



31 August 2015

Mr David O'Byrne
Chairperson
2015 Fire Services Review
Level 19, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne 3000

By email: fireservicesreview@justice.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr O'Byrne

CPSU SUBMISSION TO THE 2015 FIRE SERVICES REVIEW

Please find attached a submission on behalf of Community and Public Sector Union to the Fire Services Review.

CPSU welcomes this opportunity to provide submissions to the Review.

These submissions identify issues arising in relation to current responsibilities of our members employed at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as well as Parks Victoria.

In particular these submissions deal with our members role in relation to fire suppression and bushfire prevention, interoperability between agencies, training, remuneration, funding and resourcing as well as equipment and facilities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karen Batt'.

Karen Batt
Federal/State Secretary



anzaccentenary.vic.gov.au

*"no body of men in any walk of life,
who have been more ready to do their duty,
than the Victorian State Servants of the Crown"*
VPSA Journal - 21st December 1918



Fire Services Review

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) Victorian Branch

Submissions

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) make the following submission in respect of the Review of Fire Services. The review has identified CPSU as a key stakeholder. CPSU represents members from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria (PV). DELWP working together with PV and other partners aim to meet the primary objectives of the *Code of practice for fire management on public land, 2012*.

Summary

CPSU's position is that the current interoperability between the various fire agencies should be reviewed and strengthened. CPSU's view is that the current structure of DELWP and PV as standalone agencies best serves the Victorian community in the prevention and suppression of bushfires.

CPSU believes that adequate resources and recognition should be afforded to DELWP and PV employees working in emergency management as compared to other emergency response agencies.

If the proposed presumptive Legislation to be introduced by the Andrews Government, it should include DELWP / PV employees performing emergency work who are exposed to the same hazards and risk.

Background to DELWP & PV

DELWP have legislative responsibilities relating to the prevention and suppression of fire on Crown Land. The Networked Emergency Organisation's (NEO's) which includes Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, VicForests and others, assist delivery of these obligations.

The Departments fire management activities are governed by the *Code of practice for fire management on public land, 2012*. The code sets out the Departments two primary objectives for managing fire on public land:

- To minimise the impact of major bushfires on human life, communities, essential and community infrastructure, industries, the economy and the environment. Human life will be afforded priority over all other considerations.

- To maintain or improve the resilience of natural ecosystems and their ability to deliver services such as biodiversity, water, carbon storage and forest products.

In the event of an emergency the Department’s role may be either Control Agency or a Support Agency.

DELWP is organised into six Divisions: Regional Services, Land Fire and Environment, Water Catchments, Planning, Corporate Services, Local Infrastructure. Employees may hold a fire role as well as their substantive role whilst working at the Department.

Implementation of the Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations resulted in an increase to substantive Fire related positions: Program Manager Strategic Fire Planning; District Burn Planner; District Planned Burning & Operations Coordinator; Program Manager; Preparedness and Response; Planned Burning and Biodiversity Officers; Bushfire Risk Analysts. A larger proportion of DELWP is now made up of substantive fire roles.

Parks Victoria has re-organised its business so that a Fire & Emergency Division was implemented on 27 January 2015. It is very clear that Parks Victoria has organised its business model to separate Fire & Emergency management from park management work.

Parks Victoria has in place a Director of Fire and Emergency Services, Rangers in Charge - Fire and Emergency for each of the 16 Districts, as well as Fire and Emergency Team Leaders, Rangers, or Field Service Officers.

Parks Victoria in the Melbourne region has the majority of geographical coverage (National Parks & Reserves managed by PV) of the Departments fire prevention/suppression needs.

Interoperability of fire agencies

DELWP / PV who belong to the Networked Emergency Organisations (NEOs) are delegated under the *Forest Act 1958* (Vic). The Act gives powers for work, but hinders the Department and NEO’s from operating with CFA efficiently. For example if a fire occurs outside the nominal 1500 metre mark of fire protected land then DELWP/PV staff are not able to engage.

[REDACTED] (CONFIDENTIAL)

[REDACTED]

Examples of issue with current interoperability of agencies ([REDACTED])

(A) The CFA is linked to all triple zero phone calls through VicFire. This system is not duplicated by the Department. DELWP and PV employees have to radio watch all VicFire traffic, usually across many channels (regions) and determine if they can be of assistance or, indeed if the fire is reported on crown land. This is known as 'shadowing' or radio watch. In addition the Department uses a third party software system named BART. This system is linked to the CFA pager dispatch system. BART allows departmental operations officers to get real time dispatch data on local incidents on smart phone, coupled with radio shadowing it allows greater situational awareness for our crews. This situation shouldn't need to occur if CFA/MFB/DELWP were truly integrated emergency management agencies. The weakness is that during a crisis the phone network could fail, and if VicFire is overwhelmed like on Black Saturday, the Departmental staff are left blind as to what the CFA are doing. This problem still exists post the Royal Commission into bushfires .

