

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

Submission No: 12
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Submitter Comments:

I am opposed to the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023. This bill should be withdrawn. This bill appears to be written for the setting up of a law enforcement group such as the Queensland Police Force. It is a strongly centralised, top-down management structure with all authority resting with the government through a government appointed commissioner. This commissioner has no accountability to the volunteers, over whom he or she has authoritarian control. This is a totally inappropriate structure for what should be a rescue service.

The Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 has provisions for Marine Rescue Volunteers to forcibly enter a building, a boat, an aircraft, etc contrary to the owner's wishes.

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 adequately separated which clearly does not happen in this Bill. A marine rescue service should be able to freely rescue people and vessels without any law enforcement obligations. Whether a person is a law abiding citizen or Black Beard the Pirate, they or their vessel should be able to be rescued with no questions asked. This greatly reduces the risk of marine rescue personnel being assaulted by someone who needs to be rescued. Marine rescue personnel should also be free of any obligation to provide evidence for law enforcement. Marine rescue personnel should not have to be trained to deal with adverse people because the marine rescue service is associated with law enforcement.

A quasi-military (police) command structure is not the right organisational structure for a rescue service. The truth is there are many Volunteer Marine Rescue groups that have operated very 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 acknowledge the public interest in the provision of free marine rescue services but this could be achieved without the need for centralised government control. The simplest funding model would be for the government, through The Department of Transport and Main Roads 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 am an active member of Volunteer Marine Rescue Gladstone.

Sincerely,
Murray Peterson