they're no
longer able or willing or capable of participating. In those cases, those people would not fill out an exit survey; they would just simply say farewell and head off.

The other primary reasons for people leaving is relocation or work, and/or both. A lot of people in the rural environment now fly in/fly out, drive in/drive out. Mining is a huge industry in rural and regional areas. It doesn't lend itself to SES membership. Some manage it but many don't. With that, they choose to leave.

Certainly there are a number of people for whom the SES didn't meet their expectations, for whatever reason. They're usually the ones who fill out an exit survey.

Exit surveys are made available electronically and physically to anybody who is leaving. Can I sit here and put my hand on my heart and say that everybody is actively managed and provided with a copy? No, I'd be silly to say that.

There is probably some work that we can do in marketing. I think it is a very useful tool that allows us to take the temperature of the organisation and if people are leaving because of legitimate pressures of work or family reasons or physical relocation, then that's something that's useful to know but it's not driving at the heart of the culture of the organisation. If everybody is leaving because they think it's a terrible organisation or they're being bullied, or whatever it is, then that is really important information. I would absolutely agree that if we can do more to capture that, then that's something that we should do. So, we will look at opportunities to better and more extensively market the exit survey.

Q. We just have a specific question there as well. There was --
A. Did you want a copy of the documentation around that? There is a --

MR McGARRITY: Yes, please.

THE INTERVIEWEE: There is a doctrine and there is a copy of the survey.

MR McGARRITY: Thank you. That is Business Management
Directives BMH 26.5, Cessation of Membership.

Q. In your statement dated 30 September, you attached various surveys that had been conducted by the SES over the past few years.
A. Yes.

Q. There was a recent Sunday Mail article in which the minister referred to a specific survey of 600 members.
A. Yes.

Q. We just want to confirm whether or not that was one of the surveys that was attached to your --
A. Yes, it is the one. I think it's 19.

Q. 19?
A. Yes. It's the last one of those surveys and it is the same one.

Q. No worries. We just wanted to confirm that.
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 20 --
A. I think we have done that one.

MR BAILEY: We have discussed the role of duty officers. Are you satisfied with that?

MR McGARRITY: Yes, we did touch on duty officers.

Q. Duty officer and regional duty officer, are they essentially the same thing?
A. Simply location. There's seven regional duty officers. Each region has a duty officer at any one time. They're on-call, so it's our permanent staff on-call, out-of-hours work. There is currently a State duty manager - that's one person - from Kedron head office. We are looking at, as I said previously, with the introduction of the additional staff into the watch desk, the need for a State duty manager, and we will probably do away with that in the near future.

Q. Just to confirm, the duty officers in the regions can be any one of a number of the EMQ staff? That's rotated around?
A. Yes. It's usually more senior staff; area directors, regional directors, some of the more senior and experienced
training officers. The function is when something does get a little bit more complex and people are either wanting local knowledge or a decision about should we/shouldn't we, if there's a judgment in it, so it's people who actually have some experience.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 21: Can you explain how the Statewide natural hazard risk assessment - Risk Frontiers - will be utilised?
A. In relation to the SES directly, not at all.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Not at all?
A. No. This is a planning instrument for local disaster management plans. Now, will those plans potentially drive some activity in the SES? Possibly. If the risk profile identifies something that has either not been properly identified or for which the mitigation arrangements are inappropriate, then that may have a consequence to the SES. But the purpose of that is not for driving any change or changes in the SES. It's purely for planning at the local disaster management plan level.

Q. Just on that point, was EMQ involved in any early stages when it was decided that this Statewide hazard assessment would be undertaken?
A. Yes. The reason for it - what drove the establishment of this was discussions between all of the State jurisdictions and the federal government and, primarily, it's around ensuring that there's a connection between grant funding for resilience and a risk profile. The secondary benefit of it is that it actually allows, I guess, some independent assessment of the risk profiles across the State and that is a useful instrument in assessing those local disaster plans. So, the purpose is twofold; one is to make sure there is a clear connection between streams of funding directed at real risks and then, secondly, an assistance to planning.

Q. One of those streams of funding you referred to would be the NDRP?
A. Yes.

Q. The Natural Disaster Resilience Program?
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Moving on to command and control, question 22, what is the status of the document "EMQ Roles and
Responsibilities in support of Disaster Management Arrangements"?
A. It's currently still in draft. We are just about to put on some additional staff at the moment. One of the functions of that will be to resolve it. We anticipate that it will be finalised, subject to any issues in consultation, through early December this year. It has just simply been a resourcing issue. We have had a little bit to do over the last couple of months.

MR McGARRITY: Understandable.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Are you happy with the watch desk part of that?

MR McGARRITY: I think we have covered that sufficiently, thanks.

MR BAILEY: Q. Similarly, question 23 we have covered. A. Yes. Do you have the doctrine on deployments?

Q. Is that 8.0?
A. 8.0. You have that?

MR McGARRITY: Yes, we have that one, thank you.

Q. If we move to question 24, there has been some suggestion in the material we have received from various people that there is no direct statutory authority for tasking and deployment of the SES, but under the current legislative arrangements there is a delegation to EMQ with respect to the management and performance of the SES and local controllers, specifically, and that this provides indirect authority for tasking and deployment. Is this a view that is shared by you, that there is an indirect authority assumed?
A. Yes, it is an assumption. The Act is not clear. I think it is certainly inferred. I guess there is a level of complexity to a solution to that, if it is determined as a problem. I believe that the Act provides in two areas an opportunity for us to make doctrine that goes to the command, control and management of the SES. One is section 83 and the other is section 137, which is around making codes for practice.

We, in the SES or EMQ, have probably not used section 137 to the extent that perhaps our colleagues in Fire and
Rescue have in relation to the Rural Fire Service. I think that has more to do with the culture and nature of the organisations than anything else. The fire service is a uniformed, command and control organisation absolutely, from the start of recruitment right up to a Commissioner. Its whole structure is predicated on uniform, rank, command and control. EMQ is a public service organisation that has more of a management structure than a command and control structure, and I think that has probably driven the approach to how we deal with this.

If we use the backdrop of the events of 2010/2011 as the context to have the discussion, then I think it is very clear that greater clarity around command, control and coordination would serve the community better; that there is no confusion, it is absolutely crystal clear who is what. It's not about the issue of barking orders, and so on; it's about greater clarity around roles and responsibilities and accountabilities, in my view.

So, if there is an outcome that can be achieved that delivers greater clarity in those areas and whether that is - sorry, if I can go back, my ability to be able to articulate a - let's use command and control as an example. My ability to be articulate that, using either section 83 or section 137, can't extend - this is my view and I'm not a lawyer - beyond the intent of the legislation. I can't do something more in those sections than the legislation is either clear about or intends. I think that is probably a reasonable position to start. If the Act is silent on a level of command above local controller, then I guess it is ambiguous as to whether I can reasonably make doctrine that actually delivers that.

However, the SES is established as a State service, not as a regional service, not as a local service. So, again, my opinion is there is always an intent by the legislation that the SES will be managed as a State service. The experience, particularly of 2010/2011 and in many events prior to that, is it has to be operated as a State service because a large event immediately overwhelms capability and capacity at the local level. The whole disaster management system is predicated on that as an assumption and that's why there is a district level, a State level and a Commonwealth level. So, whilst local government is embodied in the legislation as the prime responder to an event, the legislation acknowledges that
there is going to be assistance required.

If we talk about the SES and its units and groups and if we leave to one side any confusion about local units and groups and what the structure of those should be, and we simply talk about bringing disparate bodies of SES together and being able to manage those in a coordinated way, efficiently and effectively, for the benefit of the community, then I think there is absolutely a need to have a clear structure that sits above a local controller. A local controller - in my opinion, it cannot be assumed that a local controller automatically has the capacity to manage and coordinate a major catastrophic disaster event. They are --

MR BAILEY: Q. Sorry to cut in, but you are contemplating there where other units have been deployed --
A. Yes.

Q. -- from outside the region into a location, and a local controller who normally is responsible for 40 people --
A. That's right.

Q. -- suddenly has 200 people?
A. Exactly, yes. This, I think, is where confusion reigns supreme because, historically, if there has been an attempt to codify a set of arrangements, then that is seen as an interference with local arrangements. My personal view is that's not the intent at all. If there is a local event occurring in a local area, the local controller manages it, commands and controls, does everything that is needed to respond to that. It is when it moves beyond their capability or capacity that we need a level of structure that sits above that and enables a very clear chain of command.

I don't come from a military or uniform background. I'm probably the - people don't like talking to me about uniforms and command because I don't like it. If you have to tell somebody how to do something, you have lost the plot, in my opinion. But if it clearly identifies, as I said before, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities then I think that is a really, really beneficial thing.

If I can maybe point to an arrangement that I think does work fairly well and that is in the Rural Fire
Service. If there's an event that is occurring in a
particular area, then what they do is appoint an incident
commander, and there's a fairly structured approach to
that.

In our world, that would be a flood in Roma, nowhere
else, and the local controller would be the incident
commander. If three or four rivers in the Maranoa were in
flood concurrently and we had multiple SES responding to
the same cause, then we would appoint an area commander and
that would, in most instances, be an EMQ staff member. It
wouldn't have to be, and I'll talk to that in a moment. If
the whole of South-West Queensland was in flood like it was
in 2009, then we would appoint a regional commander and
that would probably be our regional director in the
south-west. If we had multiple events across multiple
parts of the State occurring concurrently, we would appoint
a State commander.

It simply escalates the complexity, the need for
coordination, the need for logistics, the need for planning
and intelligence, all those things, to an appropriate level
but there would be greater clarity around who was doing
what. At the moment, there can be those things happening
at the local level independently of things happening at a
regional level, independently of things happening at a
State level. Everybody is well-intentioned but it's not
organised, it's not arranged, because there is no clarity
around who necessarily needs to do what.

Q. You are talking in terms of the SES still, I take it?
A. Yes.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is that reflective, perhaps, of the
hierarchical nature of the disaster management system; the
local, district, State level? Are you looking at a similar
type of --
A. Yes, but they're disconnected to the extent that
they're doing two entirely different things.

