



Report on

**REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOADS
ACROSS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES
SECTOR**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The emergency services sector is heavily dependant upon the continued commitment of CFS volunteers, SES volunteers and MFS retained firefighters to maintain community safety across South Australia. Agencies within the emergency services sector continue to receive feedback from volunteers that a growing administrative burden is impacting on the ability to retain volunteers, and as a direct result of this feedback, this review was commissioned. As a result of increasing legislative and policy requirements, both SAFECOM and the Emergency Services Agencies are expecting volunteers to have a greater knowledge of, and level of accountability in policy compliance and financial management controls. This expectation is likely to increase as the Sector strives to meet future strategic goals and directions.

The primary objective of this review was to survey volunteers and retained firefighters and investigate options to reduce the administrative burden on volunteers to allow them to focus on their important role in community safety. A total of 192 volunteers and retained firefighters provided feedback through a hard copy survey and focus groups. While this is a very small snapshot of the total number of volunteers throughout the Sector, it has captured the views of a broad cross-section of volunteers who undertake administrative work. It is important to note that while the retained firefighters raised a range of concerns including the level of paperwork required and outdated systems of work, the majority of concerns discussed in this report relate to CFS and SES volunteers.

As a result of a workforce profile survey commissioned by the CFS in August 2002, six Regional Business Services Officer (BSO) positions were created and assigned to each CFS Region to assist with non-operational tasks. These tasks relate primarily to finance, procurement, asset management and logistics. In conjunction with the already established positions of Volunteer Support Officers (VSOs), which are a shared resource between CFS and SES, these positions are a direct resource for volunteers. Information obtained through the survey and focus groups confirms that the creation of the BSO positions has been successful in both reducing some of the administrative workload for volunteers and also fostering a healthier relationship between volunteers and their regional office. Notwithstanding this, the review has also highlighted some issues with regard to the location of BSOs and other administrative support positions, and the specific role of VSOs in particular with regards to conflict resolution among volunteers. These issues are discussed further in the body of the report.

This review has revealed that the administrative burden on volunteers is still significant, and survey and focus group data shows that in the opinion of the volunteers this workload continues to increase. Group and Deputy Group Officers, Brigade Captains (CFS) and Unit Managers (SES) liken their role to managing a small business, in addition to their paid employment and non-operational roles as volunteers. In particular for CFS Group Officers and SES Unit Managers, this includes the "managing people" aspect of their role. While this did not emerge as a common theme, it was raised by a number of Group Officers who believe they are not provided with adequate support in managing the particularly difficult cases of conflict resolution or under-performance. There is also a heavy administrative workload for Administration, Finance and Training Officers within Groups, Brigades and Units, particularly those who hold dual or multiple roles.

A review of the Volunteer Management Branch recently undertaken by Volunteering SA & NT inc. has recommended a number of initiatives, including changing the name of the branch to Volunteer Strategy and Support and the adoption of National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations. This review of administrative workloads in itself meets some of the requirements of Standard 8 of the National Standards - Continuous Improvement. Accordingly, all development and implementation work resulting from this review will need to align with these standards. The review of VMB also highlights the need for greater training and support to be provided to those in volunteer leadership roles, including:

- Further development of clear job descriptions for all volunteer roles;
- Training in rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer managers, and;
- Recognition of the full range of leadership skills required in a modern organisation, including effective people management and conflict resolution.

It is also acknowledged that attempts have been made in the past to develop job descriptions for all volunteer positions, however, many are still in draft form or not considered up-to-date. The Volunteering SA & NT inc. report also acknowledges that, in effective volunteer management, clear career paths and mentoring for succession planning leads to a more effective, happy and sustainable volunteer workforce. Findings from this review of administrative workloads across the emergency services sector certainly support that view.

Key findings

- The need for a more streamlined approach to forwarding correspondence to volunteers, thereby reducing duplication and material overload. It would be useful to develop standard procedures as to whom the information should be directed (ie Administrative Officer/Training Officer, or Group Captain);
- The possibility of deploying staff to support volunteers at the local level, ie at Group level, rather than in the Regions or HQ;
- The need for a more efficient and user-friendly website, which allows volunteers to access relevant information and enables on-line reporting. This may also result in reducing some of the workload of Business Services/Support Officers;
- Staff movement within the Regions. The survey and focus groups revealed that regular staff changes and a lack of staffing continuity is a constant frustration for volunteers. This particularly applies to Business Services Officers and Volunteer Support Officers. A number of volunteers who are required to have regular contact with the regions consider that no sooner are people appointed to the position, then they are acting in other positions in the Region or Headquarters, and not doing what they were originally employed to do.
- The number of hours per month spent in meetings. CFS volunteers in particular spend a significant amount of hours per month attending meetings. The possibility of using other avenues, including teleconferencing for certain meetings and sharing information on the website could be explored.

- Lack of understanding and clarity in regards to what constitutes compliance with legislation or policy. Focus group feedback revealed that a large number of volunteers and retained firefighters did not have a good understanding of what this meant for them.
- Assistance with conflict resolution. The issue of assistance with conflict resolution was raised within the focus groups, with volunteers in leadership positions highlighting the need for more support in managing conflict and human resource issues relating to performance of volunteers. The Volunteering SA & NT Inc. review found that there is a requirement to upskill VSOs in conflict resolution, thereby increasing the capacity to transfer those skills and strategies to the brigade and unit level.

While VSOs play a key role in the process of conflict resolution, the author understands that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Regional Commander to assist Group, Brigade and Unit Managers in resolving issues of this nature. This is an area that requires some clarification for volunteers in leadership roles, to ensure there is a clear understanding of how the role of the VSO differs to that of the Regional Commander in dealing with issues of this nature.

