



Casey Fire Brigades Group

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Casey Fire Brigades Group Submission to the Victorian Government Fire Services Review

Who we are

The Casey Fire Brigades Group is affiliated with the CFA within District 8 in the CFA South East Region and encompasses a diverse risk profile from the significant Urban Growth areas of Cranbourne, Dandenong South, Hallam, Narre Warren and Berwick to the Coastal Villages of Westernport in the South and the foothills of the Dandenong's in the North.

Widely acknowledged as one of the fastest growing, environmentally and culturally diverse municipalities within Australia. Our 11 volunteer and integrated brigades attend an equally diverse range of incidents and fires ranging from large industrial incidents, transport and aircraft incidents, house fires and interagency support to other emergency services in the form of Flood Response assistance to the SES and Search and Rescue to Victoria Police and Coast Guard as well as traditional Bushfire Firefighting.

We also currently have 3 Emergency Medical Response Brigades assisting response for Ambulance Victoria. Another of our proven and acknowledged benefits is the surge capacity we provide to both the district and the state at all levels in the event of natural disasters having played a significant role in resourcing all campaigns throughout recent history, this surge capability is borne from the larger pool of volunteer members (650) able to be rapidly resourced from our heavily populated areas and our ability to maintain the skills required through regular exercising, high call response loads sustaining interest and an ability to maintain service delivery locally while deploying large numbers of resources to wherever they may be required.

Our 11 brigades consist of 9 fully volunteer brigades and 2 integrated brigades and this mix is valued as the location of our manned Integrated Stations can supplement the local service delivery of our volunteer brigades guaranteeing the Service Delivery Response while maintaining the local knowledge and interaction with local communities for which the CFA is renowned.

Fire Service Delivery

While considering the opportunities borne from a review of the current Fire Services structure and processes much has been said of amalgamating the fire services within Victoria and while many believe it to be an inevitable eventuality the construct of such an organisation provides scope for concern as we will endeavour to outline in our submission.

As mentioned above our existing model from a service delivery perspective is very sound and we are providing well over 90% Service Delivery in our area which has experienced enormous growth over the past 2 decades to attending over 4000 incidents per year in recent years, we attribute the ability for the fire service in our area to provide for this rapid growth to the ability of our volunteer workforce to adapt, develop and initiate the skills required to provide such a service.

As the response requirements have increased, the volunteer resource has been supplemented by career staff through the integrated model and this has been solely the formula for the success in accommodating this growth. In our opinion, any

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alternative to this model would have failed. The Hub, Spoke and Surge model we currently have within the urban growth corridors is heavily reliant on intelligently located integrated brigades able to provide response support to surrounding volunteer brigades when necessary while maintaining service in high response areas with reliable, available, skilled and trained resources to developing and large scale incidents on an as required basis. We can see no logical reason to digress from this current integrated model and strongly support it through this review

Opportunities for Improvement

Given that Victoria's Fire Services are able to provide a sustained and high level of service to the community within the current model or a model undertaking the same principle of service delivery, we consider the interoperability of CFA and MFB career staff to be an enormous benefit through maintaining consistent training, processes and resource availability which is also strengthened by and equally resourced volunteer workforce in place of or in concert with the permanent pool.

Areas that we believe could provide immediate and long term benefit within the fire services could be through the consolidation of the following:

- **Non Operational Finance and Administration**
- **Learning and Development**
- **Logistics and Supply**
- **Research and Development**
- **Mechanical Services**
- **Governance and Regulation**
- **Management and Strategic Planning**

Consolidation of these areas could provide 2 fold benefit of consistency across the current fire services, reduced cost and overheads providing more funding to front line resourcing, training and preventive research and development.

These benefits, coupled with a wider range of shared experience and skill sets to enhance the development of a sustainable fire service into the future particularly as our risk profiles change and new hazards emerge.

Summary

We believe that our current model for service delivery is sustainable, reliable, proven and well recognised as best practice around the world, the success of this is solely attributable to the ability of our volunteer resources to work effectively with career firefighters to provide the most suitable and timely response to incidents.

Our volunteer firefighters are among the best trained in the world and an invaluable resource that is and should be valued by the community of Victoria. Any model to the contrary would jeopardise this high level of capability.

Benefit can be realised by consolidation of non-operational shared services removing interoperability red tape, administrative duplication and better utilisation of skills and resources at this level.

Our member brigades believe that we have and will continue to adapt to our changing environments and risk profiles at ground level under the current model and the streamlining of management and support services would enhance the service delivery to remain the benchmark fire service in the world. This should be the primary focus of this fire service review

Regards

Shane KEEN

CASEY GROUP OFFICER

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