Q. Of course, but you would see that sort of movement up
the chain, so to speak?
A. Yes. The bit that would be common would be the scale
and complexity of the event. The purposes for doing it
would be fundamentally different, however. The SES is no
different to the fire service, the ambulance service or the
police service in how it needs to arrange itself as that
level of complexity and the scale escalates. Whilst I have made the distinction that it is not the triple 0 emergency responder organisation, it still has a very critical community service to provide. The more efficiently, more effectively and more rapidly it can do that, the less the community is suffering. So, there's a clear objective to make it as efficient and effective as we possibly can.

Q. Would you agree then that the key to the effectiveness of such a system would be absolute clarity around what the SES does and does not do?
A. Well, I think there is clarity - there certainly should be clarity around that because it shouldn't extend beyond its functions. That's what it's designed to do, that's what it's trained to do, that's what it's equipped to do and that's what it's managed to do.

MR BAILEY: Q. But there also has to be clarity around the roles and responsibilities as the situation escalates?
A. Yes, and it's the issue of above a local incident occurring, so this is the 5 percent of the time scenario. What is seen, I think, as a great risk - and if not properly managed, will be a great risk - is that the 5 percent of the time will be used to manage the 95 percent of the time.

SESs are established locally, they are established for the benefit of their local community - absolutely, that is a primary objective and a primary purpose - and their first port of call is to their community. However, there are circumstances - and it's the criticality of when those circumstances occur that brings a criticality to the design of an outcome that actually manages it. When it becomes critical, we have an event of usually significant or catastrophic proportions and we have to be able to move quickly, we have to be able to move effectively, we have to be able to have the right people in the right place at the right time with the right things. That doesn't just happen; it needs management, it needs coordination, it needs a level of control and it needs an ability to set priorities across all of those.

Q. I don't see any difficulty with local level operations. The SES needs to be responsive to a range of agencies when something happens. It could be 132500, it could be QFRS about something, it could be QPS about something else, a search or what have you.
A. Yes.

Q. They can self-activate all these sorts of things. So, at that local level they are responsive in a number of ways and to a number of organisations and stimuli, if you like.

A. Mmm.

Q. A local controller can be the one responsible for dealing with what his volunteers are doing. I can see that as an essential part of what they do and that's a situation that can probably operate fairly clearly. Where the difficulty seems to emerge is when you have complex operations where you need to start building up the scale to the response. You have EMQ officers feeding in to provide support and logistics, and so forth, but there also has to be that connection and integration, if you will, with the disaster management arrangements, and that seems to be a source of confusion as well. I'm talking about big, major events and how these things work in major events. You would agree, would you, that how they integrate with the disaster management structure is something that seems to have caused some confusion as well?

A. I think disasters by their very nature are chaotic and confusing. I have not experienced one where there hasn't been a level of chaos and confusion attached to it. Our objective is to limit that to the greatest extent possible.

The way that the SES - as to do all response agencies - needs to connect into the disaster management arrangements is through an appropriate liaison officer function. The SES locally should have a liaison officer with the Local Disaster Management Group and that liaison officer should be doing a couple of things. They should be taking tasks and information out of the Local Disaster Management Group that's relevant to the SES locally and feeding that through. They are the conduit through which information and, potentially, tasks might move from a Local Disaster Management Group to the local SES, and priorities.

The Local Disaster Management Group may well make decisions that say we are not going to do work in this area, our top priority is doing work in this area. That may well then change the whole concept of operations for the SES. They may be wanting to go and put tarps on roofs but the higher priority that's established is for them to go and do something else. So, that is why a liaison officer is very important. That should also be replicated.
Q. The liaison officer in each of those cases would be EMQ?
A. In the district and the State level, yes.

MR McGARRITY: Q. And at the local level?
A. At the local level it is probably going to be a member. It might not be.

Q. Not the local controller?
A. I would think that the local controller is probably more use in actually managing operations. I think there's a need for overt leadership and to be seen with your members at the coalface and directing operations is appropriate.

MR BAILEY: Q. You would see that tasking at the local level - and we're talking about a situation where the Local Disaster Coordination Centre is up and running. Tasking would come from them to the SES liaison officer, fed on then to the local controller, who would decide, in practical terms, how they are going to go about it?
A. Yes.

Q. And direct his members accordingly?
A. Yes. The Local Disaster Management Group will set priorities and will allocate tasks. It should not - and will not, whilst ever I'm around - tell the SES how to do the job, as much as it would never tell Fire how to respond to their issues, Ambulance how to deal with a multi-casualty event or Police how to deal with --

Q. But the tasking and prioritisation should come from the LDCC?
A. Yes, and in the absence of any direction, they will just simply work through their tasks in an orderly way to achieve the maximum effect. So, if the LDMG provides no direction as to tasking priority, then the SES will just get on with organising themselves to deliver on the tasks that have been provided to them.

Q. That would come through RFA Online?
A. Yes, primarily that would probably be the lion's share by volume, RFA or 132500, whether it's RFA or another mechanism to actually collate those. But, yes, requests for assistance from the general public through calls to
132500, in most instances, will be far and away the lion's share of tasks.

Q. If you go up the scale, the District Disaster Management Group is up and running as well.
A. Yes.

Q. They can provide tasking and prioritisation?
A. Probably not. There is the opportunity to do that but --

Q. Because their raison d'être is to support downwards?
A. Yes. Two purposes for the district level. One is to ensure that the local level is operating, and operating effectively and efficiently, and doing all the things that it needs to. The district officer, under the legislation, has the authority to give direction, so if they see something that should be happening that's not happening, then they can actually give directions to the Local Disaster Management Group. But they are primarily there as the first port of contact in the escalation process; when something is needed, they are able to identify whether they can source that regionally or within their sphere of influence; if not, to progress that up through to the State.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Can I just go back to something you said under the model you suggested, whereby EMQ has an area presence, a regional presence and then a State presence for SES. You said that perhaps at the area level that might be an area director who fulfills that. So, there is currently expertise within EMQ to fulfil those roles as you see them through that escalation chain?
A. My next point was going to be that I would actually see that there is a level of competency required to fulfil those tasks. If you are going to be an incident controller, commander - whatever we want to call it - then I think there should be a multi-tiered incident command and control environment similar to those encouraged through the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission; 1, 2, 3 level incident controllers, level 3 being major events Statewide. You know, highly-skilled, lots of training, down to can I manage a level - level 1, I think, is the lowest level and level 3 is the highest, sorry. You know, managing a local incident.

I would see that there would need to be a transition
through to the acquisition of a set of skills and competencies to fulfil those tasks and we would need to design a set of arrangements that people who were going to be assigned to those roles held the appropriate training and/or competency. In that model, it would, therefore, mean that there might be an occasion where a volunteer local controller or somebody in the SES might be an area or regional commander, if they hold the skill to perform that function.

So, my sense here is not about particular agencies or particular positions in agencies doing certain things. There's probably a natural order to those things that would occur in most instances, but I would see them as a competency-based appointment rather than a position-based appointment.

Q. Is there a need then for some analysis to be undertaken, firstly, as to what those competencies would be --
A. Yes.

Q. -- before you can identify the appropriate people within the area to perform it?
A. That's right. There are certainly bodies of work around the country about this. Every State, I believe, is in one way, shape or form looking at such a set of arrangements, whether it is as I have described it or whether their view is something different, but they are all, as I understand it, looking at a more structured incident command arrangement. I think that would be consistent with the things that are happening in the emergency community generally, certainly consistent with what's happening in the uniformed areas and, in my opinion, would certainly go to responding to some of the issues of confusion, or more, that have been identified in the evidence and submissions that have been provided to the Commission.

MR BAILEY: Q. Can I just jump back to the example of a local controller who is used to dealing with or managing 40 people and suddenly there's an out-of-region influx of deployment and he has 200 people on his doorstep. What command and control arrangements would you envisage in that situation for the SES operations then to be conducted?
A. If it was an area, the area commander could either take command of that or could appoint someone to do that.
That would be the way I would see it. So it could, in fact, then be that the local controller is taken out of their role of local controller and put into an area coordination role for the SES. But, again --

Q. Competency based?
A. -- it would be on competency.

Q. Do the ODIs - and I am thinking specifically of 2.0 which is the hierarchy ODI, and 4.0 which is the incident control function ODI - effectively facilitate the arrangement that you have just articulated?
A. Not really.

Q. No?
A. I think it's attempting to meet the requirements of too many people; therefore, it's unclear. All of the elements of it that have attempted to take account of particular interests or positions have had the net effect, I think, of watering down its intent and certainly its clarity. I think, thus, we find ourselves in the position that we are and people questioning the authority of our ability to be able to make such doctrine.

Q. Because it is not clear, it breeds confusion?
A. Mmm.

Q. For example, 2.0 talks about EMQ directors taking operational control when it gets beyond the capacity of a local controller.
A. Yes.

Q. 4.0 talks about EMQ appointing an incident controller.
A. Yes. Again, there's --

Q. In the context of a major event.
A. Yes. There are different issues at play and, again, because they're not attached to a very clear structure, we attempt to use other instruments to achieve outcomes. So, the incident controller in that context is more around running an incident coordination team, which is about managing and coordinating the tasks that come, than a command and control structure. So, there's a confusion of purpose here, I think.

If the legislation was to give a clear intent - not attempt to clarify the structure, but give an intent - as
to what outcome was sought to be achieved by implementing a
structure and then leaving it up to the ability to make
codes of practice and to make doctrine under the
legislation, then I think we would have the authority to
move down the path of putting in place the intent and then
providing much greater clarity.

Q. That's a really important point and I just want to
make sure I have understood it. Any legislative change
perhaps, what, in terms of section 83?
A. Well, I think section 83 and section 137. I'd have to
look at them or somebody with a legal background would have
to look at them, I think, in great detail. I think that
they would stand on their own merits, perhaps, with a-
they may need a minor tweak. But I think somewhere in
either the objects or the lead-in, there needs to be
clarity around what is the intent of raising the SES; that
it is for the purpose of local response but it is also for
the purpose of being able to coordinate a Statewide
response in delivering the functions of the SES.

I think that sections 83 and 137 - and, again, I'd
take advice on it - certainly would appear to have
sufficient authority to be able to then make codes of
practice or to make policies that give effect to that
intent. What's unclear at the moment is, I think, that
heads of purpose for establishing the SES.

Q. The review of the disaster management arrangements
conducted by Jim O'Sullivan, which was finalised in August
2009, made the comment in relation to, effectively, section
83, which deals with the responsibilities of the chief
executive in relation to the SES, that those heads are
essentially enabling and supporting roles only and
certainly he took the view - and it's a view that can be
taken - that it really didn't extend into assuming command
and control over the SES.
A. Yes.