While the author heard anecdotal evidence that some volunteers had considered “walking away” from volunteering as a result of the administrative workload, there is no evidence to suggest that this is a universally held view. Overall, while volunteers are frustrated with the amount of administrative work expected of them, the individuals who participated in this project continue to be committed to their roles as operational volunteers and retained firefighters.

With regard to learnings for the future in relation to flow of information, the author would like to acknowledge the excellent communication between SAMFS Headquarters, Regional Offices and the retained firefighters. As previously advised, the majority of issues discussed in this report relate to CFS and SES volunteers, however it is important to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by those retained firefighters who completed the survey and attended focus groups.

Finally, the author would like to acknowledge the contributions and support of all participants. The cooperation of volunteers and paid staff, as well as external stakeholders, has enabled this project to occur. To this end, a draft communication is attached at Appendix 4 for distribution by the Chief Officers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the recommendations below relates to one or more of the following Key Outcomes and Objectives of the review. For ease of reference outcomes and objectives have been numbered.

Key Outcomes and Objectives of the Review

1. Identify the different types of non-operational roles undertaken by volunteers and the workloads associated with the roles (seasonal and non-seasonal);
2. Prioritise the importance of the non-operational roles in terms of compliance with legislation or policy;
3. Identify opportunities for improving efficiencies in the delivery of non-operational roles through the removal of unnecessary or duplicated administrative functions;
4. Identify systems based opportunities to streamline and co-ordinate administrative functions;
5. Identify the agency resources available to assist volunteers;
6. Identify the business models in place in other jurisdictions to undertake administrative workloads for emergency services volunteers; and
7. Identify cross agency opportunities for maximising efficiency and effectiveness of administrative functions (ie. economies of scale)

It should be noted that Key Objective 1 above was addressed in designing the survey and focus group questions to be asked of review participants. Data collected has obviously informed the basis for the following recommendations. Key Objective 2 above was addressed to some degree in the question design by identifying areas of work related to compliance with legislation and/or policy. However, as highlighted in the key findings, there is a lack of understanding among volunteers as to what constitutes compliance with legislation or policy. Hence this informs the final recommendation below.

The key recommendations are:

1. **The streamlining correspondence to Emergency Service Agencies**
One of the key issues for volunteers is the sheer volume of information forwarded for consideration, information and/or action. This information is often distributed using a number of mediums, namely, hard copy through the internal or external mail system, email and fax. There is a clear need to streamline this process and target the information more effectively, in relation to the actual content of information and the medium used to disseminate the information. The possibility of providing volunteers with one point of contact for following up information should be explored, while continuing to foster and maintain individual agency cultures. In relation to tracking correspondence and information, the author understands that a records management system entitled Objective is currently being implemented across the sector, with the Volunteer Strategy and Support Branch as one of the pilot sites. The timeframe for implementation is approximately 18 months. Once this is fully implemented the task of tracking information will become more effective and further efficiencies may flow from this.

Relates to key outcomes and objectives 3, 4 and 7

2. Paid administrative support at the Brigade/Local level

Not surprisingly, the issue of resources was raised as a result of the focus groups and survey. Having said this, the findings do not indicate that more resources are required, rather that resources could potentially be used more effectively if deployed in different areas. Volunteers consider more local (paid) support is required at Group/Unit/Station level - this is particularly an issue for CFS. The Victorian Country Fire Authority has Brigade Administrative Support Officers (BASOs) in place who assist Brigade Officers and Captains with some of the administrative workload. Given the significant cost of such an initiative, a phased-in approach may be the most appropriate way to manage this in South Australia, or, perhaps provide initial support to those Groups who have the greatest number of Brigades.

Relates to key outcome and objectives 4, 5 and 6

3. The development of a more efficient, user-friendly website

A common theme resulting from the survey and focus groups is the need for a more efficient, up to date and user-friendly website. While there are still a large number of volunteers who are not familiar or comfortable with modern technology and the role the Internet plays in the workforce, the majority of volunteers and retained firefighters surveyed indicated that the ability to download relevant forms off the Internet/Intranet (such as incident report forms) and undertake on-line reporting is critical to reducing administrative workload. For example, currently the simple task of confirming whether a particular form is the latest version requires a telephone call (or several calls) to the region or HQ.

SAFECOM is currently in the process of revamping the SAFECOM website and integrating information contained within the Agency websites. The challenge for SAFECOM and the agencies will be to ensure that adequate resources are provided to maintain the accuracy and relevance of the information on the website.

A review of the level of access provided to volunteers will also need to be undertaken to enable on-line reporting where appropriate. The implementation of this recommendation will also legitimize on line forums to facilitate meetings and require the introduction of Moderators and Administrators. Support with regard to training and familiarization of the technology may be required with an expectation that volunteers and retained firefighters who are comfortable with the technology assist their colleagues who are not so technically capable.

Relates to key outcomes and objectives 4 and 7

4. Reduce the number of hours per month attending meetings

As referred to in the key findings, volunteers, in particular within CFS, spend a significant amount of time attending meetings. In collaboration with the volunteers, effort needs to be put into identifying and understanding the purpose of particular meetings, with a view to potentially using the website and/or teleconferencing for meetings where the primary purpose is information sharing. Regular Brigade and Group meetings and major RMVC meetings could still be held face to face, however meetings that arise to discuss specific issues could be conducted using teleconferencing.

This would require a major cultural shift and would need the support of Group Officers and Brigade Captains. SES currently use teleconferencing for the majority of their meetings, so perhaps learnings could be taken from how SES have made this an effective mechanism for meetings.

