



15 October 2014

The Hon Tony Piccolo MP
Minister for Emergency Services
GPO Box 668
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Tony

Re: A Safer Community – Emergency Services Sector Reform Discussion Paper

The Mid Murray Council as you may appreciate, covers a large geographic area of over 6,500 square kilometres, incorporating 17 towns, 6,000 shacks, 52 shack areas and the second largest road length of the 68 Councils in the State.

The Mid Murray Council has noted with interest the Discussion Paper on the Emergency Services Sector Reform.

It is noted that consultation has been undertaken with over 1,500 volunteers and staff, Sector Unions, Volunteer Associations and other key partners. It is noted that as part of the engagement process, it has been identified that there are opportunities for further efficiencies in the Emergency Services Sector, without affecting frontline service delivery.

The Mid Murray Council strongly believes that whilst further efficiencies may be able to be obtained, it must be undertaken without affecting frontline service delivery, particularly the Country Fire Service and State Emergency Service. It is also suggested that subject to the implementation of the 2 stage process as proposed, that an extensive review is undertaken with the opportunity for submissions 12 months after implementation dates. This is to ensure that implementation has been undertaken effectively and that efficiencies have been obtained as outlined in this Discussion Paper.

It is noted that a number of issues were raised during the engagement process including equity and resourcing and the Mid Murray Council considers that the Country Fire Service in particular should be better resourced to be able to provide a better frontline service for regional and rural areas. In addition, mechanisms need to be put in place (including reduction in documentation and red tape required) to encourage more volunteers, particularly for the Country Fire Service. Volunteer numbers for Country Fire Service brigades have been declining and with an aging population it is expected this will continue.

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It is noted that there are some shared facilities now with the Country Fire Service, State Emergency Service and in some cases Ambulance First Responder units. The Mid Murray Council concurs with a number of the report ideas including the following:-

- A commitment to maintain agency branding and identity, particularly at the brigade level,
- A commitment to strengthen consultative processes with volunteers
- A strong regional presence supporting frontline staff and volunteers
- A Ministerial Advisory Council, providing volunteers and staff with representation at the highest level. It is also suggested that this Advisory Council have at least one local government representative given the close working relationship that many Councils have with the Country Fire Service and State Emergency Service in particular.

Council has also noted that the proposed structure involves 5 tiers from frontline to Chief Officer and that the hierarchical structure has 4 levels from the frontline to the Chief Officer which may be too cumbersome and not workable.

It would be appreciated if Councils comments could be taken into account as part of your deliberations.

Yours faithfully

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER