

Emergency Service Volunteers — update March 2016

Transcript

Deputy Commissioner Emergency Service Volunteers Mike Wassing:

Welcome to our second video update. Today we're at Fernvale Rural Fire Brigade meeting with the local Rural Fire Brigade members and some SES members as well.

I really appreciate the feedback after our first video. You were looking for more detail, and I'm hoping to give some of that detail today, recognising there is only so much you can fit in a few minutes of a video clip.

I'm here with Andrew Rose, the First Officer for Fernvale Rural Fire Brigade. Andrew is going to ask me a few questions as we go through.

First Officer Andrew Rose:

Mike, what are some of the really tangible things that you've achieved in the last six months?

DC Wassing:

There's a huge amount of activity across the state, and most of that activity obviously occurs at local areas, brigades, groups, but there are some fundamental things at a state level as well that I would like to share with you.

We've got 56 rural fire appliances that have been built this year; many of those are already on the frontline in Brigades, deployed. We've got another 60 being built next year so that's an increase, and they're going to be fit-for-purpose, high priority in terms of design for safety. But in addition to that, for SES, we've got 42 new Pantech trailers that are being built and, again, being deployed right throughout the state— they will encompass equipment for general rescue, storm, and other general logistical requirements for the SES —as well as seven boat that will replace our current fleet of boats, or some of our fleet of boats, currently in the state emergency services as well.

I've also been very proud to oversee the deployment of volunteers and staff to Western Australian fires and the Tasmanian fires more recently. We still have Assistant Commissioner Tom Dawson from the Rural Fire Service on behalf of AFAC overseeing the coordination and review of the Tasmanian bushfires, but I'm really proud of the fact that the whole of QFES contributed to the efforts in supporting our interstate deployments from Fire and Rescue, State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service and even Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service which was fantastic and that was a true mix of staff and volunteers.



First Officer Andrew Rose:

How are we progressing with cross-training and cross-skilling between the SES and Rural?

DC Wassing:

We've got lots of joint training and joint exercises occurring, but specifically I'd like to mention a couple of key aspects.

We're about to release the first joint training package for Level 1 Chainsaw, we're also —right on the back of that — we're about to release the first package of joint First Aid training, and we've got a number of other packages that are now shared services across the services both in terms of training and exercising.

We've piloted just recently in Townsville a Level 1 Incident Management course that was targeted not at fire but actually at other hazards and that had a number of people from and members from both the Auxiliary Service and State Emergency Service.

I've also heard loud and clear from Rural Fire Service about the need for off-road training. The State Emergency Service currently have an off-road training package, and we're going to pilot that package locally in coming weeks to see if that's fit-for-purpose for the Rural Fire Service as well.

First Officer Andrew Rose:

What has given you a real sense of pride about the people who work in Emergency Service Volunteers recently?

DC Wassing:

I gain a huge amount of pride from daily working with volunteers and our staff that support. We've just celebrated Peer Support Officer Week and it's been fantastic to see both Suzanne and Melissa from State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service receive state awards for their role as our Peer Support, amongst a whole lot of other members of staff and volunteers that do a great effort in terms of our Peer Support, that are often behind the scenes.

I was also lucky enough to attend the International Women's Day and the inaugural QFES awards. We had some great participation there, and again, from an Emergency Service Volunteer Division, I was very proud to see a number of our staff and volunteers receive awards.

First Officer Andrew Rose:

Mike, what plans do you have for improving communication with the volunteers around the state?

DC Wassing:

I recognise that communications is a real challenge for us. We've got to get better at it, and that communication has to be two-way.

One of the key aspects that we're working on at the moment is on a new Volunteer Information Portal — VIP. That work is going to take us some time. The first step, and where we're at at the



moment is really a design phase for the Volunteer Information Portal, and that design is actually already being informed by you as the volunteers in terms of what those user requirements are. We'll continue to engage with you as that program develops, and make sure that there's opportunity for you to not only see that, try it, participate in it, and make it the best system it can be.

I would also like to congratulate Eddie Cowie, as the newly elected president for the newly formed Queensland State Emergency Service Volunteer Association. The associations generally, both for SES and Rural Fire Service, are integral to our engagement, our partnership, and working together into the future.

Thank you for listening, thank you to the Fernvale Rural Fire Brigade for hosting today, and thank you to the volunteers I had the great pleasure of meeting.