Relates to key outcomes and objectives 3 and 4

5. Clarity of Role with regard to legislative and policy requirements

As advised in the key findings, focus group data highlighted a lack of understanding around the legislative and policy framework in which volunteers and retained firefighters work. This is not to suggest they are not meeting these requirements, moreover some confusion exists around this issue. In order to ensure that volunteers are aware of, and familiar with, legislative and policy compliance it is important to reinforce this as part of the induction process and use the website to disseminate information and updates. With the redevelopment of the SAFECOM website, an opportunity exists to actively use the website to provide relevant policy information and updates to volunteers and retained firefighters. Individual Agency administrative policies and procedures need to complement operational policies and procedures. An opportunity exists to highlight the commonalities and the benefits of same.

Relates to key outcomes and objectives 2, 3 and 4

6. Engendering strong working relationships between volunteers and paid staff within the Emergency Services Sector

One of the themes to emerge from both focus groups and the survey is the need to ensure policy makers consider the impact on volunteers. One such example may be the recruitment, selection and induction processes pertaining to staff within SAFECOM and the individual agencies. In order to assist staff to be "volunteer friendly" it is recommended that the recruitment, selection and induction process includes information on what it means to work within, and provide appropriate support services to, the volunteer sector. Likewise, to engender future good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers, the volunteer induction process needs to include content on the services provided to volunteers by SAFECOM and staff within the individual agencies.

Relates to key outcomes and objectives 4 and 5

METHODOLOGY and CONSULTATION PROCESS

A Project Steering Group, comprising the following members, was established to oversee this review

- Mick Ayre, Manager, Strategic Services, CFS
- Chris Smith, Commander, Regional Operations MFS
- Matt Maywald, A/Deputy Chief Officer, SES
- Eileen Dunlop, A/Volunteer Management Consultant VMB, SAFECOM
- Lisa Lew, Project Manager, SAFECOM
- Veronica Lee, Director - VLee HRM Consulting
- Suzy Williss, Associate - VLee HRM Consulting

Information to inform this review was gathered by undertaking a survey and conducting focus groups.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were undertaken over a 6 week period in all the key regional areas. A total of 109 volunteers attended the focus groups, with representation from the majority of key administrative roles.

Survey (refer Appendix 1)

An on-line survey was developed in consultation with the Project Steering Group. The survey was provided to the majority of volunteers as a hard copy survey however a number of volunteers also took advantage of completing the survey on-line.

Both the focus groups and the survey targeted volunteers undertaking the following roles:

CFS

- Group Officers and Deputy Group Officers
- Group Administrative Officers
- Group Training Officers
- Finance officers
- Brigade Training Officers
- Brigade Administrative Officers
- Brigade Captains
- OHS&W Representatives

SES

- Unit Managers, Administrative Officers, Training Officers and Finance Officers

MFS

- Station Officer, Senior Firefighter and Firefighter

KEY FINDINGS

INTERNAL

Please refer to Appendix 3 for graphical details of the survey

Survey Results

The survey was forwarded to 150 people, with 83 people responding to the survey, representing a 56% response rate.

Of the respondents, 61.4% belong to CFS, 15.7% to SES, 16.9% to MFS, with 4.8% indicating they belonged to multiple agencies and 1.2% unknown.

The survey found that 75.9% of volunteers undertake pure administration, with finance, purchasing, training and incident pre-planning also featuring strongly. as highlighted below:

- 51.8% undertake finance-related tasks
- 50.6% undertake purchasing
- 49.4% undertake tasks relating to training , and;
- 38% undertake incident pre-planning

The survey question relating to the number of hours spent per week on committee work reveals the following:

- 40.5% spend 0-2 hours per week (equates to 0-8 hours per month)
- 24.1% spend 2-4 hours per week (equates to 8-16 hours per month) and;
- 13.9% spend 4-6 hours per week (equates to 16-24 hours per month)

These hours include preparation, attendance at meetings and follow-up work.

It is interesting to note that these results are significantly different from those of the focus groups where a large number (in particular Group Officers, Brigade Captains, Unit Managers, Administrative and Finance Officers) advised that they regularly spend in excess of 30 hours per month at committee meetings. 98.7% of these committees are at Brigade/Group/Station/Unit level. Focus group feedback also raised this as an Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare issue, particularly for CFS volunteers who are required to drive long distances at night after often lengthy meetings.

In regards to reducing the amount of time spend in meetings, effort needs to be put into identifying and understanding the purpose of particular meetings. Refer to key recommendations for further information.

39.2% of volunteers generally liaise with Business Services/Support Officers, 51.9% generally liaise with Regional Administrative staff and 45.6% reported that they generally liaise with Regional Management staff (this is likely to be those in leadership roles). The fact that 51.9% of volunteers generally liaise with Regional Administrative staff highlights the important role these front of house positions play within the regions.

In relation the level of satisfaction with paid staff, overall results revealed that 23.7% strongly agree that they receive adequate support, 45.4% agree, 7.8% disagree, 2.4% strongly disagree and 20.7% advised that it was not applicable to them.

In relation to support received by individual agencies the question was broken up into the following categories:

- Training
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Administration
- Management, and:
- Occupational, Health Safety and Welfare.

The majority of volunteers advised that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they received adequate support from these areas.

In relation to which areas could be streamlined or improved, volunteers and retained firefighters overwhelmingly voted that on-line forms/templates and reporting would make their jobs much easier. This was also supported in the focus group feedback.

Focus Groups

Focus Group feedback varied between regions, however a general theme emerged that the level of support very much depended on the individual undertaking the role. This highlights the need for common expectations of the role to be clarified on appointment to the role and reinforced through induction and ongoing performance management. Focus group feedback also highlighted the need for SAFECOM and the Emergency Services Agencies to continue to work towards instilling and embedding a positive working relationship between volunteers and SAFECOM and leadership groups within the regions.

