



**Country Fire Service**  
South Australia

**Gumeracha District Brigade**

*'Volunteers, professionally protecting our communities for life'*

24<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Att: MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Re: A SAFER COMMUNITY Discussion Paper / ESS Review

The Gumeracha District Country Fire Service Brigade is using the opportunity provided by the Minister, to issue comment on the discussion paper; A SAFER COMMUNITY. The views presented in this submission are those we wish taken as our official and public opinion on the matters they relate to.

As in previous submissions, we draw your attention to the extra work load providing this submission has put on us as volunteers. We believe, however, that the extra effort is crucial to ensure that the emergency service sector remains a place where we are willing to volunteer. The reform process to date is taking a path that causes great concern to us and our willingness may not be the case in the future.

Our concerns are not limited to those listed in this submission. This list of concerns also relates to information that has been released or come to light after the release of the earlier discussion paper.

Whilst we understand that there is support for a review in areas of the sector, the further into the process we progress the more it is becoming apparent that there is disrespect towards the organization we proudly call ourselves a part of; The SA Country Fire Service. To ensure that what we are concerned about gets conveyed appropriately, we are not including here any suggestions or possible solutions within this submission. While in previous submissions we included suggestions relevant to the review process and its end result(s), many of those suggestions have not been seen as taken on board, therefore, some are covered below.

There are many groups within or representing the CFS who have made representations and provided potential models, which were largely approved by the relevant member personnel. We encourage you to work with these groups to provide a defined and appropriate plan of how to move forward and to where we can aspire.

The members of the Gumeracha District CFS Brigade are concerned with the following:

1. The A SAFER COMMUNITY Discussion Paper, although it has many possible options that may improve the sector, it has many points that raise concern. Given no commitment has

been made to any of the details in the discussion paper, we see it as unfit for its purpose at this stage of the sector review.

2. At no point have the projected cost savings been made available to the emergency service members or the public. Therefore we have been unable to determine the worth of any changes to the existing and highly efficient system.
3. The earlier portrayed vision that the regions would stay unchanged has recently been contradicted. There is no foreseeable way that the existing regional structures and support could remain the same or be strengthened under any of your proposed models: ie those that increase the number of regions within the state, realign the boundaries of regions and/or restructure the duties within regions.
4. Suggestions of reforming at regional levels need to strongly consider that the link between staff and volunteer(s) is at its pinnacle in the regional centres as they currently exist. Impacting this will put extra load on the volunteers as well as paid staff. The need for these pre-existing professional relationships is absolutely paramount, as lives depend on such relationships.
5. In the interest of public and member safety, the capabilities of the emergency service sector, including the CFS must never be impeded. There is no valid evidence to indicate that the proposed reform will be successful in any way. For this reason there is a high risk of failure and a consequent risk to all South Australians.

The Gumeracha District Brigade feels it necessary to warn all current and future governments that the CFS, as an organization of both volunteers and staff should not be taken for granted. Any such failure is certain to impact the capabilities of what has, historically and in practice, been a highly successful and cost effective means of providing a crucial service to the community.

The reality is we need the sector strengthened by building on what we have. The nature of the SA Emergency Service Sector is complex, but is a system of over 90% volunteers. As such, while the reform might be looked at from multiple angles, as it stands, the sector will only hold its strength if the current regional/volunteer relationship remains. We cannot emphasise enough that this relationship is the foundation on which the entire CFS volunteer service functions so successfully.

It should also be noted that as the sector must continue functioning through out any reform processes as well as into the future, it would catastrophic to undermine its current foundation and put lives at risk..

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission. We would appreciate an acknowledgement of receipt to the contact details provided.

On behalf of the Gumeracha District CFS Brigade