

**EMERGENCY SERVICES REFORM AMENDMENT BILL 2023; STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL 2023;
MARINE RESCUE QUEENSLAND BILL 2023**

Submission No: 16
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Submitter Comments:

I wish to express my concerns regarding the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023. I humbly request that this bill be withdrawn due to the risk of its negative and dangerous consequences.

The bill seems to be trying to establish a law enforcement agency similar to the Queensland Police Force. The structure appears to be giving total authoritarian control and draconian overreaching powers to a government appointed commissioner who will have no accountability to the volunteers, over who they have been given control over. This is an unnecessary and inappropriate oppressive power structure for what should be a rescue service. A quasi-military/police style command structure is not the right organisational structure for a rescue service.

For example, the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 has provisions for Marine Rescue Volunteers to forcibly enter a building, a boat, an aircraft, and so forth, without the owner's permission.

Division 6 Powers of MRQ members

23 Power of entry

(1) An MRQ member may enter a place without a warrant or the consent of the owner or occupier of the place if—

(a) the MRQ member is performing an MRQ function at the place; and

(b) the MRQ member reasonably suspects that there is a dangerous situation at or near the place.

This provision has nothing to do with safety of life or property, it is to do with law enforcement! MRQ members should not be required to engage in law enforcement!

The Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 has provisions for Police Officers to be seconded to MRQ but:

“continues to be a police officer for all purposes and to have the functions and powers of a police officer without being limited to the performance of MRQ's functions.”

Law enforcement is a conflict of interest to a rescue service. These two services should be clearly separate entities which obviously does not occur in this Bill. A marine rescue service should be able to freely rescue people and vessels without any law enforcement obligations. Persons on the vessel should be rescued without being judged or interrogated and the vessel itself should be able to be rescued without judging the character of the occupants or owners of the vessel. Marine rescue personnel are at risk of being assaulted if they take on an authoritarian role over those who need to be rescued as this bill requires. Marine rescue personnel should also not be obligated to provide evidence for law enforcement. Marine rescue personnel should not be required to undergo training to deal with adverse people due to the marine rescue service being associated with law enforcement.

There are numerous Volunteer Marine Rescue groups that have operated successfully for more than 50 years and so the knowledge and experience in performing marine rescues is with the local people. The Queensland Government has little knowledge and almost no experience in performing marine rescues so the Queensland Government should not be making decisions in this area. The best decisions are made on site by the local people who are providing the service. Assets should remain the property of local marine rescue groups. The leadership of these local marine rescue groups should continue to be chosen by local people who are members of these groups.

I accept that there is public interest in the provision of free marine rescue services but this can be provided without the need for centralised government control. A simple funding model for the government to achieve this would be through The Department of Transport and Main Roads, who can supply data on the number of Marine Driver's Licence people in an area to provide a suitable pro rata amount of funds to established marine rescue groups in the area so local marine rescue groups do not need to raise money through membership fees. This would minimise administration and get much better results than centralised government control could ever achieve.

I live in Gladstone and appreciate the excellent service that Volunteer Marine Rescue Gladstone provides for our community. I therefore request that the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 be withdrawn so that the service that Volunteer Marine Rescue Gladstone provides will not be jeopardised or weakened and so that the well being of volunteers will not be put at risk as they clearly would be if the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 was implemented.

Sincerely,
Janne Peterson