From the outset of this review it became evident that communication between certain regional offices and volunteers did not flow well. This was evidenced through the lack of knowledge and information of volunteers of the commencement of the review and volunteers not being given adequate notice of focus group dates and locations. The level of communication varies between locations and individuals within those locations.

A theme that emerged through all focus groups was the lack of continuity of key staff in the regions and staff being recruited to undertake certain positions and then deployed into other positions within the Region or Headquarters.

In relation to the administrative tasks that volunteers find most time consuming, the results reveal meetings at 49.4%, correspondence at 34.9% and finance at 27.7%. The remaining numbers were fairly evenly spread across other administrative tasks.

60.2% of survey respondents advised that the administrative workload increased during specific times of the year. Results were evenly distributed across summer (37.3%), spring (26.5%) and winter (22.9%) with autumn at 7.2%. No reasons to explain the increase were provided.

With regards to administrative functions that are considered to be unnecessary or duplicated, 17.4% highlighted general administration and paperwork, 17.4% highlighted quotes/purchasing and 13% indicated registers/logs.

The question in relation to the resource/s that would be most helpful in reducing administrative workloads revealed that:

- 22% felt the need for computers with high speed broadband and internet access
- 30.5% indicated that paid staff could be doing more of the administrative work
- 15% highlighted the need for on-line forms/templates/reporting.

It is interesting to note that there does not appear to be a clear understanding from volunteers with regard to compliance with legislation and/or policy requirements. A direct question posed in the focus group relating to this indicated that many did not know, were unsure or felt that it related to everything they do. This feedback reinforces the importance of the work being undertaken to further develop clear job descriptions for volunteers and to reinforce legislative/policy compliance requirements through induction and regular website updates.

KEY FINDINGS

EXTERNAL

Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA)

The CFA has taken the following initiatives to ease the administrative burden on volunteers, including:

- Employing Brigade Administrative Support Officers (BASO's) to carry out some of the administrative load undertaken by brigade officers and managers, with a ratio of 1 BASO to 3 or 4 brigades;
- Allowing fire reports to be given by phone rather than having to fill out a form;
- Employing Community Educator Coordinators (this is indirect, but takes some pressure off volunteers to provide community education etc);
- The planned engagement of HR personnel at Area offices to assist in easing the people management burden within brigades by:
 - Intervention in severe cases of dispute
 - Establishing HR practices at all levels from Area downwards that smooth interpersonal relationships
- Operating a recruitment hotline and running recruitment campaigns, reduces brigade time in planning and running campaigns;
- Operating the Readiness Planning module on Brigades Online, which allows people to put their names forward for strike teams on-line and saves a lot of phone calls, particularly to brigade officers and group officers

Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES)

The Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) is a volunteer based organisation with around 5,500 volunteers which is charged with responding to emergencies and working to ensure the safety of communities around Victoria. VICSES Victorian Headquarters (VHQ) aims to foster and support a sustainable volunteer and employee emergency service workforce. To this end, making sure that the volunteer administrative workload is as efficient and effective as possible is a key priority as most volunteers prefer to be "on the tools" rather than fulfilling administrative functions and requirements.

There are also a number of professionally staffed administrative regional support bases within the State that directly support local Units. Each region also includes a professional Volunteer Support Officer (VSO). These positions were specifically created to provide support for our volunteers.

The majority of VICSES policy, reference and administrative instruments are available through an intranet that runs on broadband speed connectivity to all units. The VICSES intranet allows a number of useful tools in both operational and administrative terms to be made instantaneously available to all Units and to be readily updated and revised. The communications systems also allow volunteers to contact regional support and VHQ easily and quickly.

Within Units, Unit Controllers (the VICSES equivalent of Unit Managers) are the key administrative delegators. Of course, Unit structures vary from unit to unit depending on Unit size and history. However, VHQ mandates Unit structures that allow for the smooth running of all sizes of units, and that allows scalability of the division of labour within Units re administrative functions.

Unit Controllers will normally split administrative tasks among their members depending on workload, available volunteer experience, interest and operational requirements. Some may take on a greater number of administrative tasks themselves. The allocation of these tasks also has a strong bearing on succession planning within units, and in developing leadership skills among members. In addition, some VICSES Regions have dedicated administrative support Units.

In developing new policy and administrative procedure, where possible, input is sought at Unit level to ensure that members are consulted and brought into the decision making process. To this end, VHQ runs a number of Taskforces at any given time that seek member input to the policy development process.

Finally, standing VICSES administrative policy is under a process of continuous review and improvement with the aim of simplifying and improving service efficiency and enhancing outcomes for our volunteers.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As advised in the key findings (Internal), out of the 150 volunteers and retained firefighters who were surveyed, 83 responded to the survey, representing a 56% response rate. This is a very pleasing result and indicates a keen interest in volunteers to work with SAFECOM and their individual agencies to develop options to reduce the administrative workload. The focus groups also provided very "rich" information on which to develop strategies to address this issue.

Key findings

- The need for a more streamlined approach to forwarding correspondence to volunteers, thereby reducing duplication and material overload. It would be useful to develop standard procedures as to whom the information should be directed (ie Administrative Officer/Training Officer, or Group Captain);
- The possibility of deploying staff to support volunteers at the local level, ie at Group level, rather than in the Regions or HQ;
- The need for a more efficient and user-friendly website, which allows volunteers to access relevant information and enables on-line reporting. This may also result in reducing some of the workload of Business Services/Support Officers;
- Staff movement within the Regions. The survey and focus groups revealed that regular staff changes and a lack of staffing continuity is a constant frustration for volunteers.
- The number of hours per month spent in meetings. CFS in particular spend a significant amount of hours per month attending meetings. The possibility of using other avenues, including teleconferencing for certain meetings and sharing information on the website could be explored.
- Lack of understanding and clarity in regards to what constitutes compliance with legislation or policy. Focus group feedback revealed that a large number of volunteers and retained firefighters did not have a good understanding of what this meant for them.
- Assistance with conflict resolution. The issue of assistance with conflict resolution was raised within the focus groups, with volunteers in leadership positions highlighting the need for more support in managing conflict and human resource issues relating to performance of volunteers. The Volunteering SA & NT Inc. review found that there is a requirement to upskill VSOs in conflict resolution, thereby increasing the capacity to transfer those skills and strategies to the brigade and unit level.