(B) MFB traditionally ran 5 threads per inch (TPI) hose fittings, CFA traditionally 3 TPI fittings, the Department runs 3 & 5 TPI fittings, CamLok and Wajax to be interoperable state wide. Recently the MFB utilised Stortz fittings, many urban CFA brigades now also run Stortz fittings. However state wide, Stortz is not a standard fitting, meaning funding is wasted having the CFA/DELWP run multiple fittings. Up until this year the Department did not issue Stortz fittings at all. A uniform Australian Standard should exist and all agencies, building codes, valves, water points etc. should conform to that. To compound the problem on a recent deployment to assist fire colleagues in South Australia, DELWP & PV employees couldn't mate easily to any appliance or hydrant as they operated on a 'London round' fitting. It is hoped that a single solution could be mandated and implemented from Government.

DELWPs brand and profile

Employees have reported a perception of "is DELWP a land manager or emergency/fire management agency"

Two Departmental name changes over the last three years have occurred due to Machinery of Government changes. Employees suspect there is lack of identity and brand. Employees have been waiting on revised uniforms prior to the first MOG changes. Some employees are wearing uniforms from three previous Department name changes.

Lack of branding makes engaging with the community and other agencies difficult, particularly when undertaking planned burning.

Members felt that public perception of DELWP / PV is that they are public servants assisting CFA. Public do not see DELWP / PV as a controlling agency or understand DELWPs legislative responsibility to fire prevention.

DELWP/PV role in fire suppression

It is the perception of CPSU members that the general community are unclear of the DELWP & PV when it comes to fire and emergency management as compared to the CFA & MFB.

DELWP supplies up to 75 per cent of the Incident Management Team (IMT) capacity on campaign fires and readiness days, this is not recognised. This includes all emergencies not just bushfires. DELWP previously have staffed Incident Management Teams at major floods events, storm emergencies and Hazelwood coal mine fire. A lot of roles undertaken were not just as assisting, but leading IMT roles.

DELWP are the lead agency when it comes to identifying and managing fire affected hazardous trees at fires. This impacts on CFA volunteers, who are often required to wait long periods of time for DELWP staff to attend the scene. This is due to DELWP staff not being rostered or on standby outside of normal business hours.

The Department is generally not contacted by VicFire unless a local CFA Captain requests DELWP to be notified. Duty officers are often forced to listen to CFA dispatch channels to pick up on fires on public land. There is a perception of little, or no service from VicFire, as DELWP / PV are the responsible agencies for fires on public land.

DELWP is often committed to incidents for extended periods of time over months and years completing rehab and recovery works as a land manager.

DELWP staff hold substantive positions within the Department. Fire duties can take months out the work year, but staff still need to deliver on their substantive position duties. PV staff have now been reorganised into a separate fire and emergency services division.

Traditionally DELWP was mostly seasonal fire responder. This has changed since targets have been increased for the planned burning program, post the Bushfires Royal Commission.

DELWP/PVs Role in planned burning

Traditionally DELWP mostly responded seasonally. This has changed with requirements to complete larger targets in fuel reduction burning. Staff are required to assist and commit time from their normal duties during campaign fuel reduction burning same as they would during an emergency.

The Districts of DELWP highest priority are fire, emergency and burning over any other land management. Planned burning is a bushfire mitigation strategy undertaken by DELWP/PV. One of the main determinants of the severity of a fire is the amount of combustible material available to it. In the cases of bushfires, this material consists of organic material and the vegetation which is referred to as "fuel". The most effective way to reduce the fuel load of an area is to burn it under controlled conditions. This is referred to as planned burning. Planned burning is an effective method of reducing the risk and intensity of bushfire and is a key component of DELWP/PVs bushfire prevention strategy.

Funding and Resources

Unlike CFA and MFB DELWP/PV do not receive funding via the Fire Services Levy. DELWP & PV are subject to normal Government budget processes which affects our ability to secure appropriate resources and makes long-term planning difficult. The expectations of Government for DELWP / PV

to deliver is high however, it is felt that these agencies are not held in the same regard as CFA or MFB when it comes to resourcing and funding.

Under the previous Victorian Baillieu/ Napthine Government, both PV and DELWP had significant reductions in staff numbers under the "Sustainable Government Initiative". This has affected the number of employees available for carrying out DELWPs obligations in emergency management. The burden to fill critical IMT roles now falls on a small workforce. This has resulted in an increase to workloads, limited ability to take leave over summer and increased time away from normal duties.

The number of DEWLP employees who were in receipt of "fire line allowance, and or emergency support allowance" since 2011/2012 has been decreasing (Appendix 2)

Equipment and facilities

[REDACTED]

Training

CPSU members have raised concern that joint training courses are being delivered to a lower standard to cater for volunteers. Although joint training should still be encouraged, all training should be consistent across all agencies and to the highest standard.

With the increase to cross agency training there has been a shift to undertaking course on a weekend to cater for the volunteers. This impacts DELWP & PV staff ability to attend courses due to the overtime rates payable for employees.

There also now appears to be a lack of training places available to DELWP/PV staff in state-wide courses as they are now shared across agencies. This has not resulted less access for DELWP / PV staff to available training courses.

DELWP & PV staff who hold emergency role accreditations are required to find time to maintain the accreditations, rather than being allocated specific time for training.

Recognition and remuneration

The Emergency Services and State Super (ESSS) scheme is currently not open to DELWP & PV employees who perform emergency related work. This leaves these workers without the highest levels of death and disability coverage. ESSS is available to CFA and MFB employees.