Q. Which is what ODI 2.0 asserts or attempts to do, by
saying that operational responsibility has been delegated
from the chief executive to the executive director - which
is now you, obviously, as the assistant director - and that
really there was something that was being done there by way
of ODI that exceeded the legislative basis for it. Now,
that was a view that was taken by Mr O'Sullivan and
articulated in his report.
A. Yes, and that was attempted to be resolved by the establishment of the memorandum of understanding, because that was the only recommendation that was made in relation to the SES.

Q. Yes.
A. I guess the purpose of that analysis and that review was to look primarily at the disaster management arrangements. The SES was, I guess, a smaller component of that analysis and there was only one recommendation made in relation to the SES, and that was the MOA.

Q. As we have touched on the MOA, can I just ask about that, because the MOA does seek to deal with certain operational arrangements. At section 5.2 of the MOA it talks about local government undertakings. Under the heading Activations, Taskings and Deployments it articulates four scenarios, if you like. Are you familiar with these?
A. Oh, I haven't read it for a while.

MR McGARRITY: I have a copy here for you.

MR BAILEY: Q. Page 10. I am just picking up on the point that you said that the recommendation that was made by Jim O'Sullivan, there was only one and it was to do with developing MOUs?
A. Yes.

Q. This document is the result of that recommendation?
A. Yes.

Q. In terms of the issue of command and control, I am interested in this section in 5.2 at page 10 where it articulates four scenarios, (a), (b), (c) and (d). It seems to me that scenarios (b) to (d) contemplate arrangements occurring within the disaster management system.
A. Which --

MR McGARRITY: Have I given you the right document?


MR McGARRITY: Have you got page 10, 5.2?

MR BAILEY: That is different to the copy I have.
THE INTERVIEWEE: I have a copy. I can find it.

MR BAILEY: Q. I am referring to a version which was an attachment to your most recent statement, so if you have a copy of your statement --
A. Yes, I think I'm there.

Q. Attachment 2 is the version I have.
A. Yes. Under Appointments or Activations?

Q. Under Activations. Down the bottom of page 10 it has (a), (b), (c) and then (d) on the top of page 11.
A. Yes.

Q. I am looking at that in terms of your comment that this MOU was developed to try to address the criticism that Mr O'Sullivan had that the ODI really goes beyond the support that the legislation provides it. Those scenarios clearly contemplate these things occurring within, and feeding into, the disaster management arrangements.
A. Yes.

Q. But they're silent on the issue of command and control of the SES itself.
A. Yes.

Q. I suppose the question is where do we go from there, in terms of articulating that, either in relation to the MOUs or generally in relation to SES doctrine?
A. The requirement to have an MOA is driven, I guess, by an unwillingness to have a direct position on this. Therefore, what we have been given is an attempt to manage this by separate negotiation with 73 different local authorities. However skilled and astute we are at managing that, I think we will end up with 73 variations on the theme. Some of them will be quite narrow, some of them may be quite significant.

The ultimate outcome? Will we get 73 agreements? I don't think so. I think some local governments will choose not to enter into an MOA and I can't force them to because it's an agreement and if I make them, then it is no longer an agreement. So, I think that whilst this is certainly a useful step, I certainly would not like to see an outcome that is prescriptive down to a fine level of detail or granularity because I think that there are certainly some
local arrangements that do need to be made. I have said
before that there is great variability across councils in
both their risk profiles and in their capability and
capacity to be able to respond, to be able to support an
SES and be able to support disaster management generally.

I think there would be benefit and value in taking
those key Statewide principles and structure that would
provide assistance to the clarity of the purpose and the
organisation of the SES, to make those things more clear
and then provide some ability to be able to make
arrangements below that which take account of those
variabilities and of those differences.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Can I just confirm one thing in relation
to the model that you mentioned with the area, region and
State directors. You said that would really be based on
the skills required in that particular disaster and you
said that perhaps there may even be instances where a local
controller is the area director for the SES, let's say.
A. Yes, is the area controller or commander, or whatever
it is, yes.

Q. Sorry, commander. In such an instance, there is the
potential for a volunteer to be in charge of that
particular - in command of that area during a disaster?
A. Yes.

Q. So I have that right?
A. Yes. So long as they hold the skills.

MR BAILEY: Q. We have jumped around a fair bit there. I
might just deal with one more topic and then we could take
a further break. Turning to your most recent statement, at
paragraph 76 you talk about the issue of tasking. The
decision to accept tasks is the responsibility of the local
controller at all stages, and the local controller is
responsible for command and control.
A. Of their members.

Q. Of their members. Moving on to paragraph 77 - and I
don't think there is any issue about local level stuff.
Where we are running into the potential for confusion is
when you have a major event and a large escalation of
people and resources, and how it is then going to work. At
paragraph 77 you say:
In a large and/or complex event, all SES tasks are likely to be managed through an SES Incident Management Team under the management of an incident controller.

Just to paraphrase, the role of the IMT is to establish communication channels with the sources of tasking, to record and prioritise all tasks, allocate tasks, plan for future requirements, and so forth.

A. Mmm

Q. That is an essential ingredient in terms of any area commander arrangements?
A. Yes, but it's a function. This is not a command role, this is a functional support role. An Incident Management Team is the body through which coordination occurs. It's not about setting direction, it's not about giving command or actually allocating priorities, or what have you; it's about the collation of all of the information that's necessary, bringing that together, and then dealing with it through an incident management system approach.

We use in Queensland, as most jurisdictions do, AIIMS - Australian Interagency Incident Management System. That provides a structure to deal with incidents and it also is an arrangement that lends itself to escalate. It can be used on the back of a sheet of paper to manage a small thing out of a truck; it can be used to - we use it to manage the State Disaster Coordination Centre, to manage multiple inputs from all over the State. It's the same system. It is a structure to - it allows a structured approach to the management of multiple inputs and to organise them for appropriate outputs to get things done.

Q. What would be the difference between an incident controller and this notional area commander?
A. The incident controller would be the person in charge of that Incident Management Team. So, that is almost a functional responsibility to organise that team. The incident commander - if that's the terminology we want to use - is, in fact, the head of the response.

Q. The command and control?
A. So, the Incident Management Team would sit under the control of the incident controller - commander.

Q. I think we have already touched on the idea that --
A. But to be very, very clear - and I know I keep harping on this - reading back on the transcript when I gave evidence and we talked about incident management teams and coordination centres, I think there was a significant amount of confusion - and there may no longer be - around incident management for the SES and incident management for the disaster. I think that there was confusion that the SES Incident Management Team had a role in coordinating the entire event. It only coordinates the bits that relate to the operation of the SES.

So, there will be an SES Incident Management Team operating in a big event, there will probably be a Fire Incident Management Team operating, there will be a Police Incident Management Team operating, there may be an Ambulance Incident Management Team all operating independent of each other but their outputs will feed up into the disaster management system in the form of situation reports, so that the disaster management system has visibility of what's occurring in each of those streams of response.

Q. The first stop, in terms of the sit reps, is the LDCC?
A. That's right.

Q. And then up?
A. That's right.

Q. In relation to, say, an SES Incident Management Team and given their close relationship with the local government, where should they be? Should they be co-located in a disaster --
A. No, not necessarily. It's probably not ideal to have them co-located. It's just simply too busy and confusing. In Yasi, Townsville had an Incident Management Team established at the racetrack because it was an ideal situation for it. In Cairns --

Q. This is the SES?
A. Yes - sorry. The Incident Management Team doesn't necessarily have to be fully resourced by SES. We have had occasions where we have outsourced an Incident Management Team to the fire service, simply because that was the best way to approach it. Because we all use AIIMS, we're all using the same structures, and so on, so people are familiar with what it is we are doing. So, it is a skill to work in an Incident Management Team, not a skill
necessarily to know in absolute detail the role of the SES.

Q. You could conceivably have one Incident Management Team that's actually, if you will, servicing a QPS command and control officer - whoever that happens to be on site - it could be QFRS, it could be SES as well?
A. Sorry, could just explain what you --

Q. Could one Incident Management Team actually serve a number of different operational response groups?
A. No.

Q. No?
A. No. What you're doing there is getting into the function of disaster management. An SES Incident Management Team will take all of those tasks that are required and start to allocate those tasks out, and so on. The analysis of all of those tasks - and one of the functions of an Incident Management Team is planning and intelligence. They may go, oh, we don't have enough people, we don't have enough resources, we don't have enough equipment - whatever it might be - to meet all of these tasks beyond tomorrow. Can we find it locally? If the answer is no, then that will go as a request.

It can go two ways. It can either go up the chain of command within the SES, so EMQ may have access to more of what it is they want, in which case we will solve that. If it's not within our ability to solve, it then becomes a request for assistance into the disaster management system where somebody else will need to provide the solution to that. So, whilst ever you can deal with it in your own chain of command, you do so. When you can't, that's hands off and that becomes a coordination issue for the disaster management arrangements, because they might be getting a request from the SES, they might be getting a request from Fire, they might be getting a request from Police, they might be getting a request from Ergon Energy for similar sorts of things. So, they will solve that in the disaster management system.

MR McGARRITY: Q. So an SES Incident Management Team may have staff members from other response agencies?
A. Could do, yes.

Q. But it still only performs SES functions?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. And still reports straight up through the SES management hierarchy?
A. That's right. Maybe I confused you when I said we could have a fire team. What we would do is say, "Fire, we've got limited resources. The best use of the SES skills is not running an Incident Management Team, it's going and putting tarps on roofs. Could you provide some staff to assist us with an Incident Management Team --

Q. For the SES?
A. -- for the SES. Sorry, that was probably my confusion there.

MR BAILEY: We might take a break at this point.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR BAILEY: It seems that we have jumped around a fair bit in terms of our list of questions. We have touched on quite a few of the command and control ones already.

MR McGARRITY: Yes. We probably should discuss a bit more of the MOAs, if we could, or am I jumping ahead too far?

MR BAILEY: No, that's all right.

THE INTERVIEWEE: 32?

MR McGARRITY: Q. We are up to - sorry, if you could go back to 27 and the execution of the MOAs.
A. Yes.

Q. There was some suggestion - and I think it was in a State response the Commission's Interim Report - that all MOAs would be executed by 1 November.
A. No.

Q. We just wanted to gauge the status of that.
A. No, there was no suggestion that MOAs would be executed by 1 November. They would be out for discussion by 1 November.

Q. Oh, I see.
A. I would never give a guarantee that we will have every local government with an MOA, because it's an agreement that is at the discretion of either party to enter into.
I've got to say, anecdotally, most councils are waiting for the findings of this Commission before they will enter into a memorandum of understanding. I think they probably see, if they're strategising, see that entering into a set of arrangements may in fact influence the direction of the Commission's findings, so I think they're just all waiting.

Some of the small ones, where capacity is an issue and the State provides them with additional capacity, and so on, are quite happy to enter into MOAs; others are certainly less so.

Q. How many currently would be out?
A. Nine.

MR BAILEY: Q. Impressionistically, they are from smaller councils?
A. Yes.

Q. What about attachment A, the local arrangements?
A. No. Again, I think the reason is that people are waiting to see what a set of findings might be.

Q. When you say "No", none have been executed?
A. None of them have been executed.

Q. Are any under discussion?
A. Yes. Well, all are on that basis; it's whether we can get them across the line or not.

Q. Active discussion?
A. Yes. I'm sure we will have a hiatus from December, January, February when we will get a series of events occurring, but we will continue. Of course, any recommendations that go to the heart of providing a level of guidance for them would, I think, then require us to revisit the whole arrangement of the MOA and how it's structured and the basis on which it's determined.

Q. Just moving on to question 32, I simply note in passing - we have already had a discussion about a number of these components - that the MOA does have some information there about tasking arrangements and scenarios.
A. Yes.

Q. But section 6 throws it all back on to the ODIs if there is any inconsistency.
A. Yes.

Q. The ODI's are in the state that they are in, so, again, there is potential for that confusion to be ongoing.
A. Yes. The intent there was that the doctrine was to provide the basis for that, if there were to be local arrangements that extended that, then that was fine, but they couldn't go to the heart of it. That's the reason that that was constructed that way.

Q. Moving on to question 33, dealing with inter-region deployment, I think we might have touched on this already. The idea of deployment out of an area from a donating area, if you like, is voluntary?
A. Yes.

Q. They can't be forced to go?
A. No.

Q. They have to agree to it?
A. And I don't believe there is conflict between those two. I think they actually work in concert at different levels. The local controller will determine - based on volunteerism, and so on - whom they will put up. The second part of that, 4.1, is that the regional director will then have a look at that and make sure that the volunteers who have been put forward actually meet the requirements of the deployment. So, if we are saying we want a deployment of chainsaw operators and they are putting up three people who don't have chainsaw qualifications, it's simply, I guess, a filter to go through to make sure that we're getting the right skill set for that deployment.

Q. Question 34 we have dealt with. Question 35 I think we have probably covered.
A. Yes.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Just on 35, the second part of that question, is there any consistent training framework to ensure that SES unit members - that each unit has at least one person who is trained in IMT - incident management team?
A. Yes, there is a training framework for that. There are three elements. I think we have touched on one of them, working in the emergency operations centre. That's a one-day course, a general overview for any type of
operations centre. That's a nationally accredited one-day course. There's Introduction to Incident Management Team. Again, it's an introductory course that's two hours. That is more about an SES Incident Management Team. Then there is AIIMS training, and AIIMS training is as long as a piece of a string. You can do courses from a day to four days and then you can do further courses to get into more and more detail around that, and they are nationally accredited as well.

Q. The expectation might be that every local government would have one SES member who has received formal training in setting up an IMT and running an IMT?
A. Yes. We would certainly want more than that, yes

Q. More than one?
A. Yes. There is some other doctrine there about incident management structure, incident control function and activation guidelines that might be of use (handed).

MR McGARRITY: Thank you.

MR BAILEY: Q. What physical resources are there throughout the SES at the local level to run an Incident Management Team? I mean, if you are going to have a basic IMT running, what do you need?
A. Pretty much a room. Most of them would be run out of the SES headquarters, so the SES shed or what have you. Now, they are of varying degrees of --

Q. Serviceability?
A. Yes, usefulness. Certainly there should be an arrangement in planning to say where are you going to run your IMT from. It could be - as I think you suggested earlier, it might be in council but out of another room to the Local Disaster Coordination Centre. So there's a range of options. The training is around how you structure it and what are the basic things you need to operate it. You don't need computers, and so on, to run it; you can run it on a whiteboard or butchers paper. I've seen people run them with post-it notes and the old cards that people used to run incidents. So, it's not a requirement that you need high levels of sophistication. That simply adds to the efficiency of the operation, if you need it.

Q. With IMT training, just to jump back a bit, how sophisticated is the training? Are they being told how to
run a whiteboard or are they being told how to run computer software, or is it everything?
A. It doesn't get down to that level of detail. Like, it won't teach you how to run a particular computer program. It's basically about what are the functions and the outputs and what are the issues that need to be addressed. How you then choose to do that is something that you would then plan and practice after the event of training. If there are computer programs or if you want to structure up a whiteboard, or whatever it is that you think is appropriate to deal with the risks that might be presented to your particular area, is how you would then design your response to that training.

Q. The incident management function is designed to receive information that provides situational awareness, receive tasks, prioritise tasks, dispatch tasks, get reports back on tasks completed?
A. Yes. Its basic design is to break up large volumes of information in complexity and chaos and put it into a structured environment where there are very clear roles, responsibilities and arrangements where those roles and responsibilities interact with each other appropriately, so that what you get out of it is an efficient and effective response to the inputs that are coming into that Incident Management Team, and an ability to be able to plan and see into the future and anticipate future requirements and to be able to make requests to satisfy those things at the earliest possible time.

Q. Going back to the incident management room, at the very least, obviously, you need telephones and radios?
A. Yes.

Q. But maybe not necessarily - well, RFA Online would be good?
A. Yes. I mean, if you go to a lot of units, they actually already have an incident management room set up and they will have their radios in there and they will have their comms people, they will have a computer in there with RFA on it - if they have access to it - or a couple of computers, and they will have their little signs overhead; here's operations, here's logistics, here's the intel and planning, and so on. They will have already structured that up. That will probably be appropriate and commensurate to the things that they do on a regular basis.
Come a major catastrophic event - and I think I have already used the Townsville event - huge and lots of deployments coming in to assist, hundreds of additional volunteers, that was moved off site. A bare room, just set it up. Everybody knew the basic structure of an Incident Management Team, we just made it bigger. Necessity is the mother of invention.

MR McGARRITY: Q. If we move on to 36 then. A few issues have been raised in respect of the floods whereby there were deployments to particular regions where there may or may not have been enough consultation with the receiving local controller.
A. Yes.

Q. Could you maybe talk us through, in practical terms, what is supposed to happen in terms of consultation with the receiving area before deployment?
A. Yes. Again, there are two ways in which a deployment will be raised. One is through a request and that would be, if you like, an outcome of the Incident Management Team in operation saying we have 500 jobs and 20 SES volunteers, that will take us three weeks to finish. That's not good enough; we need more volunteers in. So that would be one way in which that would occur.

The second is either at the local, district or State level, the operations of the coordination centres there - which may have access to more information or different information - may, in fact, wish to proactively pre-deploy or stand up a deployment in anticipation of a future event or future request.

That's where the confusion can occur. In an ideal world, that is where the liaison officer network should be working. So, State would say we have information from the Bureau and we have information from other sources that indicate we are going to have a flood somewhere else. You are already stretched because you have a flood event here. We are going to move forward or stand up or pre-deploy 20 SES volunteers to wherever.

Again in an ideal world, that should go back down through the disaster management system, should find its way to the Local Disaster Coordination Centre, the SES liaison officer should then identify that and feed that information back in to the local controller.
Sometimes there are competing interests at play. The local controller is looking at a fairly narrow view and saying why do I need more people, whereas other people are making risk assessments. As always, you are better to make the decision and not need it than to get caught out not having made the decision and then having to catch up.

There are issues of course, very practical issues, that the local controller may be able to bring to the table to influence that decision, such as where are these people going to stay and how are we going to feed them. There may be some really practical issues that would moderate that decision, so we may pre-deploy but not to Condamine, we may pre-deploy to Toowoomba so they're only a hop away from where they need to be but we can accommodate them.

Q. But under current arrangements, is it mandatory to discuss with the local controller --
A. It's not mandatory.

Q. It's not mandatory?
A. No. It's good practice.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 37 I think we have dealt with. In terms of your statement at paragraphs 80 to 83 --
A. Oh, the infamous diagram.

Q. Yes. Attachment 9 I think it is. You are talking there about a need for better integration of SES and EMQ into the disaster management side of things when the LDCC is activated in a major disaster. The solutions you have suggested and the red arrows that appear there are essentially communication issues, are they not?
A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. Does that highlight the need for the liaison officer?
A. Yes.

Q. This is the key issue with liaison?
A. Absolutely, yes. There are two ways that this can be facilitated and I think both of them need to operate in concert. One is people, and people with knowledge. So, liaison officers in the appropriate places but liaison officers who actually understand the environment, who are not there just because they happened to have the right coloured shirt on. Experienced people. Some of your best
people actually have to get off the tools and be part of the management.

The second thing is that there is an opportunity for an enhanced systems environment, and we have talked about the all hazards information management program. It's not a system, it's a series of little products that will come together to actually provide a network that will enable information to flow more readily.

I think those two things - common operating pictures, so everybody is seeing the same information at the same time for the same purpose.

Q. This is AIIMS?
A. Yes, and then people to actually interpret that data; what does this mean for this stream. So, for the SES, is there information in that - in all of this data that's flowing around and the decisions that get made, is there something there that is relevant to the SES? Then the question should go to the SES liaison officer: What does this mean for you guys? No, that's fine; just give me that and we can progress that. Or no, this is a major problem; we need something; we can't do that. Whatever it might be.

Q. That data interpretation function you are talking about, that is a disaster management role?
A. Yes, it is.

Q. So that occurs --
A. It's taking the expertise out of the line agency and dropping it into the disaster management arrangements, to enable better decision making based on reality, if you like. Rather than making assumptions about what we think the SES can do, have someone from the SES at the table who can actually say, yes we can do that.

