

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 12 October 2011 12:03 PM
To: Info Flood Commission
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Queensland Floods Commission of Enquiry Questionnaire
Attachments: Flood Commission Enquiry Questionnaire.DOC.DRF

Please find attached Questionnaire completed by [REDACTED], Local Controller, Noosa, Sunshine Coast Regional. [REDACTED] can be contacted on [REDACTED] if you have any follow up queries.

[REDACTED]
Deputy Controller Sunshine Coast North S.E.S.
Ph: [REDACTED]

Ph: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED], Local Controller, Noosa, Sunshine Coast Regional

You have been identified as a State Emergency Service Local Controller. As such, the Commission is interested in finding out from you more about the nature, role and funding of SES units in Queensland. We are particularly interested in knowing how your SES unit and its various groups operate, and how operations were undertaken during the 2010/2011 floods. This will help us to understand better the arrangements for running the SES in Queensland.

We would appreciate your taking the time to answer the following questions. This should take about 15 minutes. Upon completion, please forward the questionnaire by mail to: Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, GPO Box 178, Brisbane QLD 4001; or by way of email to info@floodcommission.qld.gov.au by **Friday, 14 October 2011**. If you are legally represented, you should forward it to the Commission through your legal representative.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to provide a written response to the Commission, we can arrange to have a Commission investigator ask you these questions over the phone. If you would prefer to respond in this way, please contact [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] [@floodcommission.qld.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@floodcommission.qld.gov.au).

The information you provide may be used in the preparation of the Commission's final report, which will be published in February 2012.

Questionnaire for SES Local Controllers

The following questionnaire is split into six sections. Each section contains a number of questions asking you to describe the nature of your SES unit/groups, and also the nature of response operations conducted by your SES unit/groups during the 2010/2011 floods. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to the Commission by Friday, 14 October 2011.

1. Structure of SES units

1.1 Please describe the structure of your unit, including the number and location of any constituent groups and the number of members in each group.

Sunshine Coast North unit consists of four groups, Tewantin, Cooroy, Pomona, Boreen Point. Tewantin has 38 members; Cooroy has 24; Pomona has 5; Boreen Point has 5.

1.2 Please indicate whether any members of your unit are employed on a paid, full-time basis. If so, how many are employed on this basis and what positions do they fill?

Only the Local Controller receives an honorarium at this stage. Controller, Deputy Controller and Group Leaders (4) receive a minimal phone allowance annually (under \$300.00)

1.3 Do you believe there is a need for SES members (including Local Controllers) to be employed on a paid, full-time basis? Please explain why or why not, including whether there are other ways in which SES members could be rewarded for their time.

The Local Controller's should be a paid full-time position. This will allow them to dedicate sufficient time to administration, public awareness, liaising with other services and the local authority as well as dedicating time to visiting groups and being available to

manage activations. General SES members should be paid the same as Auxilliary fire fighters. Instructors in the specialist fields of Working Safely at Heights, Chainsaw Operations, Traffic Control, Road Crash Rescue and FloodBoat should be paid the same rate as TAFE teachers for the time they depart they residence to the time they return when undertaking these specialist courses.

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

Sunshine Coast Regional local authority has 3 Local Controllers and because I have instigated Local Controller meetings on a bi-monthly basis, there should be no adverse effects on our operational capabilities and co-operative response to tasking.

2. Readiness for the 2010/2011 floods

We would like to know whether you feel that yo ur unit was adequately prepared to cope with the demands of the 2010/20 11 floods. Please pro vide a brief explanatio n in response to the following questions.

2.1 Did your unit have enough training to prepare it for the 2010/2011 floods?

The members available at the time were sufficiently trained to cope with the tasking allocated to them.

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

If our personnel were only allocated to the tasks, we would have had sufficient members to cope with demand. However, allocating members to fill sandbags in the rain and under adverse conditions, as well as resourcing personnel from the Rural Fire Brigade, Rotary Club and Lions Club to assist with filling bags, was a waste of valuable time for professional people who could have been supporting the community doing tasks.

2.3 Did your unit have enough equipment and resources?

There is an urgent requirement for sandbagging machines which have the capacity to fill 500 bags an hour, and if one of these machines had been worked for 8 hours, this may have been sufficient bags to cater for the whole Sunshine Coast during the 2010/2011 flood period.

Road Closed signs and Road Flooded signs need to have a statutory component applied to them so that members of the public who drive past these signs, while members are manning these barriers, will be liable for prosecution.

State Emergency Vehicles need to be identified as emergency vehicles and have suitable audible and visible warning devices comparable with other Australian States to identify us as emergency personnel on activations. A rural fire unit can proceed under red lights and siren to a square metre of burning grass where our members are unidentifiable when responding to life threatening situations where people are involved in floods and other emergencies. All SES vehicles, when supplied, should have, all terrain tyres to allow for off road access to people, especially when providing medical supplies, or supporting QAS with medivac situations.