CPSU have written to the Minister for Finance, Robin Scott to seek a review the access of ESSS to DELWP and PV (Appendix 4)

Smoke and other risk exposures

The levels of smoke inhalation are of great concern to DELWP /PV employees. The level of knowledge about potential risks to health is very limited. There is no current way to eliminate the risk. Other occupational risks include exposure to carcinogens, diesel, hazardous trees and flash 21. Limited or no health monitoring of long term health effects associated with exposure to smoke and other hazards.

Currently there is no inclusion of DELWP / PV employees in presumptive legislation, although this is proposed to be afforded to CFA (including volunteers) and MFB.

CASE STUDY

EMVICCS 2014 July 2014

Firefighting in the Urban-Rural Interface



ABOUT CASE STUDIES

A Case Study is a descriptive, explanatory, written story based upon a real life example; its storytelling is a form of discussion that tells of a meaningful experience. This helps to transfer knowledge to a reader/listener and to build capabilities in others.

It aims to build mental models and increase the number of memories in the memory bank. This is to improve decision making in time critical situations which lead to better outcomes.

A case study doesn't preach or blame, it passes on learnings from the perspective of those involved.

A Case Study can be used by both the "Beginner" and "Expert" alike.

ABOUT THE AREA

Warrandyte is an outer north eastern suburb of Melbourne 24 kilometres from the central business district, and makes up part of the northern boundary of Melbourne. Popular with people who enjoy a peri-urban lifestyle, it also provides for regular tourist and daytrip visitors. Dispersed throughout the area are many high value properties, many with desirable small acreages, and these have contributed to increasing property values in recent years.

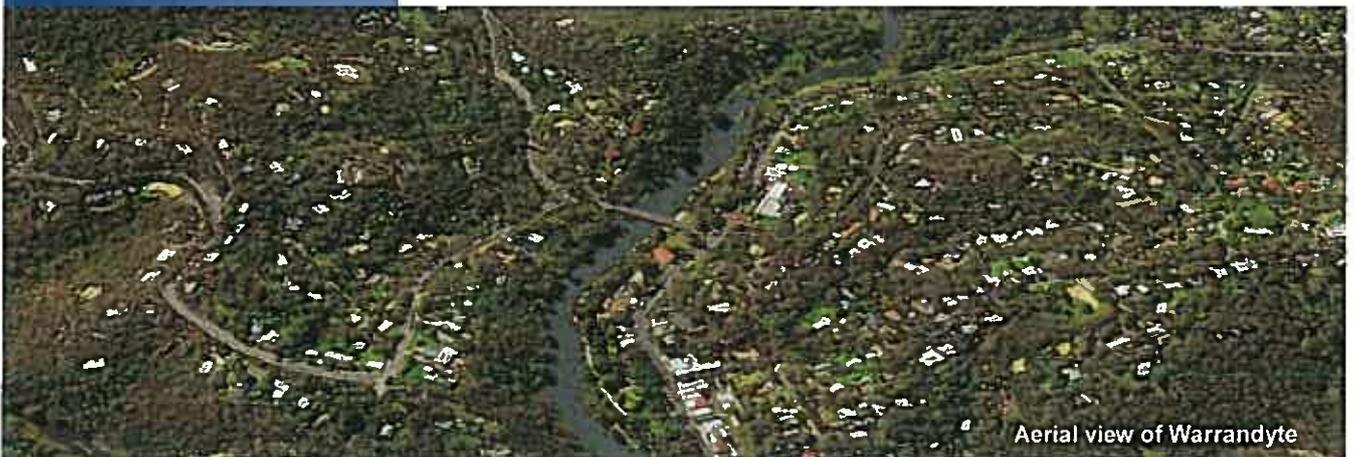
Major fires swept through the area in 1851, 1939 and 1962. More recently the devastating 2009 Black Saturday bushfires affected nearby Kinglake and other areas within a short distance of the locality, and nearby Kangaroo Ground was affected by fire in January 2014. As a result, most who reside in the Warrandyte community recognise and live with the risk of bushfire.

Fire and emergency services recognise the area as critical when bushfire starts due to the occluded interface (areas of vegetation surrounded by development) and mixed interface (isolated developments surrounded by vegetation). Due to this environment, prevention, preparedness and readiness activities are well established by fire agencies. In addition, significant activities are undertaken to educate and prepare the community, who also have a number of groups with a primary focus of bushfire education and preparedness.

By early February 2014 Victoria had been subjected to extensive periods of hot weather, including heat-wave conditions. Fire and emergency services prepared for hot and dry conditions on the February 8 and 9 ahead of a strong and squally wind change predicted to sweep across the state on 9 February.

These conditions were described as the worst fire weather conditions since Black Saturday 2009.

This **Case Study** reviews the fire which affected the Warrandyte community on 9 February 2014.



Aerial view of Warrandyte

WHAT HAPPENED?

Based on the forecast weather conditions, heightened readiness arrangements were implemented throughout the state and in particular the Melbourne area prepared for strong winds, limited overnight relative humidity recovery and sustained high temperatures in the early hours of 9 February 2014. All 45 CFA District 13 brigades, including Warrandyte, were on standby from 6.00 am and nearby Incident Control Centres (ICCs) also had Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in place.

