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SA Country Fire Service

Northern Barossa CFS Group
PO Box 624
Nuriootpa SA 5355

23rd October, 2014.

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

Dear Minister,

After reading the "A Safer Community Discussion Paper – 2014" I would like to make the following comments in response.

In January 2014 the Country fire Service experienced some of its most challenging fires since Ash Wednesday in 1983 and this States CFS volunteers & paid staff performed above and beyond the call of duty, without any loss of life to communities within this state. Yes there was loss to infrastructure and property, however it would have been much worse without the tremendous response from our volunteers and paid staff, and could have cost this State and your Premier's Government, millions of dollars.

In light of this fact you now wish to reform a highly efficient volunteer service, which is held in very high regard by other states around Australia. You would totally restructure an organisation that operates exceedingly well via its chain of command of dedicated volunteers and albeit a lean, but well structured, paid CFS staff.

If you wish to make cost savings to the States budget and let's be realistic, that is what this reform is all about. You should target those areas where there is duplication with MFS, CFS and SES across the State. Now I recall that you remarked at a reform meeting at Gawler, that you're not prepared to discuss this aspect within your reform agenda, however that said it seems obvious to me that's where savings would be gained.

I have also considered your proposed organizational structure (Fig 3) posed within the discussion paper and firmly believe there should be no change to the current structure as it stands from Tier 2 to Tier 5. This organizational structure serves us well, as the volunteer has a say in how his or her organization is managed. I want the current paid CFS management structure that understands the volunteer ethos, not some paid up United Fire Fighter union hack that is only in the service for the remuneration.

I believe I speak on behalf of all the Northern Barossa Country Fire Service Group members, when I say the current structure is not broken, so don't try to fix it!