Q. That is the liaison officer function?
A. That is the liaison officer role, yes.

Q. The liaison officer would be in the LDCC?
A. Yes.

Q. Is there any specific training on offer for liaison officer roles for SES volunteers?
A. No. It's inferred in the - working in a coordination
centre, that's part of the function. So, there's nothing
specific. Could there be? Yes. I think it is an
important role and probably discrete enough that there is
probably an element of interpretation of, yes, you
understand the environment you are working in but your
specific role in that and what are the skills you need to
complete that role.

Q. One of the impressions that I have from the evidence
has been that sometimes there is a perception that EMQ and
SES are somehow operating in parallel to the disaster
management arrangements. I take away from this morning's
discussion that that's not so. You have your disaster
management there and your SES, sort of, sitting down there
as one of a number?
A. Yes.

Q. But that feeding in, that communication flow, is
all-important?
A. Yes.

Q. That is where these liaison people come in?
A. That's why we have to deal with those three elements
of command, control and coordination and they have to be
dealt with almost concurrently, because all of those things
are operating in a disaster environment all of the time.
It's different to - most of the models come from either the
military or the police, or somewhere. Ours, in disaster
management, is fundamentally different because you have a
combination of command and control people and management
people all at the table at the same time and all with
equally important tasks to do.

Now, the Department of Communities is absolutely
critical to the response to a disaster, but don't put them
in a command and control structure because they will fight
and become ineffective, because they manage themselves in a
different way. So, this concept of coordination is
absolutely critical in a disaster management environment,
whereas command is critical in a military environment.

There are very different approaches to these things
and you have to actually look at the cohort of
organisations that you are trying to harness and point in
the right direction for a common purpose and what is the
best mechanism to actually pull all that together and
deliver something.
Q. Just so we are clear about this, coordination is a function of disaster management; command and control is a function of operational response?
A. Yes. There's an element of command and control in disaster management but only a couple of people have it. The share of the SDMG and the district disaster coordinators, they are the only ones who can actually give a direction. They can say I don't care what any of you say, this is what's going to happen and I will write that down and that is what you will do. Everything else is based on cooperation and collaboration.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Just on the liaison officers, where they currently are in place in the system, are they nominated by the local controller to be the liaison officer?
A. That should be the practice.

Q. That's how the practice should work, in effect?
A. That's right.

MR BAILEY: Q. Is that occurring?
A. Yes and no. I'm sure there are Local Disaster Management Groups that operate without an SES liaison officer.

MR McGARRITY: Q. The local controller would effectively say this person has the experience, the skills, they can contribute to the LDCC, LDMG - whatever you want; I trust their judgment and that's why they are the nominated liaison person?
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Moving on to funding - unless there is anything else you wanted to say?
A. No.

Q. Question 38. I notice you are leafing through some documents. Is there anything arising out of any of those?
A. Yes. That is some information that was actually prepared out of other documents for the Commission but I am happy to make that available. It simply takes you through some of the more detailed operational process basis for those funding programs. This one is actually talking about the recurrent and non-recurrent. I guess the observation around the non-recurrent is that it is consistently oversubscribed; there are more requests than there are
dollars available to meet those requests.

Q. How oversubscribed is it?
A. Well, there's another question about the $700,000 later on, which is at question --

MR 49.

THE INTERVIEWEE: -- 49. That was $734,000. If I could deal with that question quickly because it is, I guess, relevant. That money was a windfall to EMQ based on the cessation of a Federal Government program, where we received advice that the program was going to cease in a particular year, the money had been utilised for a continuing program of work and we went to Treasury and were funded for its continuation through consolidated revenue for the State. The Commonwealth came back and said, oh, we will pay you the money again in this year and finish the program the following year. So, we had a windfall of $730,000-odd. That money was applied to the programs that were requested in that year but not funded.

MR BAILEY: Q. The non-recurrent?
A. Yes. So there was something like $300,000 available and we had in excess of $700,000 of additional funding that was requested in that year.

Q. Was that disbursed in that year?
A. Yes.

Q. Fully disbursed?
A. Fully disbursed, yes.

Q. Was it still oversubscribed?
A. Slightly. I don't think we got to finish all of them but we got the lion's share done that year. But I guess the other thing is because there are - I mean, we can basically do two or three building grants and about seven or eight vehicle grants. There are in excess of 300 units and groups around the State, so it doesn't take much maths to work out and, by any analysis, some of the accommodation is substandard.

MR McGARRITY: Q. That funding of $734,000 from the Commonwealth was received under the auspices of which program?
A. It was called the State Support Package, which wasn't
directly for the SES but, given that it came with no
strings attached - the Commonwealth said, we weren't going
to give you this money, we are now going to give it to you,
you can use it for whatever purposes you wish in the
disaster management environment. It wasn't specific
purpose funding.

Q. But it was for disaster management?
A. Yes, and we chose to apply it to the SES to meet those
grants. I think the documentation I have given you
actually steps you through the processes, and so on, for
each of those grants.

MR BAILEY: Q. That is in response, really, to question
38?
A. 38, yes.

Q. Question 39: Is funding administered directly between
the local controller and EMQ's grants and subsidies team or
is it channelled through the council?
A. All of the non-recurrent grants go through local
council simply because local controllers don't have the
governance or administration to deal with that. They don't
all have bank accounts, and so on, and it's not an
expectation that we would have on a local controller to
administer substantial amounts of money. So it's a much
stronger governance arrangement to provide it to local
government. The executive allowances that are paid and the
modest allowances for out-of-pocket expenses, that's done
direct with each member.

Q. The recurrent funding obviously goes directly to the
council as well?
A. Yes.

Q. In relation to those recurrent subsidies, question 40,
are they tied in any way? Do they have strings attached?
A. Well, they are tied to the purposes which the
application seeks. We don't have a formal audit program
but our regions are made aware. So when local government
gets the grant for the building, the region is made aware
and we work with council to progress those grants.

I think the question goes to are they monitored?
There is not a formal process of auditing and monitoring;
it is, I guess, to some extent a trust relationship. But
there is, I guess, some oversight that the money actually
gets spent on what it was applied for.

Q. Leading on to question 41, you might have regard to what you have said at paragraph 31 of your statement as well, because there you discuss the criteria used to determine the amount that is payable in relation to the recurrent subsidies.
A. Yes.

Q. I just want to take you as well to attachment 5. This, at some level, gets back to something we were talking about very much at the outset, about the structuring of SES units versus groups, and forth. Attachment 5 seems to indicate that regional councils receive these subsidies based on the number of units they have and there are councils with multiple units, as opposed to a single unit and a number of subgroups. On that basis, it appears that they have the subsidy paid a number of times rather than just once.
A. Mmm.

Q. For example, you can see Bundaberg Regional Council has subsidies paid for Bundaberg City, Burnett Shire, Isis Shire and Kolan Shire, which are the pre-amalgamation council areas.
A. Yes.

Q. That appears to be an anomalous sort of arrangement.
A. Yes.

Q. By comparison, Brisbane has one unit and it receives one subsidy payment.
A. Yes.

Q. Admittedly it is a large and well-resourced council but it is somewhat inequitable; would you agree?
A. Yes, it is. The basis of taking that approach was that during amalgamations the determination was made that no council would be disadvantaged by virtue of amalgamation. So, if the SES received $21,000 in pre-amalgamation terms, then they would receive $21,000 post-amalgamation.

There was little in the way of equity in the distribution prior to that. It was a blanket fee. By design - it's a modest amount of money and, by design, it was to try to cover things like general administration, and
so on, printer cartridges, paper, and that sort of thing. It hasn't been increased in line with CPI or any other function of inflation over time, so its purchasing power has certainly eroded over time.

There is probably an argument to be made that a model similar to Victoria, where they actually categorise their groups and units into, for the sake of argument, small medium and large, and then there's funding streams that attach themselves to them.

Q. In terms of the amalgamation strategy, which was that no-one is going to be worse off, is there any sort of sunset clause on those arrangements?
A. No. That was the decision taken at that time and it was an administrative decision.

Q. Taken by whom?
A. By me.

Q. Is there any plan, if you will, to reconfigure these arrangements in any way?
A. The difficulty is that the budget is what it is and to reconfigure them in any meaningful way, there is simply not enough in that pot to provide a meaningful solution to that problem.

Q. When I say reconfigure, I suppose I am moving into question 43 which is, for example, could the total amount of available funding for a particular SES unit be proportionate, say, to the risk profile of the area? Could it be weighted in terms of the resources of the council generally? Are there other --
A. Yes. I think, yes, there are. Again, there would need to be some more detailed analysis of how that might occur and certainly that would need to be attached to a stream of funding. I think the only outcome that you would arrive at from that analysis is that it would cost you more money. I don't think there's anything that you would arrive at that would cost you less money than is currently available in the budget for this purpose.

Q. Which is to say $480,000 per annum?
A. Yes.

Q. Which is fixed over the four-year budgetary cycle, did you say?
A. Well, budgets occur on an annual basis but budgets are based on a zero, so basically you start off from the position that you will get what you got last year, if it's recurrent, and then any new money has to come through submissions and requests.

Q. Do you see that these arrangements are anomalous when compared to the intent of the structure that is implied by the Disaster Management Act?
A. Yes.

Q. That there would be --
A. I think that the arrangements are inconsistent with the current structure of local government, post-amalgamation in particular.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Would this all be made a lot easier if the various units that operated under one local government were combined into one unit, let's say? I'm not talking here about having one local controller, I'm talking about an amalgamation of units, as such, given that the intent of the legislation seems to be that those transitional arrangements, whereby several units could exist under post-amalgamation circumstances, would perhaps come to an end eventually?
A. Yes. Look, I don't know that that's necessarily the answer. I think the answer lies more in what you indicated in the earlier part: what is the risk profile that that local government faces; what are the unique conditions, perhaps of distance, of numbers of units, or whatever it might be that are unique to that particular local government; how then do you arrive at some formula that says these conditions equate to this level of funding.

Q. Is that something that the Statewide Natural Hazard Risk assessment tool might be used to --
A. It could be.

Q. But it hasn't been --
A. No.

Q. -- suggested as yet?
A. No. As I say, its primary purpose is around disaster management and planning for disaster management generally, not for the SES specifically.

