

RECEIVED #79
27 OCT 2014

Labbozzetta, Joe (DCS)

From:
Sent: Friday, 24 October 2014 11:51 AM
To: DCS:Minister Piccolo
Cc:
Subject: RE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR REFORM

The Honourable Tony Piccolo, MP
Minister for Emergency Services

ministerpiccolo@sa.gov.au

RE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR REFORM.

Dear Minister Piccolo,

I am writing to express my concerns in regard to the proposed sector reform model being put forward. Having looked at the model carefully there are aspects that 'may' work but I believe there will be numerous insurmountable challenges with the overarching framework.

I am aware that there needs to be change and the time and money already invested into reports, reviews and consultation with the services is substantial. I am also very conscious that the safety and wellbeing of the South Australian communities may also be impacted by the decisions made and I have no doubt that we all want these to be positive impacts.

We know from experience, and it is taught in vocational education and management training, that work place culture has a significant impact on any change in any organisation or business regardless of the services performed. Each of the emergency services considered in this reform have their own workplace/organisational culture and I believe this will be one of the insurmountable issues that will be encountered. There may be some shared values and beliefs but on a whole each service is distinct from the other.

We also know from experience, and it is taught in vocational education and management training, that having the 'right person' in leadership positions is imperative to achieving organisational goals. The 'right' leader can connect with their people, build positive relationships, develop mutual respect, achieve outcomes more efficiently and benefit the organisation.

The SASES has in the past few years under taken several reviews and restructures and the benefits of these and the consolidation of the right people in the right position are now evident. I believe the majority of the SASES volunteers are of the belief that they are being provided with good leadership and the appropriate volunteer support to provide a professional service to their communities.

My fear if the current proposed sector reform model is implemented is that many of the volunteers may decide that their values may no longer align to the organisational values and decide to walk away. While this is always an option for any volunteers at any time, the risk is that those that walk may be taking with them a wealth of knowledge and skills. This risk is not only for the service knowledge which may be captured for future reference somewhere but the local knowledge which will go with the individual.

All the services have developed and improved their skills and knowledge and service delivery through experience and over time. While there is now data that we can access to review events from the past, the knowledge of the locals with in the community is usually past from person to person and has been learned over generations. We depend on the local knowledge in many emergency situations and decisions made of how, where, when to respond are often around this key information.

I am also concerned that if some of our volunteers decide to leave that we may encounter situations where 'community members' not aligned to any emergency service may take it upon themselves to 'assist' in times of need and this has the potential to put people at potential risk of harm. The Australian ethos of 'helping a mate when he's down' is still prevalent, especially in rural communities, we don't want individuals or small groups of friends who are not members of an emergency service assisting in emergency situations under their own control.

During your consultations it was identified that the services all work well together at incidents and during times of significant emergency events and this is correct. I believe there is mutual respect between the services when they are assisting the community but I cannot anticipate this ever happening on day to day basis in a 'blended' organisation.

I do believe there are some areas that will function well as a shared role such as administration and work, health and safety but not in the areas of operations and the direct volunteer leadership and support. During my 14 years as a volunteer with the SASES I feel this is the first time that our organisation is in jeopardy and I trust that the decisions you make, will ensure the safety of the South Australian communities.