



Submission to the Senate Select Committee

Overview:



**CQ RESCUE (Central Queensland Helicopter
Rescue Service)**

CQ RESCUE is a not-for-profit, Mackay-based helicopter rescue service and was formed as a result of forty business people from Mackay seeing the need for an emergency aero-medical service within the region. This group of people first met in 1994 and the first official emergency flight was flown on 1st September 1996.

The area covered by CQ RESCUE is from Bowen in the north to St Lawrence in the south and includes most of the Bowen Basin from Collinsville to Clermont. Usually the region covered is a 300km radius from Mackay although it is not uncommon to be tasked further afield. The area serviced by CQ RESCUE is approximately four times the size of Tasmania.

These types of tasks generally involve seriously injured patients who require vital medical care which may not be available in Mackay or critically ill patients who require urgent transport from this region to Townsville.

Our primary aircraft is an American manufactured twin engine Bell 412 which has IFR capabilities. This aircraft is the most capable emergency medical service (EMS)/Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter between Brisbane and Townsville.

CQ RESCUE has a wet lease agreement with CHC Australia (the largest helicopter provider in the world). As part of the contract CHC also supply pilots, crew and engineers and ensure the pilots and crew are up to date with training and safety standards. CHC Australia also provide CQ RESCUE with a back up aircraft, a second Bell 412 helicopter which places us in an ideal position to continue rescue and medical tasks when the primary aircraft is due for scheduled maintenance.

The crew consists of four pilots, three air crewmen and a rescue crewman. Paramedics have also been trained in rescue crewman roles. Successful negotiations between CQ RESCUE and Queensland Ambulance Service have resulted in an Intensive Care Paramedic being made available to fly with the CQ RESCUE crew 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A Queensland Government funded doctor is assigned to CQ RESCUE. Our rescue service is the only facility between Townsville and Brisbane to benefit from having a doctor at a helicopter rescue base. Having a doctor and paramedic readily available enables the rescue crew to respond to tasks in a fast, efficient and professional manner.

Missions and patients

In 2010, 47% of tasks have been to locations in the Bowen Basin with 21% of missions to the Whitsunday Islands. The number of tasks to areas north of Mackay including Townsville has more than tripled since 2005 taking the current amount of tasks to 20%. Other tasking breakdowns include missions over water (excluding the Whitsunday Islands) 6% and coastal regions south of Mackay 6%.



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While the nature of the tasks vary some examples include spinal injuries, broken limbs, pregnancy complications, head injuries, cardiac conditions, aneurisms and illnesses such as appendicitis, meningitis and meningococcal just to name a few.

The crew of CQ RESCUE also conducts a number of search and rescue tasks each year. Many of these are high profile search and rescue tasks which attract significant media attention. In past years CQ RESCUE has flown search and rescue missions as far south as Bundaberg and conducted several successful missions off the coast of Gladstone and further north towards Townsville. There were also quite a high number of rescues within a 300 kilometre radius of Mackay.

Earlier this year, the CQ RESCUE helicopter and crew were deployed to Brisbane where they remained for one week to assist with flood relief. While in Brisbane the crew flew a total of fourteen missions in seven days including number of missions to Kilcoy, Kholo and Hervey Bay where they transferred ill and injured patients who were isolated by flood waters. CQ RESCUE also assisted by flying supplies to hospitals to replenish urgently required stock.

By February the crew was in Townsville to assist with the recovery mission after Cyclone Yasi. While based in Townsville the crew conducted nine missions in four days.

In both instances while a CQ RESCUE helicopter was assisting with flood relief in Brisbane and Townsville the second Bell 412 remained in Mackay to cover this region for emergencies.

CQ RESCUE is one of the busiest helicopter rescue services in the State. In recent years CQ RESCUE has carried out more primary missions than any other helicopter rescue service in Queensland. The majority of our patients fall into the category of males aged between 25 and 55 followed by women in the same age group.

The aircraft has the capability of transporting two stretcher patients at any one time and on each flight the crew generally consists of the pilot, an air crewman, a doctor and paramedic. An average of four hours is required for each mission.

Operational Costs

CQ RESCUE operates two Bell 412's. These aircraft are IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) single pilot, twin engine helicopters with operational costs of approximately \$5 million per annum.

The helicopters are leased from CHC Australia who charges a 'standing rate' and a 'flying rate' as part of their contract. The cost to fly the Bell 412 equates to \$6,033 per hour.

The annual operational cost is based on an estimated amount of missions expected to be carried out throughout the year.

CQ RESCUE, along with several other helicopter rescue services in Queensland, is a community-funded helicopter rescue service with almost \$2 million per annum provided by the Queensland Government and the remaining costs (a minimum of \$3 million) are sourced through sponsorships, business donations and the community.



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Importantly, the service is free to all Australian residents.

Management

CEO of CQ RESCUE is Phillip Dowler who holds a Masters degree in Commerce and undergraduate qualifications in Accounting.

The company also employs an Accounts Clerk and a Business Development Manager who looks after fund raising, public relations and marketing.

Board members include Chairman, Dr Peter Bastable OAM, currently in private practice with experience in emergency medicine; Secretary, Pat Crompton (retired Chief Executive Officer with Mackay City Council); Dr Bert Sadleir (Director of Medical Services, Mackay – Queensland Health); Chris Wright (partner in a local accountancy firm Brown & Bird) and Bill Cooper (Consulting Solicitor – Bill Cooper & Associates). All board members donate their time free of charge in support of the helicopter rescue service.

A number of volunteers assist with public relations and marketing events.

Community Benefit

Without the helicopter rescue service the outcome for many patients would result in serious consequences. The community is aware of the significance of the service which is evident in the amount of support we receive. This support is not only apparent from the financial contributions made by our community members but the compliments, moral support and testimonials we also receive.

In some instances CQ RESCUE is sometimes a patient's only lifeline and while the cost of a life cannot be measured in dollars and cents, the gratitude shown by these patients' means a great deal to our crew.

Media Support

CQ RESCUE is in a position where we have an extremely high profile within the community which means that the local television and print media seek us out for stories. The relationship we share with all media, locally and nationally, is constantly nurtured.



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