At 8.30 am the temperature at Melbourne Airport was 33 degrees, relative humidity 13% and northerly winds were recorded at 30kph with gusts to 60kph. At 11.00 am the Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI) at this location spiked at 120 ahead of the south westerly change. A maximum temperature of 40 degrees, relative humidity of 7% and north westerly wind of 50kph gusting to 80kph preceded the change.

Early in the morning near Gladysdale, in the Yarra Valley, a fire was quickly contained by CFA resources including a tanker from Warrandyte. This fire required blacking out and patrol into the afternoon.

At 11.43 am in neighbouring CFA District 14, a fire started at Dalrymple Road, Gisborne. Just south of the township, the fire quickly spread under the influence of the north westerly wind. At 11.55 am another fire started at Mickleham Road, Mickleham. This fire, on the north western outskirts of Melbourne's residential sprawl, also spread quickly under the influence of the strong north westerly wind towards the edge of the urban development in the area.

Control of the Dalrymple Road fire transferred to the Gisborne ICC while the Kangaroo Ground ICC assumed control of the Mickleham Road fire.

At 12.19 pm a fire was reported at Flannery Court, Warrandyte. Warrandyte Brigade volunteers, on standby at their station, received verbal reports of the fire from fellow firefighters. CFA's call taking and dispatch centre also received a large number of calls for the fire.

The Warrandyte CFA Captain was amongst the first to respond in the pumper, as their tanker was still at Gladysdale, and saw a column of smoke southwest of the township while still some distance away. This prompted him to immediately escalate the response to 10 tankers. Arriving on scene within five minutes of the initial alarm, the Captain identified houses were already under immediate threat as the fire had moved from the nearby bush and travelled in a south easterly direction uphill towards Glamis Court. The first of the three houses destroyed by the fire was already involved by the time the first crews arrived.

Less than 10 minutes from receiving the call, the Warrandyte Captain had requested additional resources, including a Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) Pumper Strike team he was aware was pre-staged at Ringwood (a short distance away), and aircraft support.

Shortly after this two Deputy Group Officers (DGOs) from the local Maroondah Group (also Warrandyte



volunteers), arrived in Tindals Road. They had been tasked to provide on ground command support during the day throughout the Group area if required. They established a control point on a nearby hill in Tindals Road. This location gave them an excellent view of the fireground and overcame radio black spots which were hampering communications. It took a little time to confer with the Warrandyte Captain regarding the transfer of control but they knew how important this was with the developing fire situation.

The DGOs set an incident objective which was to protect the properties in the area and stop the fire from crossing Tindals Road. They were both aware if it was to cross here, the fire would be difficult to stop from running into Warrandyte township and beyond. They also requested the first of many community warnings be issued.

"We've all worked together for many years and knew he (the Warrandyte Captain) was pretty involved in the fire below. In terms of the Transfer of Control we thought it's better to seek his forgiveness later than prolong the transfer at a critical time during the fire development."

CFA Deputy Group Officer

At 12.28 pm, the District 13 Operations Manager, who was monitoring activity from the District 13 Command Centre (DCC), issued a red flag warning in relation to the impending wind change to the fireground.

At 12.38 pm the predicted wind change impacted upon the fire area, immediately spreading the fire in an easterly and uphill direction as the wind backed to the west and then south westerly direction. This pushed the fire across the slope towards two houses, just off Amersham Drive, which were subsequently destroyed. Several other houses in the area were also affected by flanking fire and sustained limited damage. During the early periods, the fire has been estimated to have travelled at speeds of up to 18kph.

The first house destroyed by fire in Glamis Court was initially assessed from the street as being defendable. Crews attempted to suppress the fire until it was determined the house could not be saved and they moved on to protect other properties.

"It was a tough decision to leave the house in Glamis Court. Some of the crew didn't understand why we were leaving. This is not what we normally do but I knew we could do nothing more and there were other defendable properties under threat which needed us."

- Warrandyte Captain

Radio communication between the incident and VicFire (CFA's call-taking and dispatch centre) was difficult at times due to radio congestion. A Fireground Operations Vehicle (FOV) was utilised at the Tindals Road Control Point enhancing communications on the fireground and with the Kangaroo Ground ICC. Victoria Police established Traffic Management Points to limit access to the area.

A pre-staged CFA pumper strike team was dispatched from the CFA Bangholme Training facility in addition to a tanker strike team released from the Gladysdale fire.

As resources arrived the DGOs immediately tasked them to asset protection and direct attack on the fire where it was safe to do so. Key to these tactics was locating the trucks, either as individual resources or strike teams, in the streets and deploying hoses to gain access to the rear of properties. This tactic made the task of relocating firefighting resources, if necessary, safer and easier. A crew in the Warrandyte Slip-on (4x4 vehicle with a 400 litre water tank) made access into areas where larger tankers could not and extinguished numerous spot fires which, if left unchecked, would have claimed more homes. An initial shortage of Sector Commanders made some elements of fireground command challenging.



