

# INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

DIRECTORATE



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ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
103 WALKER STREET

PO BOX 1268, TOWNSVILLE  
QUEENSLAND 4810

TELEPHONE >> 0727 9229  
FACSIMILE >> 0727 9051

enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au  
www.townsville.qld.gov.au

**Wayne Wendt MP - Chair**

Public Accounts and Public Works Committee  
Parliament House  
Cnr Alice & George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir,

**SUBJECT >> Inquiry into Management of Rural Fire Service**

The following comments are supplied for the above Inquiry by the QLD Public Accounts and Public Works Committee regarding the relationship and issues between Townsville City Council, Townsville Rural Brigades and QLD Fire & Rescue Services (QFRS).

Townsville City Council currently has a reasonable but limited relationship with local brigades and QFRS. Historically, the level of consultation between Council and the Rural Fire Brigades is dependent upon the availability and enthusiasm of the QFRS Area Director - Rural Operations. The current QFRS Area Director - Rural Operations is presently working to rectify the issue of there being limited joint planning undertaken in the Townsville region for wild fire planning and operations.

The avenue for strategic plans and local discussions on brigade operations and planning is available through the Area Fire Management Groups. To date these groups are operationally based and do an excellent job of planning and undertaking season inspections and consequentially burn offs where required. The make up of the Fire Management Groups may need to be altered to allow for more detailed regional wide planning.

There are currently over 80 Fire Wardens in the Townsville City Council area. These positions have been organised and managed by QRFS. Again, there is limited contact between Fire Wardens and Council. Council Local Laws apply to areas of over 20,000m<sup>2</sup> regarding fire breaks and back burning and are related on an adhoc basis to Fire Wardens with limited avenues through QRFS for a specific education program on these Laws.

Council annually collect and distribute the fire levy per Brigade area as per the request of the Brigades and through the QRFS Area Director - Rural Operations.

Council insists that the Brigades meet the accounting conditions of the Act. It has been obvious that smaller brigades struggle with the cost of supplying audited accounts to meet the requirements of the Act. This cost has an impact on their limited funds for maintaining their brigade.

Council at times also supports their brigades with one off grants for specific infrastructure costs relating to upgrading equipment or shed construction. There appears to be very limited financial support from QRFS and there is no scheme available to the Brigades or Councils such as the annual EMQ SES Subsidy Program for SES Groups. This program offers an avenue for Councils/SES Groups to fund various projects to upgrade their operational capability.

If you have any queries on these issues, please contact Allen Morris - Executive Officer - Emergency Management via phone on [REDACTED] or via email [REDACTED].

Yours faithfully,



**Neil Allen**  
Director Infrastructure Services