There should be the availability of amphibious vehicles to cater for the demand of numerous water crossings to be able to travel road, water, road, water, road to access people requiring evacuation, medivac or the supply of food and medical equipment.

The amenities provided for SES members need to be upgraded to cater for the type of activations we respond to i.e. suitable areas for people to rest, shower, change into dry clothing and be fed. All these facilities are not available to all Groups.

IT equipment, including computers, photocopiers, fax machines etc needed to be upgraded as a matter of urgency to allow our local unit emergency operation centres to function efficiently and communicate information to the local groups.

With RFA Online, this equipment now becomes an essential part of our operational procedures.

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

At a local level, and with my previous knowledge and experience of flooding in the local area, I believe our Unit (Sunshine Coast North) was prepared and capable of handling the tasks that it received.

3. Operations during the 2010/2011 floods

3.1 Please describe the activities undertaken by your unit and/or its groups during the 2010/2011 floods (e.g. Requests for Assistance, rescues, evacuations).

During the period from September 2010 to March 2011 we processed 375 RFAs. A chart reflecting these is attached at the end of this document. This report only reflects storm damage activations, although flood boat activations were also entered into RFA but do not appear on this report.

4. Command and control

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

My responsibilities as Local Controller are to manage my local Unit by maintaining an overall command and control of personnel, equipment and liaison with other services and organisations to be able to effectively deploy people and resources to tasks as they are prioritised.

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

Emergency Management Queensland.

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

SSQ, the Watch Desk, by phone from the public and by members of the public coming through the door as well as requests forwarded on from other emergency services.

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

The RFA is printed out. The person requesting assistance is contacted to find out their current requirement, after which the task is prioritised and allocated to a group and team to process

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

We contacted the person requesting assistance to get updated current, relevant information and a check on local conditions so that those tasks could be split and prioritised accordingly.

4.6 During the 2010/2011 floods, did your unit receive any Requests for Assistance that it was unable to respond to? If so, how were these requests managed?

There was a request for foodstuffs that we were unable to deliver at the requested time because of the road, water, road, water situation. We kept communication with these people and because of the changing flood levels, these people received their supplies.

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

Yes. Members were deployed and this was managed by monitoring local conditions and forecast conditions as well as the availability of all members to make sure we had sufficient members to respond locally.

4.8 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your unit's contact and coordination (if any) with the following:

a) Local Disaster Coordinator

NIL

b) Local Disaster Coordination Centre

NIL

c) Local Disaster Management Group

NIL

4.9 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your unit's contact and coordination (if any) with the following:

a) District Disaster Coordinator

NIL

b) District Disaster Coordination Centre

NIL

c) District Disaster Management Group

NIL

4.10 During the 2010/2011 floods, what was the nature of your contact (if any) with Emergency Management Queensland's Area Directors and/or Regional Directors?

We were in constant communication with our Duty Officers, Area Directors and Regional Directors, giving them sit reps and requesting information that they could supply regarding updated current situations.

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

At a local level, we were tasking urban fire and rural fire to tasks that were within their roles, and supporting QAS by removing trees from roads that they needed access to. We also transported a QAS officer by four wheel drive through bush paddocks to attend to a casualty with a fractured ankle, transported that casualty by chair to a private helicopter who then transported her to a waiting ambulance on the other side of the flood waters.

4.12 During the 2010/2011 floods, were the requirements or expectations of local disaster managers ever in conflict with those of Emergency Management Queensland? If so, how were these various demands resolved (if at all)?

If you are referring to the Local Controller, my discussions with Emergency Management Queensland were never in conflict.

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

These officers' role should be to support local units and groups with information, equipment and supplies.

5. Communications

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

Computers – desktop and laptop

Printers

Faxes

Scanners

Phones – land line and mobile

UHF Radio

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

Yes. The combined photocopier/fax machine at our Emergency Operations Centre failed after hours. Arrangements had to be made to send a vehicle to another location to remove a machine from there to allow the Emergency Operations Centre to continue functioning.

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

Yes – phones, fax at this stage

6. Funding

6.1 Where does your unit receive funding from?

The local authority, grant applications and fund raising.

6.2 Has your unit applied for additional funding from the State Government in the 2009/2010 or 2010/2011 financial years? If so, what was the funding program and did you find the application process easy/difficult?

No

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

Yes.

6.4 In your view, is the total amount of funding currently received by your unit adequate? If not, please describe how your unit would benefit from additional funding.

Operational funding appears to be adequate at this time, but additional funding needs to be applied to capital works and vehicle turnover.

6.5 Do you think that the way in which funding is allocated and distributed to your unit is adequate? If not, how could this be improved?

I do not know how the funding is allocated.