Information about the fire was provided to the control point by reconnaissance aircraft, ground observer teams and the Warrandyte Captain, who by now had assumed a more mobile fireground command role. A CFA District Operations Officer attended the control point and provided valuable support and assistance to the DGOs.

Members of the community in the area responded in a variety of ways during the fire. Many were oblivious to the risk until they went outside and were confronted with smoke and embers. Others checked to see what

was happening when one person drove up a street sounding his car horn. Some became aware of the situation when they received warnings from CFA by an Emergency Alert (telephone warning message). Their reactions also varied. Some immediately took action to deal with spot fires around their homes, others sheltered in place, while some immediately left the area in their vehicles. This final option created additional hazards for firefighters who had to contend with vehicles driving through smoke along the streets they were working in.

"I went outside and saw black clouds coming up and flames out the top, there were spot fires on the nature strip and embers flying over us as we were leaving"

- Warrandyte resident

The first of two water-bombing helicopters arrived 45 minutes after the fire started; other nearby aircraft were already tasked to the Dalrymple Road and Mickleham Road fires. However, by the time aircraft began arriving ground crews had already made significant progress in stopping the fire spread and protecting the many properties in the area.

Transfer of Control to Kangaroo Ground ICC took place at 1.00 pm with one of the DGOs assuming the Division Commander role but continuing to work with others as an integrated team.

The fire was contained by 4.00 pm with mopping up and patrolling undertaken by local brigades until 11 February 2014.

Approximately 300 fire-fighters, 70 vehicles and two aircraft were involved at this fire. Three houses were destroyed, one significantly damaged and approximately 35 others suffered minor damage. There were no reported injuries to either firefighters or residents. The fire cause was later determined to be consistent with a branch falling on nearby high voltage power lines and igniting bush in the power line easement.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

The weather conditions predicted for the day were described as the worst since Black Saturday 2009. The forecast conditions led to an enhanced level of readiness at Warrandyte and throughout the state. This included IMTs in the nearby Kangaroo Ground ICC and the Maroondah Group personnel tasked to perform and support key fireground command roles.

The strong and gusty winds, before and immediately after the change, contributed to extreme and erratic fire behaviour.

The fire originated adjacent to a bushland reserve. However, the area nearer the houses affected by the fire was lightly treed with limited ground and ladder fuels.

"I don't feel like we live in a rural area here, but I do today"

- Warrandyte resident

It was not dense bushland with years of undergrowth and is similar to many areas across the state, some of which are even closer to the centre of Melbourne and other provincial cities and towns. Despite the fuel arrangement around the houses, wind blown embers from the bushland and the limited scrub and ground fuels still supported a fast moving and intense fire.

Some of the affected properties were constructed in the past few years and it is expected they would comply with bushfire building requirements.

The early and significant escalation of resources based on the local knowledge of the Warrandyte Captain and his situational awareness ensured both an immediate weight of attack and integration of MFB resources he knew were available.

The early development of an incident objective ensured the effective application of strategies and tactics.

Firefighter safety was enhanced by the impending wind change warning issued by the District Operations Manager. The safety of the community was achieved through the issuing of timely, relevant and tailored warnings and advice including the use of Emergency Alert. The behaviour of the community, once they became aware of the fire, was consistent with observations made during similar events in the past.



Based on a clear understanding of the fire risk in this area, extensive community education has been provided to the Warrandyte community by fire services and other community groups.

The timely support by Victoria Police during this, and previous incidents in the Warrandyte area is, in part, due to an initiative of CFA District 13 many years ago which provided local Police with a CFA radio. As a result they were aware of the fire within minutes of its report and able to integrate quickly into emergency management roles, particularly, establishing Traffic Management Points to limit access in the area.

Establishing fireground control and command and the subsequent Transfer of Control to the Kangaroo Ground ICC contributed to efficiency of many elements of the fire operations and management. The decision to locate the control point in Tindals Road provided an effective overview of the fireground, allowed the reception and deployment of resources as they arrived, and eliminated communication black spots (based on the local knowledge of the personnel involved). Operations were enhanced by using an FOV.

Despite a very early request, firefighting aircraft were delayed due to the high level of activity nearby and in other parts of Victoria. The first helicopter water-bomber arrived 45 minutes after the initial request, travelling to Warrandyte from the state's south west.

WHAT WORKED WELL?

Readiness

Due to the predicted weather, having people already at the station minimised the time to respond to this and other fires and incidents.

"As part of our readiness on high risk days we have a Station Manager who looks after everything the response crews need. He was incredibly valuable on the day and meant some of the logistic needs of the incident were handled locally reducing the impact on the IMT"

- Warrandyte Captain

Situational Awareness

The people involved in this incident used every means of increasing their situational awareness before and during the fire. Understanding of fires which were already burning, resources available, and the weather conditions all improved initial decision making. Gathering information by using air and ground observers and regular communication on the fireground improved decision making at the fire.

Local Knowledge and relationships

The key people involved in decision making during the early stages of this fire were all from the area and have extensive local knowledge. The two DGOs, in addition to being Warrandyte Firefighters, are former brigade Captains. These two people in conjunction with the current Captain, have built strong relationships during the many years they have worked together. They all apply consistent priorities to decision making, objectives, strategies and tactics.