MR BAILEY: Q. Since these questions were committed to
paper, we have had some input from LGAQ which suggests that there are variations in funding arrangements; there's no agreed funding formula. I am not entirely sure what is meant by that because there seems to be a formula here that you have articulated for the recurrent arrangements. But the essence of what I want to get to is that there seems to be an implicit suggestion that funding arrangements could be based on functions of the local SES unit, demography of the local community, or identified hazard risk landscape. Is that a preferable way to approach it, as opposed to what we have here in paragraph 31 of your statement?

A. I guess we need to contextualise all of the comments around this; that is, under the current arrangements the funding for the SES is a mutual obligation between the State and local government. All we are talking about at the moment is the State's commitment, and that's fine, but I just think we need to be clear that there are obligations on local government to support the SES as well.

I think the issues that we just spoke about before would go to answering the question that's raised by LGAQ. What is the complexity, what are the conditions or circumstances of a particular local government, and how might we be able to articulate it in some form of algorithm that leads to the finance. That would have been a function of what the available budget is. If it remains at the $400,000-odd mark, then how do we cut that pie up? Whether we make the pie bigger or smaller, I think, is a different question.

Q. The question I am asking is how do you cut the pie up because the current arrangement seems to be anomalous, that's all.

A. Yes, and what I'm saying is I think that moving down the path of having a risk-based approach to it would be a better outcome, but I wouldn't like that to simply automatically suggest that a consequence of that outcome is more money, because I don't have access to more money.

Q. I see what you are saying. We might have been at cross-purposes there.

A. Yes.

Q. No, I wasn't implying that you would have a bigger pot or a bigger pie. I'm looking at how the pie gets cut up at the moment, and it seems a bit odd.

A. Yes, and I am agreeing that I think some form of
risk-based approach to that, which takes account of the
unique circumstances of local government, would be
something worthy of consideration.

Q. Irrespective of the size of the pie?
A. Yes.

Q. Who would best be positioned to do that?
A. We would have to lead it, I would think, but we would
need to do that in conjunction, probably, with LGAQ as the
representative of council.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Is that something that EMQ is looking at
progressing, a different way of --
A. Not actively at the moment but it is something that
has been exercising our mind for some time.

Q. I think you mentioned Victoria, was it, which operates
on a risk-based --
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Obviously we are only talking about one
component of the funding?
A. Yes, absolutely.

MR McGARRITY: Q. I think we can go to question 45, the
sponsorship arrangements that exist with the private sector
and, specifically, there has been mention of NRMA, the
insurance providers. Would you be able to give us just a
few details about the operations of that arrangement,
considering certain arrangements such as this occur in
other jurisdictions and has there been any commentary on
the appropriateness of a commercial entity providing
support?
A. There is a commercial sponsorship arrangement in New
South Wales and Victoria; AAMI in Victoria and NRMA, the
same as us, in New South Wales. The arrangement is covered
by the State Sponsorship Policy. The State government has
a policy for sponsorship of State government entities,
instrumentalities, and so on, and it is complying with
that.

As I have indicated in my evidence, the contractual
arrangements with NRMA are commercial in-confidence and
NRMA are particularly protective of those commercial
arrangements, so I would seek not to divulge the quantum of
the arrangement. I guess it's up to you. If you need that
then we would probably have to go through something a
little more formal in order to provide that. So, I can
leave that with you. I'm not seeking to be obstructive --
Q. Of course.
A. -- but we signed a contract in good faith and I know
that NRMA are particularly concerned that that might become
part of - fall into the public domain.

The sponsorship is a combination of in-kind and direct
financial support. The in-kind is principally around
assisting with community education. So, they will produce
advertisements around storm season that have messages that
we concur with and support, but it allows them to attach
their brand to those messages and have tag lines that serve
their commercial interests.

They also provide us cash that is tied, but fairly
loosely. It's not an enormous amount of string, but it's
for the benefit of the SES, so we usually provide
equipment, support for SES week, those sorts of things.

MR BAILEY: Q. Would that go into the non-recurrent pot?
A. No, no. It doesn't go into that directly. We might
fund equipment for the SES just through our general
equipment appropriation, we might apply it to an activity
that promotes or supports the SES. They were involved in
Can You Survive For Three Days, the house with the two
young kids tweeting and facebooking, and so on, in
Reddacliff Place. So, a range of activities that raise the
profile of the SES and raise the profile of disaster
management.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Do you have the ultimate decision as to
how that money is spent?
A. The cash, yes.

Q. Whatever need there is, it's directed towards that?
A. That's right, yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. I might just drop back to question 44 and
perhaps get a response from you about that. I saw you had
something written down, so I will see what you have to say.
A. Again, the legislation is, I think, somewhat fraught.
Introduction of legislation of that nature would require, I
think, significant consultation with those stakeholders and
I think a lot of consideration would need to go into
anything that went down that line.

Having said that, the positive is - as with the other issues we have talked about - that if there is uncertainty then providing clarity is a good thing. We have to be careful that in the attempt to provide clarity, we don't actually destroy the intent. Whilst there are always areas where we may have different views, and so on, to our colleagues in local government, we do have a system that, when something happens, works. I'd just caution that we are practical in the way that we might progress any recommendations in that area.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Can we take from that that you would not be supportive of a definite legislative obligation?
A. Not unless we could have a genuine negotiated outcome; that position was agreed against all the key stakeholders. That would deliver the best outcome.

Q. You are talking about extensive consultation with --
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 46: Does EMQ monitor local government applications for SES funding and identify those local governments that may not be accessing the funding program?
A. Again, in --

Q. I suppose we should be clear that we are talking about non-recurrent.
A. Yes. In a formal sense, do we have a program to do that? No. EMQ is working with individual units, is working with individual governments, as needs are identified. If those programs haven't potentially been identified by local government as an opportunity or a solution to those problems, our people will certainly raise that and we will provide assistance in the development, and so on, of an application under those programs. It's really, again, a best-intent approach to that, with our people working with both the volunteers and the local government.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Again, you are using the local knowledge of EMQ area and regional directors to assist where that need arises?
A. Yes, that's right.
MR BAILEY: Q. But how much do you push it when the program is oversubscribed anyway? You go to the effort of making an application that can't be fulfilled.
A. Yes, that's been raised with me and my response to people is, well, there's only one way to assure you don't get the grant and that is don't apply for it. If you have a genuine need --
Q. You have to ask.
A. -- then your need will be considered in a priority sense or a merit-based sense with other applicants. If you are the highest need, you will get the money.
Q. On that issue, when you have all these applications, how are they prioritised? How are the merits identified? Who gets to the top of the heap?
A. There is a process that's gone through and it is guided by a set of principles to score. There's a group that comes together, an assessment team, and they have some rules around how they should conduct that assessment and undertake it and rank each of the applications.
Q. That assessment team is within EMQ?
A. Yes.
Q. Who is on the team?
A. Oh, I would have to give that to you separately.
MR McGARRITY: Q. Can we get a copy of those rules that you referred to?
A. Yes.
MR BAILEY: Q. Does the team make recommendations?
A. Yes, they make recommendations to me.
Q. And you sign off on that?
A. Yes.
MR McGARRITY: Q. Presumably the applications also have some comments from the regional directors before they go to EMQ; is that correct?
A. Yes. We seek input, both formal and informal.
Q. I suppose that leads on to question 47 about the input from EMQ officers, area and regional directors, about how funding is directed.
A. The role is support and advice. We don't write the
application. We will provide advice to make sure the application meets the criteria or addresses the criteria, and so on, and what is the best way to form up the application, and so on, but it's a local government application.

MR BAILEY: Q. Question 48: How is the budgetary allocation for the SES determined?
A. Take last year's and --

Q. Same again?
A. Yes. I think we indicated in my formal response there are certainly opportunities for new money through the budget process and through things like election commitments, as that cycle comes around, but principally it's take last year's budget and roll it over.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Just on that point - and this might be something we might touch on later - when making submissions vis-a-vis next year's budget and, so forth, is much consideration given to the amount of fundraising that was undertaken by --
A. No.

Q. There's no regard given to that?
A. No regard at all. I don't know how much they raised or where it's raised.

Q. There's no barometer as to how much extra money was required across the State?
A. No.

MR BAILEY: Q. Does EMQ have details from the local governments as to what their financial commitment is to SES?
A. No.

Q. Really, you are just administering your side of the equation?
A. Mmm.

Q. Whatever they do is a matter for them?
A. Yes.

Q. But acknowledging that under the Disaster Management Act they have a general obligation to maintain a state of readiness?
A. Yes.

Q. SES is the primary way they look at doing that, or one of the ways they look at doing that?
A. Yes, one of the ways they look at doing that, yes.

Q. Some SES units may be accessing funding sources from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. Is that something you have any knowledge about?
A. We usually provide a level of endorsement to those, but that's the extent of it.

Q. That fund makes its own assessment and allocation?
A. Yes, they have their own assessment criteria.

Q. Is that part of Queensland Treasury?
A. I believe so. I think it's administered through their gaming fund.

MR McGARRITY: Q. I think it's through (indistinct) these days.
A. Yes, or the finance.

Q. Through Liquor Licensing, I think, perhaps, these days.
A. Yes.

Q. When you say "endorsement", is that really an overview as to whether or not you support the application?
A. Yes.

Q. So it may or may not be an endorsement?
A. There hasn't been one that I am aware of that we have knocked back yet, but yes it's to - I guess what they are looking for is to ensure that the application is consistent with the purposes and intent of the SES.

MR BAILEY: Q. Those applications are prepared by the local government?
A. Yes.

Q. Question 51: Has any work been undertaken to estimate the potential cost if the SES was totally funded by the State government?
A. The answer is I think so, and I have been turning the place upside down because there was some work done in 2007, not specifically for that purpose, but I understand or my
recollection is that it was a question that was asked. Somebody had a recollection that there was a disc that did have some work around that on it. It is not in the report that I have found and, if you will bear with me, I will continue to search for that. If I find it, I will give it to you; if I can't find it, I will let you know.

MR McGARRITY: Q. Do you know who posed the question initially?
A. I think it was me. The work wasn't being done for that purpose, I think that's why it didn't find its way into the final report. But I think it was a question that was of interest, certainly to me and some other people, and it was something that probably could have been done as an adjunct to the work. I can't recall - and the veracity of the output is probably not absolutely ironclad, but it might give an indication.

