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Rosmini, Michelle (DCS)

From: Hastie, Brenton (DEWNR)
Sent: Tuesday, 14 October 2014 1:59 PM
To: DCS:Minister Piccolo
Subject: Comment on "a SAFER community" 2014 [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

For Official Use Only

*Child
Name
Piccolo*

Att the Hon Tony Piccolo MP

Dear minister

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper – a SAFER community 2014.

I provide my comments having had the following experiences in Emergency management in Australia over the past 10 Years;

- Former Department of Sustainability of Environment (Vic) as a remote area firefighter and Fire Manager
- As a former Regional Operations Planning Officer with the CFS in Region 1 and 5 having held the rank of Commander and acted in the role of Regional Commander in Regions 1 and 5
- As a Level 3 Incident Controller as accredited by the NSW RFS
- As a participant in the AFAC Fire study tour which visited all major Australian Fire services in 2012
- As a former volunteer with the CFA
- As a current volunteer with Compton CFS

Having read the discussion paper and the previous reviews of the sector I provide the following comments:

General comments

- There is a risk if the individual services exist beyond Brigade / Unit / Station level internally e.g. a CFS Manager of 'X' or a SES manager of 'Y' that there will be continued division amongst ESO's. A volunteer vs. non-volunteer structure would also be damaging. The only service which has successfully implemented this sort of amalgamation is the Tasmanian Fire service who have full integration which is functioning without the internal volunteer vs. paid politics seen in other states.
- The integration needs to be complete with no exceptions otherwise there will be internal competing structures. The nature of ESO's are that they are parochial (due to passion for what they do) and there is (despite an unwillingness to admit it) aspects of patch protection when planning decisions are made. I would strongly suggest that a core role of the executive is to ensure that this is eliminated at all levels as it is damaging, inefficient and can (and does) negatively affect community safety. A core role of a senior person in the new structure should be to monitor and fix these issues as they emerge
- There is a risk at the operational level that (as seen in other states) participation in an urban fire 'drill squad' and service in a recognised urban fire service is made as a mandatory requirement for command roles. In a joined up Regional version of what is proposed, this would eliminate virtually all CFS and SES staff from filling those command roles in a supervisory capacity including as region or zone commanders. Whilst not to downplay the valuable skills of MFS commanders and the skills bought to their staff through drill squad and their promotion systems, there are only a few current MFS command personnel that adequately understand the command of volunteers, the aspects of dealing with rural and farming communities and the management of large, complex, geographically vast emergencies such as major rural fires. Experienced CFS command staff on the other hand have broad experience in all types of emergencies and dealing with a far broad skillset of the firefighters they supervise and communities they work within. There is a significant risk that if experience in an urban fire service is a pre-requisite of command roles as seen in Victoria, Tasmania, Qld and WA in the new SA service that highly experienced and valued CFS / SES staff will be unfairly excluded from running for key roles.

Proposed Regional Structure / location

In developing new Regions the following must be considered

- The need to have a quick response capability from or by duty officers to the emergency or coordination centre to meet the community demands of immediate public information and to ensure the safety of firefighters at complex incidents.
- The need to have a quick response capability from or by duty officers to the emergency for specialised responses to ensure the safety of all crews and to manage the coordination between other services (capability beyond what should be expected of volunteers / firefighters). Max of 1 hours response time (less in higher risk areas) from a duty officer to any emergency (excluding vastly populated areas) is reasonable.
- Sufficient operational experience and staffing to initially staff an short IMT **AND** Coordination Centre in the early stages of an incident (these need to be separate and distinct roles). The current lack of ability to have adequate staffed control centres staffed in the very early stages of a fire (as done in Victoria since black Saturday) is a significant factor in the lack of ability to provide community information in the early stages for an emergency incident. Any structure must be large enough to support the required Coordination and Command functions in the early stages of a developing emergency.
- Staff must be fairly paid for their work and accountability. A current Regional Officer in the CFS is on \$71000 whilst a RO in Victoria is (at a training level) on a minimum \$102k with less accountability. As a result of the vast pay differences South Australia has lost some of their best staff interstate and struggles to attract high performing staff from other sectors / states
- Regional structures are built around the importance of building local relationships rather than technical abilities (as per current structure). That is rather than having a technical specialist such as a regional officer in training or prevention (when these roles can be managed by non-operational staff) have generic Regional Officers assigned to a smaller Geographical area responsible for a Group of CFS Groups, SES units and MFS stations (as seen in the SES). This with further break down any communication barriers that may exist between frontline services and ensure their remains a link between the volunteer / firefighter level and paid regional staff.

I would be happy to expand on any of my comments further if required and am happy to be contacted on the number below.

Kind Regards,

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