

13 December 2019

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## Blue Water Review – Phase 2 – Complete

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What a busy but amazing year 2019 has been! Whilst the Blue Water Review Project has been underway, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has been tested with bushfire operations that have stretched every available resource.

As the year draws to a close, the Blue Water Review (BWR) Working Group would like to commend the work undertaken by all volunteers who work in the emergency services sector, including those in the maritime rescue space who continue to deliver highly professional work, often in very challenging conditions. We should all be proud of the way we make a difference in the lives of those we assist and our wider communities.

We take this opportunity to wish Marine Rescue volunteers a safe and Merry Christmas period, and thank families of our volunteers for continuing to support them during this potentially peak period on the water during the holidays and into 2020.

### What has been done?

You will recall Campbell Darby DSC AM delivered his report into volunteer marine rescue organisations about this time last year to then QFES Commissioner, Katarina Carroll. On authority of the Commissioner in early 2019, the BWR Working Group (WG) was formed. The WG was handed a “blank sheet of paper” and requested to produce recommendations and a plan that addressed the issues in Campbell Darby’s report, for consideration by the Queensland Government. The WG held a series of meetings and industry consultation sessions across Queensland throughout 2019. Attendees turned out to be a dynamic group of dedicated people whose passion and expertise is admirable. The WG delivered:

1. 11 recommendations (the Vision) – delivered April and June 2019
2. A Concept of Operations (CONOPS) – draft delivered June and final delivered November 2019
3. An Implementation Plan of the Vision (the Plan) – delivered November 2019.

At the final WG Meeting on 9 November 2019, the group chose to disband as they have delivered on their scope of works with the CONOPS and the Plan now delivered to the Commissioner.

### Now what?

The Plan is with the Commissioner and because it recommends significant change will also need to be considered by the relevant Queensland Government Agencies and the Queensland Cabinet for final decision. This means specific timeframes can’t be given but it’s an exciting time with many conversations happening. It’s likely we will hear more in the first few months of 2020.

It is timely to reflect on the achievements of 2019 and the high levels of stakeholder and volunteer involvement which brought us to this point. It is also important to acknowledge that consultation will be ongoing, and volunteers will continue to be able to shape and be part of any new future direction.

## **What next?**

Once an announcement is made by the Queensland Government, this will give a clear way forward. Whilst we wait for that final decision, momentum will be maintained, and there will be plenty of opportunities for volunteers to get involved.

The next steps of the BWR are already underway with the relevant government agencies being consulted with further targeted consultation with volunteers and stakeholders to follow. Indeed “taking the sector on a journey” will be a key concept in the success of building a better future together and there will be opportunity for further input.

An official communique will be released when an announcement has been made by the Queensland Government. No doubt all branches of emergency services are going to face a very busy operational period over summer.

## **From the Chair**

QFES extends its sincere thanks to the WG. The expertise and dedication of the WG has led to a detailed and evidence-based plan being delivered to QFES. Many of these members will continue in an advisory capacity in one way or another so this group expertise will not be lost.

We look forward to working towards a better future and working more closely in 2020 with our valued maritime rescue partners in Queensland.

Questions or comments? Email the Blue Water Review via [BlueWaterReview@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:BlueWaterReview@qfes.qld.gov.au)