Q. That leads on to the next part of that question: Is it possible to even put an estimate on what total State funding might be?
A. Yes, you could. It would require work. What I think would need to happen is that it would need to be a proper accounting based assessment, so there will be assets, there will be depreciation, there will be a whole range of tangible and intangible - cash and other elements of that. I think we would need to be able - if we were going to go down that path, it would need to be done properly so that we actually got a realistic assessment of what the cash contribution and what the in-kind and other intangible contributions might be.

Q. Would you have any idea about the total cost in other States? I know it's hard to compare apples with oranges but just to get an idea?
A. See, even there - in New South Wales, the budget for the SES is something in the order of $100 million, by memory. I would need to confirm that. But that doesn't take account that local government still provides many of the built assets for SES accommodation, and so on. If you take into account the accommodation - which is probably, in terms of an asset base, the most valuable part of the SES - it might be a couple of hundred million dollars in total. I don't know. But that's why I say if we wanted to do that exercise, I think we would have to do it right and set up the criteria by which we did it. Then if we wanted to compare that to other States, then we'd have to be provided
that criteria.

Q. So it can be done but it's very complex?
A. It's time-consuming, probably costly and complex.

MR BAILEY: Q. Do you have a view about complete State
responsibility for funding here in Queensland?
A. I would not be supportive at all. I think there are
enormous benefits that come from a construct of mutual
obligation/mutual benefit. The local government is
squarely entrenched in our Disaster Management Act and,
therefore, the SES, because that's where it resides. I
think that brings enormous benefit to the level of support
that is provided to the SES, it ensures that there is local
content, that this is not something that's run from afar,
that it's actually run with significant local knowledge and
significant local interest.

When the SES is deployed, whilst the local government
doesn't have a direct command role or a deployment role,
they do bring to the table an enormous amount of local
knowledge that is incredibly useful and supportive to the
SES in doing their work. I would absolutely hate to see
any set of arrangements that went to the heart of the
concept of mutual obligation/mutual benefit.

Q. Do you have any general comments about the level of
funding, from the State's perspective or EMQ's perspective,
or the current funding programs and how they are
administered?
A. Are we talking about total funding support for the SES
or just the recurrent and non-recurrent funding programs?

Q. Well, in general, yes. Total support.
A. Any organisation that doesn't seek more, I guess, is
not trying. The SES, along with every other instrument of
the State, will compete for scarce funding through the
budget cycles. We put forward through the Cabinet process
our bids and they get supported or not, as is the case with
other elements.

MR McGARRITY: Q. With the fundraising - I know it's a
function under the Act of SES - is it appropriate for that
to continue as has been the case, in that some members have
suggested they have spent a lot of time and effort having
to fundraise because there simply is not enough money from
the government to support the units. Do you have any ideas
about how that impost could be lessened on those people?
A. Well, the only way that I can see it's lessened is
more direct funding, but we don't necessarily understand in
total what the quantum of that might be.

Q. Would that be important, to try and get a handle on
the quantum, the types of sums we are talking about in
terms of fundraising needs, particularly thinking in the
future when making submissions to the CBRC, and so forth,
for more money?
A. Yes. I guess the problem around us having ongoing
visibility of that is that it actually drives then an
obligation that we would need to manage and administer
those funds in some way. There would be an obligation on
the State to ensure that those fundraising activities were
managed appropriately, that the accounts were audited, and
what have you. That would bring an enormous impost onto
the paid staff of EMQ. It's one which we are probably not
competent to undertake at the moment, so we would have to
find ways to do that. All I can see is an awful lot of
cost.

Q. I guess what I am trying to get at is can we use the
numbers that are raised through fundraising activities by
volunteers and come to some sort of arrangement whereby the
State says we think this has taken too much time and effort
on behalf of volunteers, we see there is an issue here,
there is a discrepancy in fundraising, we will meet you
halfway - or something like that? Is that something that
could be worked on or is it appropriate to continue under
the same model, where fundraising can just take place,
dependent upon the particular unit?
A. I'm sure there are a number of volunteers who,
whatever the case, will continue to fundraise, so I don't
know that it is going to solve the problem that has been
presented to you. The quantum of fundraising is probably,
in the scheme of things, fairly small. Some of them might
be talking about several thousand dollars but, in the
scheme of running the whole SES, even in aggregate, that's
not an enormous amount. It's a difficult question because
I can't really --

Q. That's why I'm asking you. I don't know the answer.
A. Yes. It could be an awful lot of work for no value.
I don't have an answer, quite frankly.

MR BAILEY: Q. Just on the fundraising activities side of
things, is there a new policy being developed and has it been distributed?
A. No, it hasn't. There was correspondence from our regions to all units to advise them of the changes, but there has been no doctrine or administrative instrument developed as yet.

Q. Question 54: Some local governments have instituted a local levy, with some of the money being used to support disaster management; for example, Mackay. Is this an option that you support?
A. It's really a matter of government policy. A levy is a new tax. That's a matter of government policy. It's not really something that I am able to comment on.

MR McGARRITY: Q. We did receive from various people some suggestions that perhaps there could be a paid arrangement in place in the SES that parallels that in the Rural Fire Service or the auxiliary fire service. I think the people who said the Rural Fire Service might have been referring to the auxiliary fire service?
A. There is in my - not from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, but my understanding - and I have asked the question - is other than a similar arrangement that we provide for training, occasionally paying trainers on a casual basis, there is no remuneration stream for Rural Fire Service.

Q. Just to clarify then, we are referring to auxiliary fire service operators?
A. Yes. Auxiliaries are not volunteers, they are part-time employees, so we are talking about a fundamentally different set of arrangements.

Q. Do you know where that operates specifically? Is it the case that they get paid on an hourly call-out basis?
A. Yes, I think so and that's only for urban. This is in addition to urban fire fighting arrangements in smaller communities where they might have auxiliaries to meet a night shift, for example. Again, I'm not 100 percent across the arrangement but it's either to meet a part-time arrangement where no urban fire fighting exists or to augment a limited service that's not a 24/7 like you would find in a major centre.

Q. Basically, the difference is there were two fundamental --
A. One is an employment arrangement, the other is a volunteer arrangement. The Rural Fire Service is like the SES; it's a volunteer service. Auxiliaries are simply part-time employees.

MR BAILEY: Q. One of the suggestions that has arisen in the context of some feedback via LGAQ is that the registration and insurance of vehicles can create confusion about ownership of those assets. Is that something you can comment on?
A. Yes, it can and I guess EMQ might have contributed to the confusion some time ago. There was an effort for EMQ to actually own some of the SES assets, so to hold those assets on our books. When I took over in this role, that was very concerning for me. We had no budget for depreciation, we had no capacity to manage those assets and we had a very mixed arrangement.

Previously or historically, equipment that would fall into the category of an asset was always dealt with by a grant process to local government, so that the asset would vest in local government, would sit on local government’s accounts and the ongoing operational expenses would be met by local government. I have reinstituted that as a policy position for EMQ.

We do have a budget to meet the registration and insurance costs of vehicles and I absolutely can see that that might cause confusion. Well, if the asset is registered through the State, then the State actually owns the asset. If that's causing any level of anguish in local government then I am happy to look at an arrangement. Perhaps we can provide that money by way of grant as well rather than do direct registration.

Q. On this topic, I just want to turn back to the MOA because there are some passages in there that relate to it. Under the heading Equipment in section 5.1 on page 7, one of the obligations undertaken by EMQ is to determine with local governments the agreed arrangements for registration of vehicles and to determine the most efficient and cost-effective means of insuring all vehicles. That leaves the whole issue pretty open-ended.

However, if you go further into the MOA under Local Government Undertakings, in section 5.2 under the heading Support, one of the things that they take on board is the
provision of or access to registered and insured vehicles.
What ultimately is contemplated by all of that?
A. It may be a clumsy way of describing it. The first
part that you mentioned is by agreement, to determine whom
will be responsible for the registration and insurance of
the vehicles. I think one of the drivers of that is that
local government can get access to concessional
registration and we can't, so it may in fact be cheaper for
them to do it. Also, I think there have been occasions
where we have both registered the same vehicle. So, I
think it was simply to avoid the confusion and the
inefficiencies that that might cause.

I think the second element is around - the vehicle,
the asset, is vested in local government but it's for the
purposes of the SES, so it's just to ensure that local
government makes the vehicle available for SES activation
as is required. So, they don't think that it just simply
becomes part of the council fleet.

I guess the other point is that that document is the
starting point for a negotiation. So if any of those
issues --
Q. You would expect that to be ironed out in the local
arrangements?
A. Yes, and LGAQ were party to the construct of that
document as well.
Q. What hope is there for a consistent position on that?
A. I think, as I previously said, striking an agreement
with 73 councils is going to get you certainly, if not 73,
a significant variety of outcomes.
Q. I have heard the expression used in relation to the
European financial crisis that it's like herding cats.
A. Yes.
Q. The only other thing I wanted to raise arising out of
the EMQ input was that in major operations where there is
deployment outside of a home base, if you like, using a
combination of State-owned and additional council
resources, there are complex cost recovery arrangements.
Are you able to, perhaps, interpret what that might mean or
explain what they might be referring to there?
A. It may be the NDRRA arrangements, Natural Disaster
Relief and Recovery Arrangements. They're jointly
Commonwealth and State funded. They are designed to meet
the cost of responding to asset damage, and some other
things, as a consequence of disasters. I am struggling to
think of what they're actually referring to. Can I just
have a look at that?

Q. Sure. It is that paragraph there. It seems to be
referring to it in the context of insurance and
registration, and things of that nature.
A. Yes. It may have something to do with - see, the
usual costs of an operation, so your sunk costs, are not
recoverable but additional costs are. So, if there is a
confusion about ownership for a vehicle that goes outside
one council area and into another, who makes the claim;
that might be what they're getting to.

MR McGARRITY: Q. So things like fuel, perhaps?
A. Yes, but even, you know, is there a cost associated
with the vehicle. I'm struggling to come up with --

MR BAILEY: Q. All right. We will just move on to the
topic of local controllers. Question 56: What are the
arguments for and against local controllers, in particular,
being paid?
A. There are a number of local controllers who are paid
by local government.

Q. I suppose we are getting at the idea of a full-time
salaried position rather than honorarium?
A. Yes. It would appear that the purpose of making the
payment is more - I certainly don't mean this to be
gratuitous, but it's more about the role undertaking the
administration of the issues that sheet back home to
council in terms of their obligations, their governance,
their administration. So, for the bigger councils that
provide substantial financial support, they obviously want
some level of control around that, as is entirely
appropriate, and the paid controller often, I think, spends
much of their time in that space.