While VSOs play a key role in the process of conflict resolution, the author understands that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Regional Commander to assist Group, Brigade and Unit Managers in resolving issues of this nature. This is an area that requires some clarification on behalf of the volunteers in leadership roles, to ensure there is a clear understanding of how the role of the VSO differs to that of the Regional Commander in dealing with matters of this nature.

APPENDICES

**REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOADS OF
SES AND CFS VOLUNTEERS AND RETAINED FIRE-FIGHTERS
ACROSS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR
DEFINITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORK FOR THE PURPOSES OF
THIS SURVEY:**

Throughout this survey you will be asked to respond to a range of questions relating to administrative tasks in the following areas:

- Correspondence - Ensuring mail/correspondence is opened and dealt with
- Membership - Managing a range of functions related to membership
- Meetings - Providing a range of support to meetings
- Financial Duties - Acting as Finance Officer for the Brigade/Group/Unit/Station to which you belong
- Records Management - Accepting responsibility for a range of record keeping across all administrative areas
- OHSW&Injury Management(OHSW&IM) - Administrative functions associated with OHSW&IM
- Distribution of Information - Related to any of the above activities
- Provision of Reports - On a range of operational and non operational activities

Agencies within the emergency services sector are responding to feedback that there is a growing administrative burden on SES and CFS volunteers and retained firefighters. This survey is being conducted to provide us with information on how we may be able to simplify this process by effectively coordinating administrative functions, identifying unnecessary or duplicated functions, and identifying agency resources available to assist you. As you will see, providing your name is optional and is not a mandatory field. In order to make our information meaningful, however, we are keen to be provided with your gender, age, length of service and region, so we ask that you complete all these fields. All information collected will be treated in accordance with the relevant Privacy legislation. This will include the secure storage of all documents. Information gathered from this survey will only be used for the purposes outlined above. Thank you for participating in this survey.

- 1. Name (Optional):**
- 2. To which Emergency Services Agency do you belong:**
- 3. Please advise which Brigade/Group/Unit/Station you belong to:**

CFS

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SES
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MFS
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

- 4. How long have you been a Volunteer/Retained FireFighter:**
- 5. What is your gender:**
- 6. What is your age group:**

0 - 5 years

5- 10 years

10 - 15 years

15 - 20 years

20 + years

Female

Male

16 - 20

21 - 30

31 - 40

41 - 50

51 - 60

60 +

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- 7. What administrative role do you undertake for your Brigade/Group/Unit or Station (Tick more than one box if appropriate):**

Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purchasing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OHS&W and Injury Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cadet Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Education and Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incident Pre-planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Which of the following administrative tasks do you undertake (Tick more than one box if appropriate):
CORRESPONDENCE

- Maintain Correspondence Register
- Actioning and Filing
- Membership Applications
- Incident Reports
- Workcover Forms
- Photocopying
- Induction
- Directory/Membership Register
- Other (please specify)

9. Which of the following administrative tasks do you undertake (Tick more than one box if appropriate):
MEETINGS

- Notification of Meetings
- Venue Management
- Catering
- Preparing Agendas
- Minute Taking
- Printing Minutes
- Distribution of Minutes
- AGM preparation
- Elections preparation
- Annual Returns
- Other (please specify)

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10. Which of the following administrative tasks do you undertake (Tick more than one box if appropriate):
MEMBERSHIP

- Personal Records/Files
- Attendance Records
- Training Records
- Injury/Accident/Near Miss Records
- Recognition and Award Records
- Personnel/Personal records maintenance
- Volunteer Magazine Mailing List - Frontline and OJ Mailing/Email list
- Other (please specify)

11. Which of the following administrative tasks do you undertake (Tick more than one box if appropriate):
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Brigade/Group/Station
- Unit
- Region
- State
- National
- Other (please specify)

12. Which of the following administrative tasks do you undertake (Tick more than one box if appropriate):
FINANCE

- Day to Day Financial Record Keeping
- Maintaining Transactions
- Budgeting
- Banking
- Petty Cash
- Purchase Cards
- Financial Reports
- Annual Financial Returns
- Purchasing/Procurement
- Financial Audit
- Other (please specify)

13. Approximately how many hours per week in total do you spend on Committee work (excluding scheduled training nights)?
14. What Committees do you participate in?

- 0 - 2 hours
- 2 - 4 hours
- 4 - 6 hours
- 6 - 8 hours
- 8 - 10 hours
- 10 - 12 hours
- 12 - 14 hours
- 14 - 16 hours
- 16 - 18 hours
- 18 - 20 hours
- 20 + hours

Other (please specify)
 Brigade/Group/Station/Region level

 Unit

 State

 National

 Other (please specify)

15. Do you provide any other administrative services:

Weekly Reports

 Monthly Reports

 Quarterly Reports

 Annual Reports

 Other (please specify)

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16. Who do you generally liaise with in relation to undertaking your administrative role and at what level:

Business Services/Support Officer

 Regional Administration Officer

 Volunteer Support Officer

 Regional Services/Support Officer

 Regional Business Manager

 Regional Management Staff

 Local Level

 Regional Level

 State Level

 External

 Other (please specify)

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17. How much time do you spend on administrative tasks per week?

