

**In Your experience, what areas of emergency response could have been done better**

*The following covers two areas observed on 17 November 2019 in Southern QLD:*

- 1. Safety concerns regarding command and control*
- 2. Lack of RAFT resources in QFES*

**1. Safety concerns regarding command and control at Boonah ICC.**

On 17 November I was the OIC on an urban pumper deployed from Brisbane to assist with fires in QLD's Scenic Rim area (QFES's South East Region). During the day I was deployed from the Boonah ICC to Spicer's Peak to assist other resources with structural protection.

I observed things during the day which I found concerning and were not in keeping with running safe and effective firefighting operations. This included; lack of a briefing of current fire-behavior and an Incident Action Plan prior to leaving the ICC; no communications plan was provided; no locations of safety zones or escape routes were provided; no command plan or locations for the division or sector commanders were provided; and no maps were provided.

I find this concerning as this could have led to a dangerous situation occurring, or a death or serious injury on the fire-ground occurring.

During the day a fire-ground warning was transmitted over the radio network to the division commanders about dangerous and erratic fire behavior being forecast over the next hour. The division commanders were required to acknowledge this message. However, the message did not seem to be sent out in the same manner to the fire-ground.

It seemed that the ICC was more caught up in the running of itself, than carrying out safe and effective command and control of a major wildfire firefighting operation.

Due to these concerns I sent the following email to my Inspector to be forward up the chain of command:

***Dear Inspector [REDACTED],***

***On Sunday 17 November I was an OIC on 526A as part of a strike force to assist SE region with the fires south of Boonah.***

***I have concerns about the lack of critical safety information that was give to crews by the IMT. These views were also shared by other OIC's who I spoke to during change of shift.***

***This includes a complete lack of fundamental information such as:***

- A current situation briefing***
- A mission, overall plan or concept of operations***

- *The location of critical command elements such as sector commanders the divisional commanders location*
- *Communications plan*
- *The location of safe zones and escape routes*

*I also found it concerning that a key weather safety warning was issued by the ICC to the divisional commanders and it was not passed on to all the appliances manning the sectors (my crew only happened to hear this information as we were in the appliance at the time)*

*Could you please pass my concerns up the chain of command an over to the IMT so these issues can be rectified*

*I am happy to discuss these issues further if required.*

*Regards*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*Mob:* [REDACTED]

*Email:* [REDACTED]

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## **2. Lack of RAFT capability in QFES:**

During the course of the 17th of November 2019, I observed fire moving through steep inaccessible terrain, while RFS and urban personnel stood by ad watched. I believe that QFES lacked sufficient Remote Area Firefighting resources.

Conventional RFS and urban resources lack the equipment, fitness and training to make access to these areas and undertake firefighting operations. The fire moving through the areas at the time had very low flame height and was moving down hill with a low rate of spread.

#### **Improved arrangements for preparation and response**

1. Ensure that personnel carrying command functions in the IMT have sufficient fire-ground operational experience prior to being employed in an IMT operationally.
2. Ensure the operational experience that qualifies IMT personnel is relevant for the type of incident e.g. wildfire fire-ground experience for wildfire IMT, not flood or storm for wildfire IMT.
3. Provide better training and more realistic training for IMT personnel.
4. Ensure incident controllers, operations officers and planning officers can identify safe zones and escape routes, and communicate them to crews prior to going on the fire-ground and are accountable for doing so.
5. Ensure that ICC's have the capacity to provide written comm's plans, safety information and command information to crews.
6. Ensure Incident Controllers understand the importance of crews on the fire-ground receiving key safety warnings and all command personnel are accountable for the timely dissemination of these warnings.
7. Ensure that clear IAP's are communicated on all fire-grounds and that IC's are accountable for this.
8. QFES should invest in the development of their RAFT capability.
9. All fire-ground personnel should have adequate fitness for firefighting and be fitness tested with something similar to the "arduous pack test" as used in the USA for wild-land firefighters.

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**From:** [RCNDA - Enquiries](#)  
**To:** [RCNDA - Submissions](#)  
**Subject:** RCNDA - Submission - [REDACTED] [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 28 April 2020 9:34:50 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[Royal Commision Submission \[REDACTED\]](#)

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 27 April 2020 10:17 PM  
**To:** RCNDA - Enquiries <[RCNDA.Enquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:RCNDA.Enquiries@royalcommission.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Royal Commission Submission

To Whom it may Concern,

I have attempted to place a submission using the submission page of the Royal Commission's website on the night of 27 April 2020. However, the website was unable to upload my submission.

Therefore, please find attached my submission.

I would like my submission to be anonymous unless my consent is given to be published under my name on request of the Royal Commission.

Regards

[REDACTED]

**Mob:** [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]