Early escalation

Recognition of the location, the weather conditions and the potential of any fire on the day, informed the early escalation, including the request for aircraft, ensuring effective weight of initial attack.

Establishing/Transfer of Control

Despite the initial issues communicating with the Warrandyte Captain, the DGOs decision to assume control and then subsequently Transfer Control to the Kangaroo Ground ICC went well. The location on Tindals Road was perfect to provide good communications, reception and deployment of resources and the FOV greatly enhanced the operations at this location.

Incident Objective

Quickly developing an incident objective based on the Strategic Control Priorities meant everyone understood what the plan was.

Warnings and Advice

The early request from the fireground for community warnings and advice allowed for the timely issue of the warnings.

Strategies and Tactics

The crews involved in this fire applied strategies and tactics which focused on property protection and fire suppression as the first priority. This included triaging the properties, allowing resources to be deployed to other properties which could be saved. The crews involved in leaving houses which were already well alight said it was a tough decision to make, but after the fire, recognised why it was so important to do. These actions during the fire reduced damage to other properties which could be protected.

Other successful tactics identified by crews were:

- Positioning trucks on the roads so they were facing towards egress routes;
- Using lay flat hose from the trucks, even though it meant running some longer lines in places;
- Using slip-ons to access areas where larger vehicles could not; and
- Identifying someone, generally the crew leader, to monitor the fire and conditions.

These were conscious decisions of the crews based on their training/exercising, and ensured firefighter safety by enabling crews to move quickly if needed.

Multi-agency integration and teamwork

All fire and emergency agencies integrated well and performed as a team during the initial escalation and throughout the fire.

CFA District Operations Officer Support

The role undertaken by the CFA Operations Officer was identified by those at the control point as a positive. There was no expectation of assuming control by the particular officer; he provided a key support to all elements of the fire management.

Injuries

There were no reported injuries to firefighters or members of the community.

WHAT COULD WE IMPROVE ON?

Communication Systems

Initially communications was challenging due to the local radio black spots, the amount of radio traffic and suitability of CFA portable radios compared to “bag radios” issued to different personnel. Some of these problems were overcome by the use of the FOV while others relate to radio discipline and allocation.

Fireground Commanders

When requesting fireground command vehicles, it's better to request the fireground commanders with the vehicles. It was identified during this fire if a combined request had been made it would have reduced the need to find suitable personnel, who were already 'deployed on the fireground, to perform these roles.

Tactics

The hosereels provided on some trucks, were identified

by crews, as being difficult to move around and may have delayed the crew's ability to relocate quickly if it had been necessary, potentially putting firefighters at risk of injury.

Community behaviour

Once residents became aware of the fire they behaved in a variety of ways. It was observed some community members escaping in their vehicles, created safety issues for firefighting crews working in smoke logged streets by narrowly avoiding collisions with trucks and personnel.

TOP TIPS (FROM THOSE ON SCENE) ...

- Teamwork, relationships and trust developed before the fire are what make it work during the fire.
- Local knowledge is critical.
- Sometimes you have to remove yourself and “not get smoke in your face” to get a good overview of the situation.
- Be agile, adaptive and prepared for anything. You might turn out on the pumper but need to find another means of transport when the job gets bigger.
- Sometimes the “book” doesn't cover it.
- Don't underestimate how a fire can behave on extreme days when there is little fuel.
- Learn, train and exercise the strategies and tactics you need to use in the urban/rural interface.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

After reading this case study, consider what actions you would take if confronted with a similar incident. Also consider the following questions; perhaps discuss them with your colleagues:

- Are there areas, with occluded or mixed interface, similar to Warrandyte, near you?
- Have you considered the different strategies and tactics you need to use during fires in the urban-rural interface?
- Are their people at your station/brigade/work centre, or others you can talk to, who have been involved in this type of firefighting? What did they learn?
- Do you understand the “triage” or “prioritisation” concept spoken of in this **Case Study**?
- Is urban-rural firefighting a part of your existing training program in the lead up to summer each year?

“It was a very significant achievement for crews to contain Sunday's Warrandyte fire to about 10 hectares, and limit the damage, especially given the conditions we were facing of winds of up to 90kph when the change came through. Some houses were just lucky, there's no other way to put it”

