

Blue Water Review – Next Steps

January 2020

Late in 2019, the Blue Water Review (BWR) Working Group provided a detailed plan of how to implement their recommendations to QFES. The Working Group did an impressive job of pulling together the views from all the Working Group engagement sessions and delivering on time.

The QFES BWR Team has reviewed the plan and is providing advice to Government for its consideration and to make a decision. Progress to date on the BWR can be found at: <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/Pages/Review-VMR.aspx>

Since the final Working Group Communique issued on 13 December 2019, the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) team has progressed to an exciting new phase of the Blue Water Review (BWR). The team remains committed to maintaining project momentum, progressing the review, engaging with stakeholders and continuing to support our valued marine rescue volunteers.

Despite the significant bushfire operations and the support being provided by QFES to interstate efforts, the BWR team has maintained its focus and expanded its capability.

The Blue Water Team is out and about

The BWR team has continued to engage sector partners including the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service and Maritime Safety Queensland. This included introducing, discussing and gaining feedback on the work and planning done to date.

In early January, a meeting was held with multiple government agencies who have a mandate or interest in marine search and rescue and boating safety which provided further feedback on the proposed future direction.

Assistant Commissioner Joanne Greenfield recently visited Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Burdekin, where she handed out Minister's Emergency Service Volunteer Pins to all eligible members. A standing offer remains for volunteers to take part in ceremonies or events to present pins. Please contact the team if you wish to explore this.





VMR Burdekin Squadron President David Papale (left) receiving his Volunteer Pin from QFES Assistant Commissioner Joanne Greenfield (right).

The QFES Blue Water Review Team

The BWR Working Group voted to wind up their activities in November 2019, having achieved their objectives under the Terms of Reference. They produced 11 recommendations, a Concept of Operations and an implementation plan for the future of the sector. The group worked hard, many in a voluntary capacity, to produce a framework for the future. So, who is working on behalf of the Review now?

QFES have a dedicated BWR Team for the next few months.

Matthew Thompson and **Keith Williams** have joined and **Keryn Malone** remains on the team. **Jade Keogh** remains involved and is focused on the current service agreement negotiation.

Matthew has previous experience working in the New South Wales Government within the Office of Emergency Management and Rural Fire Service and in Coastal and Maritime Safety with Emergency Management Queensland Helicopter Rescue, Marine Rescue NSW and Surf Life Saving Australia. During his tenure with Marine Rescue NSW, while the sector was under transition, Matthew delivered a Statewide Radio Communications Review, implemented a centralised system for activating volunteer marine rescue assets, and served as Executive Officer to the National Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue Committee (NVMSARC). Matthew has a passion for volunteering, marine safety and delivering high quality emergency services to the public.



Keith requires no introduction, joining us from VMRAQ. He has immense experience across both the VMRAQ and Coast Guard organisations and in-depth knowledge and technical expertise of the maritime rescue sector gained from years of volunteering. Keith will work with Matthew to guide how any proposed changes to be considered by the government may impact the sector. This work will be fundamental to the development of a sustainable and robust future for volunteer marine rescue services in Queensland.

Keith and Matthew have worked together in the past through the NVMSARC, chiefly on the architecture on Exemption 24.



Matthew Thompson (left) and Keith Williams (Right) join the QFES BWR team.

Matthew's email address is Matthew.Thompson@qfes.qld.gov.au and he is excited to soon be getting out with Keith to visit sector volunteers and move the review program forward.

So, what's happening with the review?

The implementation plan was presented to QFES' new Commissioner, Mr Greg Leach, who is up to date and on board for positive change. The next steps will be Government to consider the Implementation Plan and it's proposed costs. This may take a number of months.

Once a decision is made there will significant effort put in to consult our valued volunteers on the next steps and the detail.

In the interim, the team is planning more engagement with sector volunteers. Sourcing existing knowledge and experience in the sector will be crucial to future success, as has already been done throughout the previous two phases of the review



with Campbell Darby DSC AM and the BWR Working Group. Nobody knows the business like the people doing the business!

What hasn't happened yet?

All ongoing activities and work carried out to date is about planning. Planning must be carried out thoroughly and consulted on widely. This project has not moved to a phase of implementing reform. There are plans to consult with existing volunteers on all aspects of any changes once Government has had a chance to carefully consider the matter.

At this stage, the project has not:

- created a new service with a new name determined
- determined to reduce the number of individual units
- determined the need to transfer vessels between units or for QFES to "take them over"
- determined the need to transfer cash or other assets from existing units
- proposed plans for QFES to take over operational command of marine activations.


Remember there is just one reason to undertake this project and that is to improve support to volunteers, thus improving safety and the service you provide. Key concepts will revolve around:

- increasing recognition of the work done by marine sector volunteers
- enhancing public safety
- delivering an enhanced boating safety network for the people of Queensland.

In fact, current planning acknowledges the existing expertise in the sector. Engaging this expertise will be critical to the success of the project with any decisions and implementation pathways communicated and consulted on.

Be safe out there!

Another period of high activity on the water is upon us. We would like to wish all volunteers, your families and loved ones a happy, safe and enjoyable Australia Day weekend. Your efforts in keeping the community safe embody the spirit of what it means to be Australian.



Joanne Greenfield

Assistant Commissioner
Emergency Management and Community Capability
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

Questions or comments? Email the Blue Water Review via BlueWaterReview@qfes.qld.gov.au