MR McGARRITY: Q. So that is non-operational?
A. I'm not saying it's absolutely. I'm sure --

Q. But the --
A. But I think that there is a significant element to
that. There is then the issues of employment because the
local controller is employed under a role description that
we provide. There is some opportunity to negotiate, for
there to be some variation in that, but that role
description describes the role of local controller, not the
role of someone administering or managing assets and other
things on behalf of council.

I think there then becomes the opportunity for some
confusion as to what the role is and how the role is
fulfilled, and potentially becoming an instrument of local
government rather than an instrument - as designed, mutual
obligation/mutual benefit - between the State and local
government.

Now, that is certainly not the case in all
circumstances and there are a number of paid local
controllers who are absolutely wonderful and a number who
probably fulfil their roles to council very well.

The other thing about paid controllers is that you are
going to absolutely end up again - if we were to go down
that path, Carpentaria Shire, Paroo Shire, Bulloo Shire are
not going to have sufficient for a paid local controller to
manage an SES in their patches. All of the indigenous
councils in the Cape, and so on, would probably be in the
same boat and certainly would not have the financial
capacity to meet that cost. So, you would end up again
with a multispeed system. There are big councils, there
are medium-sized councils and there are very, very small
councils. It's not to say that you can't design an outcome
but it would probably be a complex and, again, potentially
confusing outcome.

Is there, in fact, two roles here? Is there a role of
being the volunteer local controller for the SES and, in
some instances, is there a role of administering and
managing councils' contribution and councils' financial
commitment? Do those two things necessarily need to be one
and the same? For example, the Gold Coast have previously
had a paid local controller; they now have a volunteer
local controller and a paid administer.

MR BAILEY: Q. Of SES council assets?
A. That's right. So, the administrator does all of the
paperwork, completes all of the financial requirements, all
of those sorts of things.

MR McGARRITY: Q. What is your view on that model?
A. In my opinion, that's probably - may be better.

Q. May be better than having a full-time paid --
A. Than having a full-time paid local controller. What
you then start to get is "I'm a paid controller", "I'm a
volunteer controller but I have the same volunteer
responsibilities." It's, again, a little inequitable. I
don't know that we can arrive at an arrangement where
everybody is paid. Even if we were to pay people
part-time, that again brings an obligation and it brings a
whole range of HR issues. Many of those local controllers
who are volunteers may not be able to commit to what is
necessarily required under a paid arrangement. A number
would not want to be paid.

Q. If there were a suggestion that there should be some
paid controllers or there should be consideration of paid
full-time local controllers in some areas, what type of
factors would need to be considered by a local government
to determine if they should have a full-time local
controller?
A. Their capacity to pay.

Q. Aside from that? Are we looking at number of
activations or are we looking at the number of people --
A. I don't think so. I don't think that's a
consideration at the moment. I think it's a risk decision
based on protecting both reputation and interest. I
actually have a role description for a local controller, if
that would be of any help? I might have already given it
to you (handed).

MR BAILEY: Thank you. We have Business Management
Directives, Volunteer Executive Appointments BMH 14.0.

THE INTERVIEWEE: One of the attachments to that is a role
description.

MR BAILEY: Q. Do you have any comment on the fact that
local controllers are performing functions that involve
statutory responsibilities, given that they are volunteers?
A. Yes, they're volunteers but they apply for the role
and they apply for the role in the full understanding of
what comes with it and they are selected on the basis of
merit. So, no, I don't have a concern. People are going
in, at least, with their eyes open as to what the
requirements of the role are.
MR McGARRITY:  Q. I just thought of something, if we could flick back to the previous discussion about local controllers. If some local governments are of the view that they probably do require a full-time local controller, do you have a position on whether that should be totally funded by the local government, given that it is their decision, or should that position be either fully State funded or in some way State funded?
A. No, it should be funded by local government.
Q. Completely?
A. Yes.

Q. Because they have made the decision --
A. I have no requirement for a paid local controller.

Q. Anywhere around the State?
A. No. Therefore, if local government, as I say, have assessed the risk and they believe they need an employee, then I think that is their call.

MR BAILEY:  Q. Just moving on to question 59, and I think we have touched on this already: Should there be only one local controller for a local government area? There has been some discussion to that effect already. Is there anything you would care to add to that?
A. Again, I think our conversation was around it's not so much what you call them, it's around do you have a consistent structure to deal with it, and are the roles, responsibilities and obligations of those various roles clearly understood and common across the State. I think it's less about what they're called and more about having a common approach to it.

MR McGARRITY:  Q. Just from your experience, is there the potential for some conflict in particular areas where you may currently have four or five local controllers but there may have been a determination that we'll just have one local controller? I'm thinking here about cultural issues, which you have referred to in the past. Is that something that you think might cause problems?
A. It's potentially a bit of a storm in a teacup. We have talked about the Toowoomba example and certainly a number of people did have their noses a little out of joint. I think that will probably blow over in time. I'm hopeful that it won't become an entrenched and endemic
position, and that people will understand that the role
hasn't really changed at all, it's just the name that
they're called. I think if we were to go down that path of
making some changes that did impact on some people's roles,
that it's something that we can manage, maybe without --

Q. Incidentally, just on the Toowoomba point, do you know
if their controller is --
A. Paid.

Q. -- paid? Is it?
A. Yes.

Q. Full-time?
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. Just in relation to the transitional
arrangements under the Disaster Management Act, it provided
that if there was an SES unit in existence before, it
continues to be in existence; if there was a local
controller, there's still a local controller. It has
effectively preserved the status quo.
A. Yes.

Q. How do you get out of that? Where does it go from
here, or is that just an open-ended transitional provision?
A. No, I don't - well. I don't believe that it's
open-ended.

Q. One of the comments made - sorry. If you will just
bear with me for a moment. In relation to SES units, for
example, under section 173 of the Disaster Management Act,
subsection 1 says:

This section applies to a group of SES
members who immediately before the
commencement were an SES unit for a local
government area.

Subsection 2:

From the commencement, the group continues
as an SES unit for the local government
area as if established under new section
84(a) until the unit's establishment ends
under that section.
So, is there anything being done in terms of --
A. No.

Q. -- ending the establishment?
A. Not at this stage, no. Again, I guess we are also
waiting for any recommendations that come. I mean, we
didn't want to move - put a position on the table and then
have a different position next year. So, I guess we're all
in a little bit of a hiatus in terms of some of those
bigger structural and strategic issues.

Q. Just moving on to the final topic heading, Equipment,
question 60: Is it reasonable for SES vehicles to be
fitted with audible and visual warning devices to identify
them as emergency personnel?
A. I'm assuming that this has come not from visual
warning devices but, specifically, blue and red warning
devices. Audible? I don't believe so. The SES vehicles
have no need for sirens on them at all. Red and blue
flashing lights? That's a matter that is at the discretion
of the Queensland Commissioner of Police. A request has
been forwarded to him some time ago. The determination was
that they saw no proper reason why the SES should have blue
and white flashing lights.

They do have orange lights. I understand that in many
areas orange lights are probably on more vehicles than they
aren't, particularly in the mining parts of the State, and
that everybody has become attuned to orange lights.

Q. Tow trucks and traffic management vehicles and --
A. That's right, yes. But there is - I mean, they are a
visual warning device, they do attract attention. A lot of
the stuff that we do where warning lights are needed is
also done in conjunction with Fire or Police and they have
their lights as well.

MR McGARRITY: Q. The status quo is sufficient, as you see
it?
A. Yes. It's not one that I am going to fight to the
death for.

MR BAILEY: Q. Has EMQ conducted an equipment audit and
replenished supply in preparation for the 2011/2012 wet
season?
A. Yes. We have looked at - each SES unit has a small
holding of things so that they can make an immediate
response and those things have been replenished. Do I have
a Statewide audit of every SES unit and the equipment they
hold? No, I don't.

We do have a series of caches and stores around the
State and all of those have been replenished. I can tell
you that we have in stock 11,169 tarpaulins, 260,375
sandbags, 47 ladders, 67 generators and 119 chainsaws, as
the key items of equipment that are in addition to
equipment that has been issued. So, this is ready to be
deployed immediately.

We also have arrangements with the Commonwealth and
other jurisdictions to borrow or acquire additional, so we
don't hold everything in stock but have arrangements where
we can rapidly access it, if needed.

MR McGARRY: Q. Those equipment audits in the regions,
are they conducted by area directors?
A. Yes.

MR BAILEY: Q. The caches are at Beenleigh and Townsville,
are they?
A. No. We have just acquired a major facility at Ormeau/
Beenleigh, and we are in the process of attempting to
purchase or build - we are yet to decide - in Townsville,
so that doesn't exist. But each of the regions have got
caches of varying sizes that they hold stock in. Some of
them are quite significant. It's a small warehouse or one
of those double-doored facilities in a multi warehouse
facility.

MR BAILEY: I think that's everything we wanted to cover.
Thanks for your time, Bruce.

THE INTERVIEWEE: It was a pleasure and I hope it has been
useful.

MR McGARRY: Yes.

THE INTERVIEWEE: We are very supportive, obviously, of
getting an outcome from what has been a very extensive set
of deliberations, and so on. So, if there is anything,
even informally, if there is just clarification - I hope
I'm not speaking out of turn.

MR [REDACTED] No, no, not at all.
THE INTERVIEWEE: I am happy to deal with things. If there is something that requires clarification, I would rather deal with it and get it done than have it go through into recommendations and be misunderstood, or what have you. So, I am happy to make myself available at any time.

MR [BLANK] Can I just clarify a couple of things which I think Bruce indicated he would try and get to you. I think one was the funding criteria of the assessment team.

MR BAILEY: The non-recurrent assessment team rules.

MR [BLANK] Those rules or criteria.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Who is on the team and what are the criteria.

MR [BLANK] And I think you were going to continue your search for the work, perhaps done in 2007, for the estimate of what might be total State funding of the SES. That's assuming - subject to you locating anything.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I don't think it will answer the question of total State funding. I think the question was asked more about can we make an assessment of what we believe the council contributions are, but that will be the lion's share of it.

MR [BLANK] Bruce can just channel that to me and I can pass that on.

MR BAILEY: Thank you.

AT 12.55PM, THE INTERVIEW CONCLUDED.
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