

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 volunteer members of the Roxby Downs unit of the South Australian State Emergency Service; I advise that the members of this unit overwhelmingly do not support the sector reforms with the model being proposed.

Members have major concerns with a model that appears to be catering primarily to the Metropolitan Fire Service (whose members are either fulltime or retained staff) and the United Firefighters Union, at the expense of the volunteer services.

It is suggested that the current South Australian Emergency Services model, whilst not perfect, is working quite well within our areas. Our information is that the proposed models, as implemented in others states, are not servicing the community anywhere near as well as the current organisation 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 many experienced volunteers with highly developed skills from our organisation, particularly in the area of Road Crash Rescue (RCR).

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

Combining some business support functions may well streamline support for volunteer units, but attempting to amalgamate operational functions, training and skill development especially, will reduce our ability to provide services, especially to Regional communities. The potential end result of cutting support to regional services is a return to the pre-1913 system with ad-hoc, locally funded and uncontrolled service provided by untrained civilians.

Our unit respectfully urges you to fully review the effectiveness of the current situation and not to rush into unneeded and short sighted Sector Reforms which appear to heavily favour paid and retained staff under the auspices of the United Firefighters Union over the needs and aspirations of our most important assets, the volunteers of both the SES Units and CFS Brigades, the Treasurer's recent comments notwithstanding.

Yours faithfully



Unit Manager
Roxby Downs SA State Emergency Service Unit.
17 October 2014