18. Does the administrative workload increase during specific periods of the year?

0 - 2 hours

 2 - 4 hours

 4 - 6 hours

 6 - 8 hours

- 8 - 10 hours
- 10 - 12 hours
- 12 - 14 hours
- 14 - 16 hours
- 16 - 18 hours
- 18 - 20 hours
- 20 + hours
- Other (please specify)
- Yes (Go to Question 19)
- No

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**19. Please indicate when the workload increases:
20. Which administrative tasks do you consider to be the most time consuming:**

- Autumn
- Winter
- Spring
- Summer
- Please estimate the increase in hours per month
- Correspondence
- Membership
- Meetings
- Finance
- Recruitment
- OHS&W and Injury Management
- Incident Records
- Training Records
- Purchasing/Procurement
- Other (please specify)

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21. Do you feel you have adequate support from staff in the Service that you belong to?

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A
- Training
 - Human Resources
 - Finance
 - Administration
 - Management
 - OHSW and Injury Management
 - Other (please specify)

22. Are there certain administrative functions that you consider are unnecessary or duplicated? Please indicate which area:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

23. Please indicate which areas you consider could be improved or streamlined and how:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

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24. What would be the resource that would be most helpful to you in reducing your administrative workload?

25. Do you have any other suggestions/recommendations as to how the administrative requirements of Volunteers could be improved:

To all CFS Volunteers, SES Volunteers and MFS Retained Firefighters

**HELP US REVIEW THE ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD OF VOLUNTEERS AND
MFS RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS**

Agencies within the emergency services sector are responding to feedback that a growing administrative burden on volunteers and retained firefighters is impacting on the ability to retain volunteers. We wish to better understand your feedback and work with you to develop options to more effectively manage this situation and in order to do this, a review has been commissioned to consider the administrative workload right across the emergency services sector.

The review will be undertaken by VLee HRM Consulting and will include the following:

- conducting and completing a workforce survey, utilising an on-line survey tool (or hard copy where required) for metropolitan areas and undertaking Focus Groups for Regional areas;
- providing analysis and evaluation of the findings from the survey and focus groups; and
- providing recommendations and options for potential solutions to address the various issues relating to administrative workloads.

The review will be led by Ms Suzy Willis, who will be coordinating the process of gathering information and seeking feedback. The survey will seek feedback from a sample group of approximately 150 from relevant Stations, Brigades, Groups and Units across the emergency services sector, in addition to the Focus Groups. It is anticipated that the review will take approximately two months to complete.

Please find below Project Steering Group members and their contact details. For queries in relation to the review objectives and process, please contact any member of the Project Steering Group. For queries related specifically about the survey or focus groups, contact Suzy Willis direct on 0407 771 712.

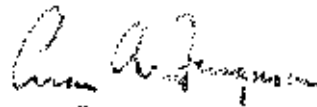
Project Steering Group:

- Mick Ayro, Manager, Strategic Services, CFS – 8163 4120 or 0407 466 630;
- Chris Smith, Commander, Regional Operations, MFS – 8204 2535 or 0417 814 541;
- Matt Maywald, A/Deputy Chief Officer, SES – 8433 4175 or 0429 900 842;
- Eileen Dunlop, A/Volunteer Management Consultant, Volunteer Management Branch, SAFECOM – 8463 4700 or 0417 819 535;
- Lisa Lew, Project Manager, SAFECOM – 8204 3514; and
- Suzy Willis, VLee HRM Consulting – 0407 771 712.


We look forward to your involvement in this process. Your honest and constructive involvement in the review process is sought, in particular through the completion of the survey (on-line or hard copy), or participation in Focus Groups.



David Place
Commissioner of Fire and Emergencies
SA FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
COMMISSION



Euan Ferguson
Chief Officer
SA COUNTRY FIRE SERVICE



Grant Lupton
Chief Officer
SA METROPOLITAN FIRE SERVICE



Stuart Macleod
Chief Officer
SA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

**REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD OF VOLUNTEERS
AND MFS RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS**

Agencies within the emergency services sector are responding to feedback that a growing administrative burden on volunteers and retained firefighters is impacting on the ability to retain volunteers. We wish to work with you to develop options to more effectively manage this situation, and in order to do this a review has been commissioned to consider your administrative workload.

The review is being led by Ms Suzy Williss of VLee HRM Consulting. Suzy is coordinating the process of gathering information and seeking feedback through conducting focus groups within the regions and developing a survey for completion by volunteers who are involved in administrative management.

The survey is attached for you to complete. **Please note** that the inclusion of your name is optional, however, it is really important for us to know which region you are part of, so please include this information. Hopefully you will find the survey fairly self explanatory, however if you have any questions in relation to completing the survey, please contact Suzy Williss direct on

0407 771 712 or via email on suzy@vleehrm.com.au .