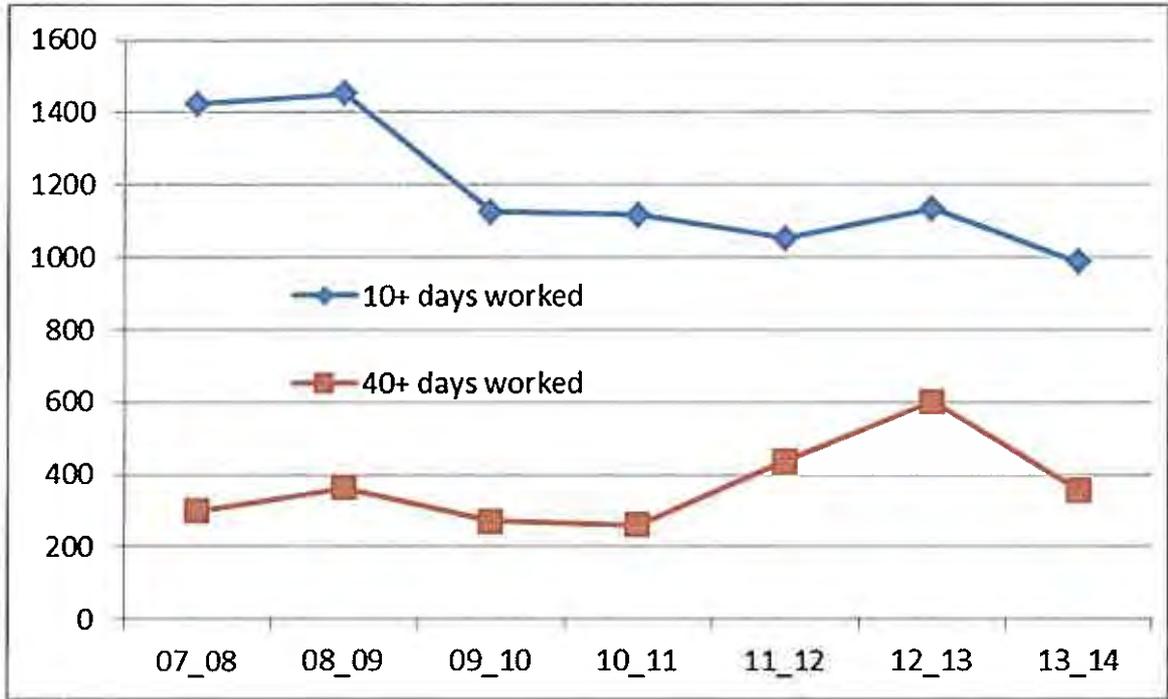
- CFA Operations Manager

The organisations involved in the development and review of this Case Study acknowledge the assistance of their members (volunteer and staff).

This publication may be of assistance to you but the state of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss, or consequence which may arise from you relying on any information contained within. ©Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) - This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 - July 2014.

Appendix 2.

Fig 1.0 Days worked for DSE/DEPI/DELWP staff receiving FLA or ESA



Appendix 3.

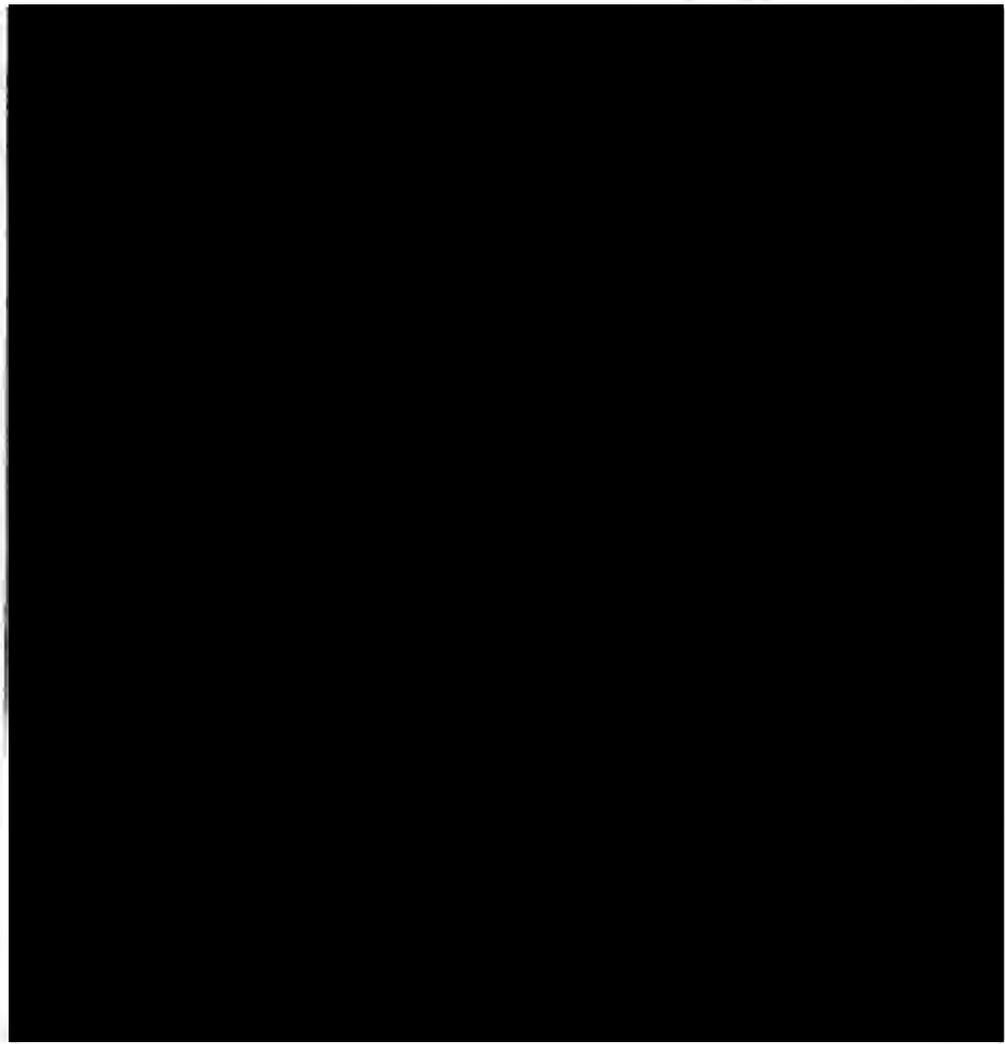
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix 4.