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

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

Events to support community groups to undertake their fund raising activities and raise the profile of SES members in the community.

Grant applications

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

As I do not have a figure on my operating budget, this percentage cannot be calculated.

c) does fundraising present any difficulties?

Yes. SES members spend sufficient time maintaining their skills and should not have to fundraise to support the requirements of an emergency service organisation.

7. Other

7.1 Do you have any suggestions as to how the SES can attract and retain members, either for your particular unit or at a state-wide level?

Yes. Pay in line as per the process with Auxilliary Firefighters.

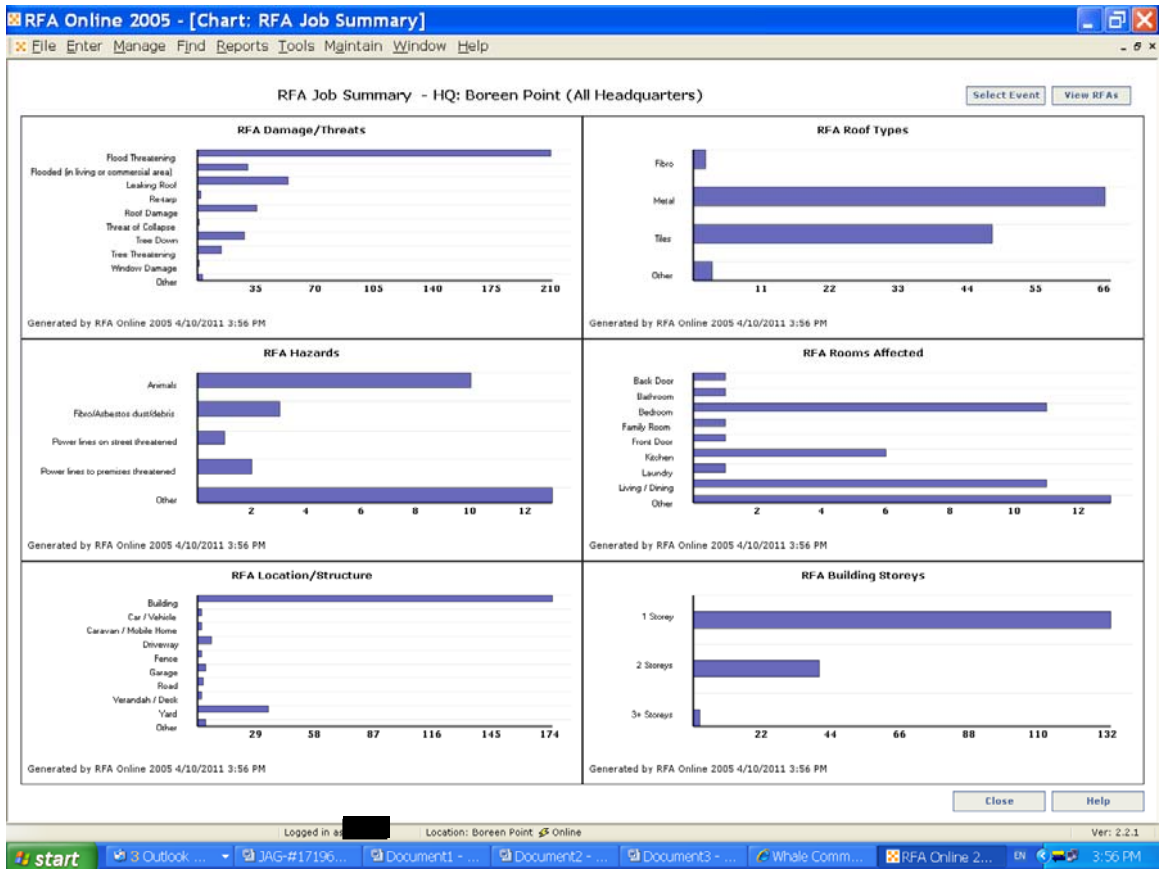
Streamline the training requirements for new members so that they can be deployed in a more timely manner. An issue that contributes to this is the fact that training course materials are unable to be submitted for validation and certification until members have ID numbers. ID numbers are not able to be allocated until after they have completed their three months' probation and a Criminal History Check has been completed, during which time they are undertaking training to get them ready to participate in activations. A solution could be to reduce probation period to 2 months.

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

The general standard of facilities provided to Emergency Management Queensland regional offices and local authority units need to be upgraded to reflect current workplace standards and operational requirements to allow this organisation to function efficiently during major events such as the 2010/2011 flooding.

I believe the Queensland State Emergency Service, as the name implies, should be State run to eliminate some of the complicated processes that are in place now. The SES should be totally State funded and managed either through a levy or from general revenue. The processes to deal with equipment and facilities are complicated and time consuming and need streamlining especially for a volunteer organisation.

If you would like any elaboration on any of the above, please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED]



Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire