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RECEIVED 24 OCT 2014

Songer, Rachael (DCS)

From:
Sent: Thursday, 23 October 2014 6:07 AM
To: DCS:Minister Piccolo
Subject: EM Sector Reform Submission

Minister,

Thank you for the opportunity of providing a submission. By way of background, I am both a volunteer with the State Emergency Service and work for one of the support agencies to the emergency services who is also a control agency and a hazard leader for a couple of hazards. As such, I have a unique perspective on the emergency services sector.

I applaud your initiative in reforming the sector. This is in line with interstate initiatives as well as the Premier's rejuvenation of the public sector.

Having said that, I think you have some significant challenges. Safecom clearly has not worked for the sector and should be disbanded in its entirety. Very little support of frontline services has emerged from Safecom and in some cases has added to the administrative burden and certainly to the resentment of frontline troops who has seen funding diverted from them to pay for bureaucrats.

I am concerned that your model has one Chief Executive reporting to the Minister. Currently there are at least three that report to the Minister. I am concerned that despite the advisory boards that will be established, the needs of the individual agencies will not be adequately represented to the Minister in a timely fashion. I would be more comfortable with your proposed model if the deputies also had access to the Minister.

There are significant concerns around the single agency being able to provide adequate support for all agencies. While I agree that this will provide more consistency and prevent double handling, I can also see an increased need for statistics, reporting and other administrative requirements that already frustrate volunteers. Most volunteers want to *do* something - get on a truck, use a chainsaw, put the fire out, rescue the person, learn fire and rescue techniques, teach others, work with other agencies - NOT be stuck in an office filling out paperwork.

From a support agency perspective, I concur with what I have heard other support agencies saying regarding having one agency to be in contact with. Knowing that you can talk to one person or team who will then be able to disseminate the information to all three frontline troops will make it easier to ensure that contingency plans or information is getting to the right people.

I'm sure I don't need to mention this but it is going to be extremely difficult to push ahead with these reforms in a climate when people are paying significant increases in their emergency services levy and volunteering for one of the services, knowing that the funding isn't contributing to their needs. It is incredibly frustrating and in some areas is almost at the point of having long term volunteers leave the sector because they are having to fundraise to purchase needed equipment when they know there are significant funds being raised by the government and not being spent where it is needed.

I have been impressed by the amount of consultation that you personally have undertaken with your proposed initiative and would like to see this continue well into the implementation and review of the reform. From the rejuvenation that is being undertaken in my own workplace, I have learned that you

cannot underestimate the value that staff (and in this case, volunteers) place on being able to make comment on the changes and have some ability (however small) to influence that change. Workshops, forums, emails, feedback sheets, visits all contribute to allowing people a chance to have their say in a way that they feel comfortable sharing it. I cannot understate how valuable this is and how important this will be in the implementation and review stages. Please keep allowing people a chance to have their say in a variety of forms - some people are comfortable in getting up in a forum and addressing you directly. Others prefer generic feedback "tick and flick" forms and others prefer emails or web based communication.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment. I'd be happy to participate in future roundtables or be contacted about the comments I have made.