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14 APR 2010

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Fitzroy Rural Fire Brigade Group

9th April 2010

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

Dear Sir,

Please accept our submission to the Public Accounts and Public Works Committee regarding the inquiry into the Management of Rural Fire Services in Queensland.

The Fitzroy Rural Fire Brigade Group has a membership of 18 Brigade's and as at 09/04/10 a volunteer base of 483 members. There are approximately 10,000 residents within the Brigade districts of the Fitzroy Group.

Yours faithfully,



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Public Accounts and Public Works Committee **pg1/3.**
Submission Response from Fitzroy Rural Fire Brigade Group, Central Region.

Is the current model of Rural Fire Brigades suitable?

- yes it is satisfactory, at the Brigade level and at the Group level.

Is the existing funding model, including resource allocation, appropriate?

- No – the subsidy on appliances should be increased or preferably the Government should pay for the entire cost of the vehicle.
- the subsidised equipment list needs to be revised to include more equipment eg. commercial blowers and chainsaws.
- A command vehicle should be available for Groups to use during level 2 or higher incident fires.
- Brigade's need to have a personnel transport vehicle available, so that firefighters are transported safely to the fire incident.
- The Brigade's within the Fitzroy Group would certainly benefit from the provision of additional resources including additional appliances, command vehicles and personnel carriers.

What effect is urban encroachment within Brigade areas having on Rural Fire Brigades?

- Urban encroachment is having a very serious effect on Rural Fire Brigade's... the workload has increased as urban boundaries have expanded.
- Hazard Reduction in the urban areas is increasing the workload of Rural Brigade's as a majority of property owners of these rural lifestyle blocks (1 – 50 acre) lack the knowledge, sense of responsibility and initiative to ensure that their properties are safe from the threat of fire.

How can the increasing demands on Rural Fire Brigade be managed effectively.

- By the provision of more resources to Brigades.
- An improved system of ensuring that QFRS and Rural Brigade personnel strive to work more effectively together, which would include using the knowledge of Brigade personnel and persons who live in the areas affected by fire.
- Increasing the number of administration and operational staff at the Rockhampton Rural Operations Area office, so that they can better serve, train and support the 138 Brigades in the Central Region.

Are the accountability mechanisms currently in place appropriate?

- For the Brigade's that are adhering to the accountability requirements as per the Rural Fire Service Manual, there are minimal problems, unfortunately there seems to be a lot of Brigade's that are struggling with achieving these accountability requirements. These Brigade's need immediate assistance.
- There needs to be more communication from the Area Office, to distribute information to all Brigade's so that all Brigade's receive up to date information. eg a regular newsletter.
- There needs to be more follow up from the Area Office to ensure that all Brigade's with appliances do get the annual safety inspection done on their appliance as well as ensuring that other checks are regularly carried out eg first aid kits, fire extinguisher checks, if these have not been complied with a follow up needs to be done without delay.
- Brigade's can become very complacent when there seems to be no follow up on the non compliant accountability, and more importantly disillusioned with the system of checks etc if nothing seems to be done with the information collected.

What should be the role of Fire Wardens within the Rural Fire services model?

The role of Fire Warden should be retained, the position should be held by a person who is resident in the Brigade district that has extensive local knowledge of the area and is an experienced fire fighter that is conversant with all of the relevant rules and regulations.

- The Application for a “ Permit to Light Fire” should be mandatory.
- During the Fire season there should be a system where there can be restricted areas in which all fires need a permit and property owners should be more accountable for any fire on their property.

Are there any other relevant matters the committee needs to address?

- There should be more liaison between Brigade’s, Government Agencies, Regional Councils and Real Estate Developers.
- The level of staffing both Administrative and Operational needs to be significantly increased at the Area Office, Central Region. The current level of staffing is insufficient to effectively and efficiently handle the workload of service delivery, administration, accountability conformation and training requirements of the 138 Brigades in the region which includes approximately 2600 volunteers.