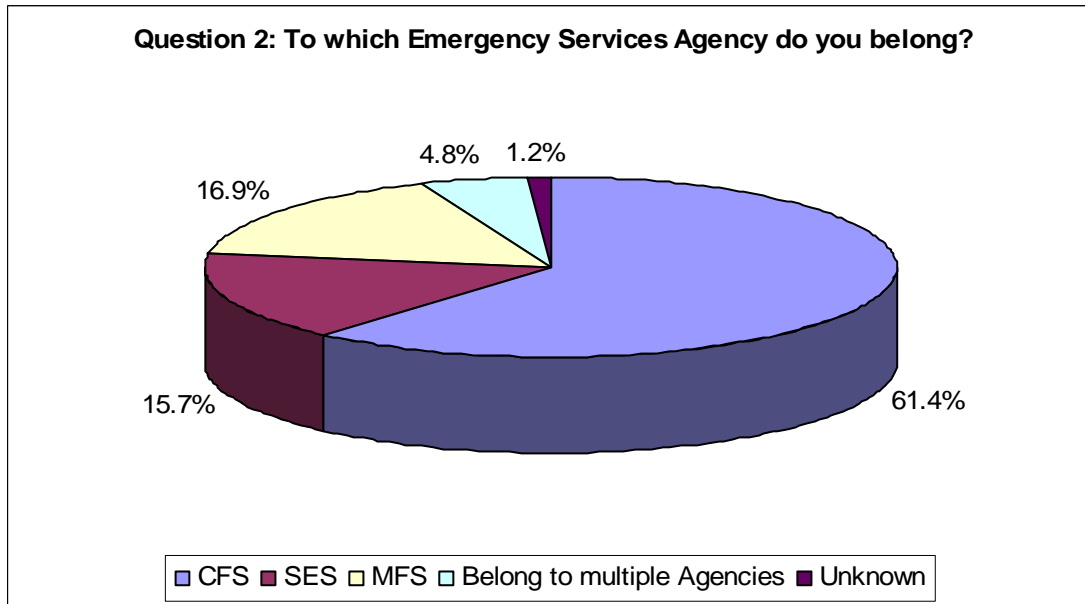
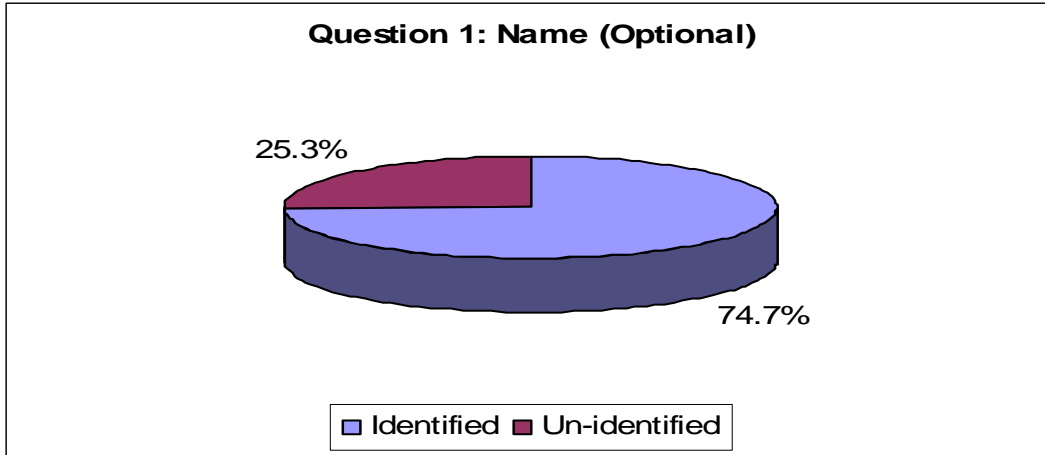
Once all the focus groups have been conducted and the results of the survey analysed, Suzy will provide a report to the Commissioner, SAFECOM. The report will provide recommendations and options for potential solutions to address the various issues relating to administrative workloads.

Please complete the survey and return it in the attached Reply Paid envelope **BY FRIDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2008.**

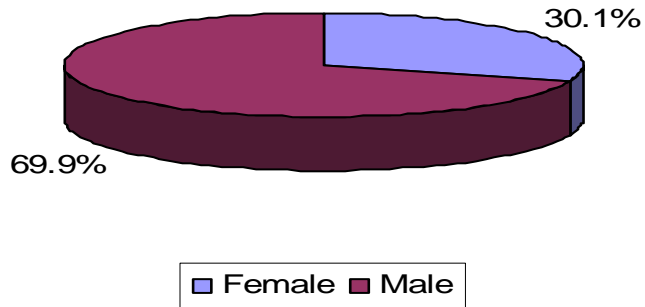
THANK YOU IN ANTICIPATION FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

Appendix 3

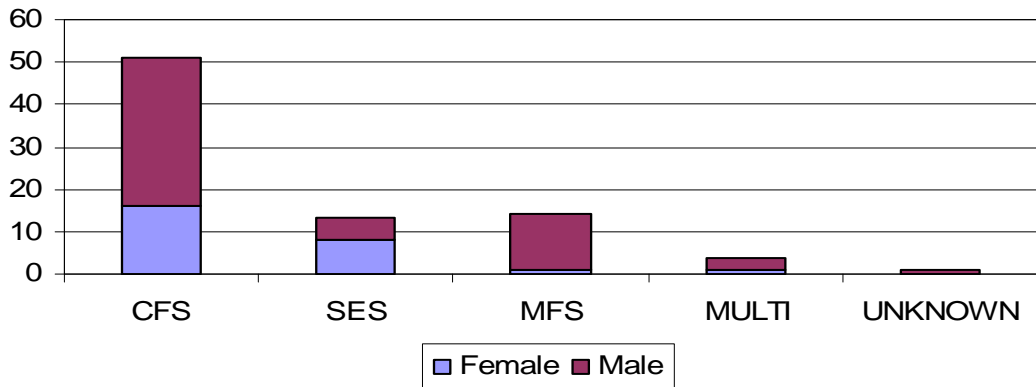
Key Survey Data Outcomes (83 Responses)



