

Avon Group of Fire Brigades

Country Fire Authority

Submission

Review of the Fire Services CFA and MFB

(a) An assessment of the resourcing requirements necessary to ensure Victoria is appropriately equipped and fire ready.

Most emergency services across Australia are under equipped and the (CFA) Country Fire Authority, and the (MFB) Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board are no different in their day to day activities, especially when large events occur such as campaign fires. Vehicles, Protective Clothing, Radio's, General Equipment, these are always in short supply especially in the CFA with many Brigades having to fund raise to purchase vital items such as Tankers, Forward Control Vehicles, and other general equipment, more funding is required in the budget rather than the organisations going to the government every time an issue arises that needs funding.

(b) How CFA and MFB staff can be best supported in protecting communities, taking into consideration operational needs, as well as Occupational Health and Safety best practice and best training methods,

We hope the above term also includes CFA volunteers.

One of the main issues concerning volunteers in protecting their communities is the total lack of spare stand in vehicles when the local tanker is called away on Strike Team duty leaving local community vulnerable to fire outbreak, this generally occurs on the worst fire danger days and then the Strike team tankers are left sitting in Staging Areas just in case they are required. This course of action needs to be reviewed.

Each Region should have two pre formed Incident Management Team. These teams need to be staff or seasonal people hired to fill these positions. There are some volunteers available to fill these positions but in general they are at work or are on the fire front in the first instance.

(c) The interoperability between CFA and MFB

To have the same command structure would be a great start at the moment the CFA has Operations Officers as a rank and the MFB have Commanders as a

rank. Are the two the same level of authority? And the incident management team also has an Operation Officer but this is not a rank but a position within the Incident Management team this causes confusion across all agencies. The same command structure across both agencies would be good start. (The CFA is the only fire agency across Australia with a different command structure). The CFA is a volunteer based organisation, and an item that is of great concern is that the MFB and CFA permanent staff will not work under a Volunteer Officer in charge. This is a challenge for interoperability especially on the interface with CFA and when MFB are supporting into the CFA area.

(d) The interoperability across fire agencies responsible for preventing and suppressing all types of fire in Victoria whether on public or private land.

The interoperability between the CFA and DELWP is working well in the Gippsland Area with the two agencies working together on the fire ground and in Incident Management Teams, but there are always some minor problems that occur with people from both agencies. For example both CFA Staff, Volunteers and DELWP Staff understanding each agencies needs and requirements.

(e) CFA and MFB management structures and work practices.

The question is do both agencies have a stable management structure. At the moment the CFA has many people in acting positions within its Executive Leadership Team and with Emergency Management Victoria giving a helping hand we are unsure who the management is at the moment.

(f) Enhancing workplace culture, including fostering greater respect and cooperation between management and its workforce, as well as enhancing workplace innovation and diversity.

At the moment the respect between staff and volunteers in the CFA is low in some areas and excellent in others. We believe one of the main contributors to poor respect between both parties is poor people skills on both sides.

Another item is the many Chief Officer Standing Orders, and Standing Operational Procedures that exist and the interpretation of them is causing conflict.

One of the SOPs states that you cannot take a mobile phone onto the fire ground. As many volunteers go straight from work to fire calls they rely on the mobile phone to contact their families or workplace as to their whereabouts, and

also there are the many self employed who need the phone for business purposes. We have forgotten the volunteer culture is to help at all times but not at the detriment of our families and to our livelihood.

All these small issues add up to confusion, misinterpretation, over governance, causing conflict and disrespect between parties. These issues exist across all sections of the CFA.

(g) Options for the establishment of a Career Fire-fighters Registration Board,

What is the purpose of a Career Firefighters Registration Board. Does this mean there will be a Volunteers Registration Board as well. All for one and one for all.

(h) The best mechanism to provide support for volunteer fire brigades and to ensure their viability in providing emergency services.

We live in technical age. The CFA has online Training Material Information, Weather Information, Mapping and many other items of information online but fails to provide computer technology and access to the brigades. Many brigades have purchased their own Computer and pay for their own internet connection. Providing brigades with computers would increase information flow. Facilities are an issue, many brigades do not even have meeting or training room, let alone a TV or DVD to view the training material and information that the CFA send out. Don't make brigades jump through hoops to get small equipment replacements. There is a reluctance on the part of District Logistic Officers to hand out new small items of PPC.

On behalf of the Avon Group of Fire Brigades.

Briagolong, Clydebank, Dargo, Meerlieu, Munro, Perry Bridge and Stratford.

Secretary.

Maureen Kerr

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