



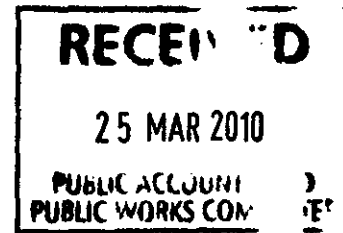
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22nd March 2010

The Research Director
Public Accounts and Public Works Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Q. 4000



Dear Director,

Submission: Management of Rural Fire Services in Queensland

Committee Member Panel

Firstly, it is disappointing to note that the Review Panel is comprised of committee members based in South East Queensland. All regional representatives should be included in the panel. This representative omission leaves the panel with an imbalance in group perspective and a lack of in depth regional knowledge.

Queensland is a vast and diverse state not only in size, but also with topography and district weather conditions. Even within regions there is complexity of terrain, distance and weather conditions.

Decentralised Control

CANEGROWERS Mulgrave considers it is vitally important that the current decentralised model for Rural Fire Brigades continue to be retained. It is the most efficient, effective and safest system suitable for a state such as Queensland. It is a proven and tested model that should be the envy of other states.

Local Rural Fire Brigades, Fire Wardens and the local permit system must be retained not just for convenience, but also for safety, response time and the very important knowledge regarding local conditions including terrain and weather.

Retain the ability to burn cane/and or cane trash as authorised under the Commissioner's Notification. There should be continuation of burning programs for hazard reduction purposes and local knowledge is best suited for this. It should not be more difficult to obtain a hazard reduction permit because of vexatious public veto due to impacts on swimming pools. In certain wet areas unless trash is burnt off the cane stool gets a black mould and rots off, necessitating replant of the cane crop more frequent than at least 5 years.

Machinery and Equipment

Rural Fire Brigades are a vital link in the control of fire, particularly with their prompt response time, knowledge of terrain and weather conditions. It is important that Rural Brigades be provided with appropriate machinery and equipment to continue their important work. This means that there needs to be increased financial assistance to secure important equipment. It is disappointing that the equipment lists in recent years have been markedly shortened. The 3000 litre galvanised trailers are very good onsite support for water supply and should be made more easily available. These trailers are very necessary to assist urban fire tenders which only carry 1000 litres of water, rural fire units top them up so that they continue to fight the fire.

Accountability Mechanisms

There may be some shortfalls with accountability mechanisms, however, these could be overcome with a few improvements to current systems. The Regional Office assists with purchase orders and maintain inventory of equipment. Annual inspections/reporting of machinery and equipment could be implemented to overcome concerns regarding condition and safety of rural fire brigade equipment.

Training

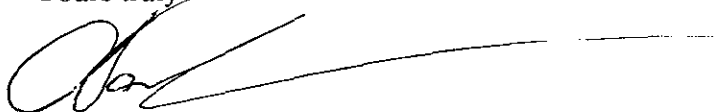
There is recognition of the valuable part training provides however, this would best be offered on a voluntary basis. Members of Rural Fire Brigades are volunteers and training requirements need to be suitably provided to respect the demands of their respective livelihoods.

Fire Wardens

The role of the Fire Wardens within the Rural Fire Service model should continue to be maintained. Fire Wardens are selected locally after being nominated by "people in the know" and they understand local conditions when it comes to issuing fire permits. They are usually very involved with their communities.

I trust the foregoing information will assist the Review Committee with their deliberations on this important issue for Queensland.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Christine Hancock', written over a horizontal line.

Christine Hancock
Manager