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The Honourable Tony Piccolo, MP
Minister for Emergency Services
ministerpiccolo@sa.gov.au

RE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR REFORM.

Dear Minister Piccolo,

On behalf of the Whyalla Unit of the South Australian State Emergency Service; I advise that the members overwhelmingly do not support the current proposed sector reform and the model being proposed.

There is also a number of members that support it in some way.

Members have major concerns with a model that appears to be catering to the Metropolitan Fire Service (Whose members are either fulltime staff or retained staff) and the United Firefighters Union, at the expense of our Service (SES) and the Country Fire Service (CFS), the majority of whom are local volunteers.

It is suggested that the current South Australian Emergency Services model, whilst not perfect, is in the main working well within our areas. Our information is that the changed models in others states, is not anywhere near on a par with the current situation in South Australia.

There is a concern amongst volunteers that the introduction of generalised training across three or more agencies will reduce skills and capabilities in many areas, particularly as the MFS has a policy of their members not being trained by volunteers. This will no doubt lead to the loss of experienced volunteers with highly developed skills and training abilities from our organisation, particularly in the area of Road Crash Rescue (RCR) for example.

It is suggested that amalgamation within the proposed Sector Reforms will not fix costs overall, but rather lead to more paid and retained MFS staff in the Urban environment, thereby decreasing the limited funding available from the Emergency Services Levy to flow to Rural areas, where due to location and isolation, risks are somewhat higher, particularly in the areas of Fire, RCR and Storm and Water Damage.

Our unit respectfully urges you to allow the status quo to remain and not to rush into Sector Reforms which at this time appear to heavily favour paid and retain staff under the auspices of the United Firefighters Union over the needs and aspirations of our most important asset throughout the state, being the volunteers of both the SES Units and CFS Brigades.

Yours faithfully

SA State Emergency Service Unit.

Whyalla Unit

24 October 2014