10 June 2015

The Hon Robin Scott MP
Minister for Finance
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
Level 5, 1 Macarthur Street
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

Dear Minister

ENTRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AND STATE SUPER DEFINED BENEFITS FUND FOR DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER AND PLANNING FIRE FIGHTERS (DELWP) & PARKS VICTORIA (PV)

In the lead up to the 2014 State Election, the Victorian Labor Platform stated that *'Labor has always believed that we must act to support and stand with those who put their lives on the line to protect us'*. The Platform document goes on to say Labor will 'Review the superannuation entitlements of Department of Environment and Primary Industries (now DELWP) and Parks Victoria emergency services employees, when compared to that of MFB and CFA career fire-fighters. CPSU writes to you supporting this commitment.

CPSU is pleased that the Labor Government has recognised the hazards DELWP and PV firefighters face. Since 2003 three DELWP fire fighters have lost their lives whilst engaged in fire suppression activities. In addition to this there were 814 OH&S incidents reported during the 2013/14 fire season alone, and a further 683 reported vehicle incidents including 20 vehicle rollovers accidents in the last three years. The main causes of serious injuries on the fire line are vehicle accidents, falling trees and in the longer term the impact of chemical exposures.

DELWP and PV firefighters are routinely exposed to a range of volatile compounds found in bushfire smoke both at bushfires and during planned burning operations. These compounds are known to be harmful and potentially fatal to firefighters who are repeatedly exposed to smoke over extended periods. Other common occupational chemical exposures DELWP fire fighters face include diesel (used in blends as an ignition fuel), Phoscheck fire retardant, Asbestosis, formaldehyde used in protective clothing and Flash 21 fuel gelling agent.

DELWP and PV employees currently pay out of their own pocket for Death and Disability insurance, although this type of cover is often less comprehensive than that offered by the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme (ESSS) Death and Disability insurance policy. This is compounded by the uncertainty surrounding insurance coverage for death and disability occurring on the fire line, there are real question marks over whether commercially available insurance policies, including those offered by VicSuper will provide any coverage at all in the event of a fire line incident. Employees have reported difficulties in obtaining insurance cover when the insurer discovers the emergency response work that the employee is engaged to perform by DELWP and PV.

The Department, supported by Parks Victoria has a number of legislative obligations to fulfil its role as a fire and emergency management agency:

- The DELWP Secretary is listed as a Responder Agency and Fire Services Agency under the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (EMA).

- The DELWP Secretary has obligations under the *Forest Act 1958* to plan for the prevention and suppression of bushfires on State forests, national parks and protected public land in Victoria (one third of the State).
- DELWP is listed as a Control Agency alongside the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV).

This justifies having all DELWP and PV fire fighters fair and equal access to the Emergency Services and State Super Defined Benefits Fund (ESSS) in line with the access available to fire fighters employed by other Responder and Fire Services Agencies (EMA 2013) and Control Agencies (EMMV), namely the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

The Chief Fire Officer has stated that DELWP and PV fire fighters provide 70% of all Incident Management Team readiness personnel under Emergency Management Victoria - Joint Standard Operating Procedure (Incident Management Team Readiness Arrangements for Bushfire) (J2.03). Without DELWP and PV employees commitment Emergency Management Victoria and the Victorian Government would fail to meet J2.03 and therefore fail to meet its obligations under the EMA. DELWP contributed fire fighters and Incident Management Team members on 64,443 occasions during the 2014/15 bushfire and planned burning season. With the Victorian Government moving to an "all hazards" approach DELWP staff will be increasingly called upon to fill emergency management roles. Support has also been offered out of Victoria with recent deployments in April 2015 to assist New South Wales flood responder agencies (fire fighter technical specialists (tree hazard)) and deployments during the 2014 Canada and United States of America Fire Seasons.

The CPSU Fire and Emergency Management Sub Branch has defined a 'class of persons' as described in Emergency Services Superannuation Act (ESA) 1996 Part 1(e) as;

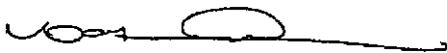
Any employee of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or its successor) whose employment enables the Secretary of DELWP to fulfil their obligations under Section 62 (2) of the Forest Act 1958 and as a Control Agency under the Emergency Management Manual Victoria.

There are currently 24 positions within DELWP which have been granted access to the ESSS Defined Benefits Fund. These positions have not been reviewed since 1997 and given the significant shift in DELWP's role (as a Responder, Fire Services Agency and Control Agency) over an 18 year period, an urgent review of eligibility is warranted.

CPSU request that you grant the employees within the 'class of persons' defined in this letter entry into the Emergency Services and State Superannuation Defined Benefits scheme at the earliest opportunity by publishing a notice in the Government Gazette.

CPSU looks forward to your response and welcomes further discussion.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Davies
Assistant Branch Secretary