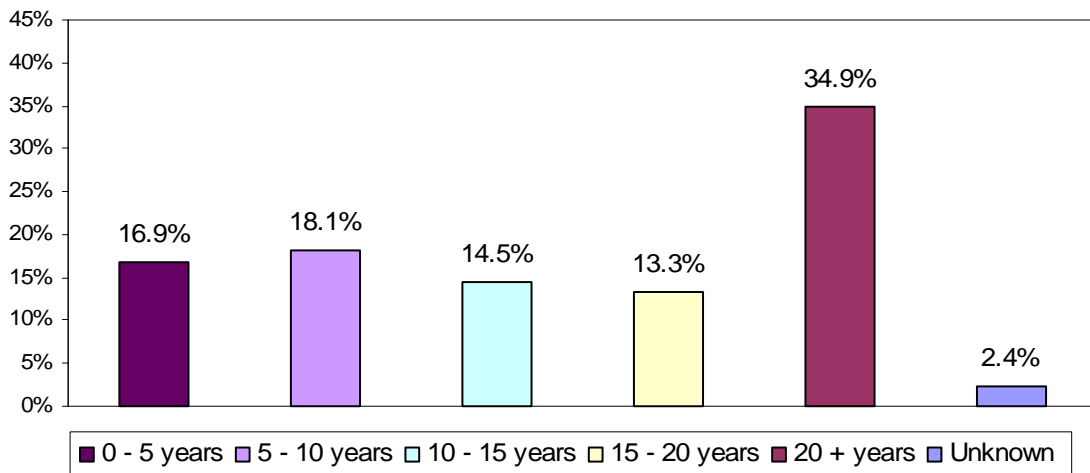
Question 5: What is your gender?

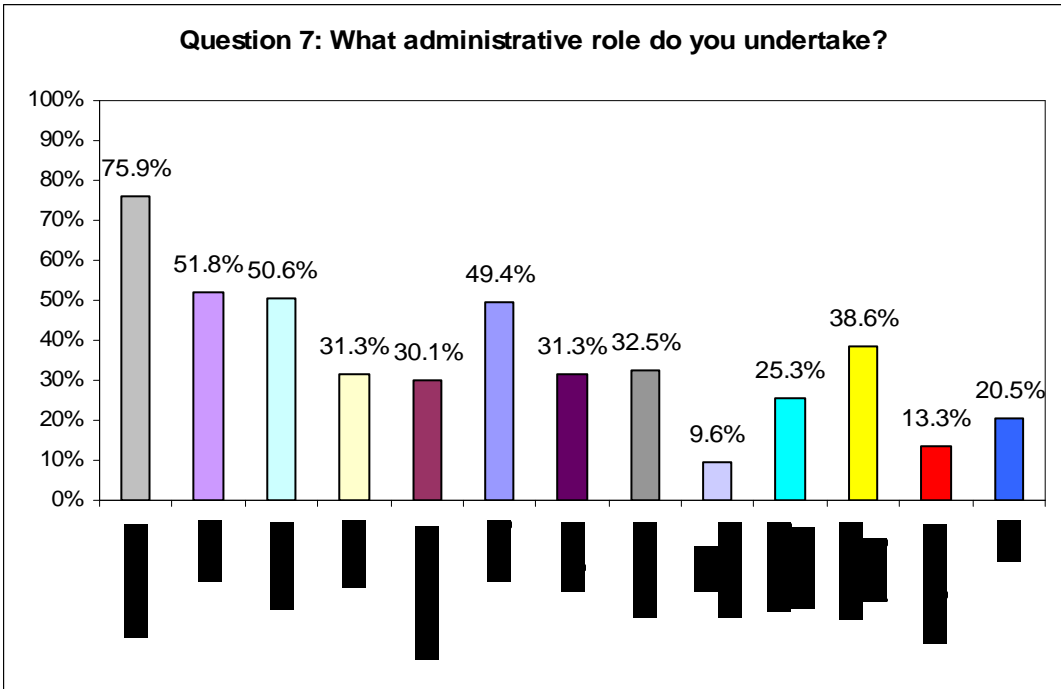
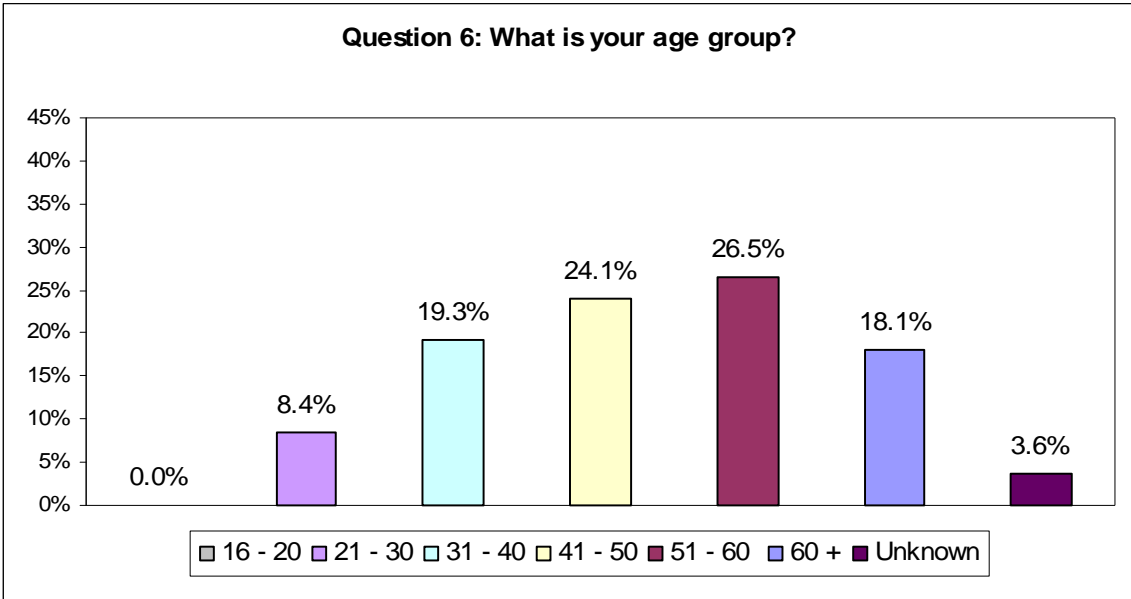


Agency by Gender

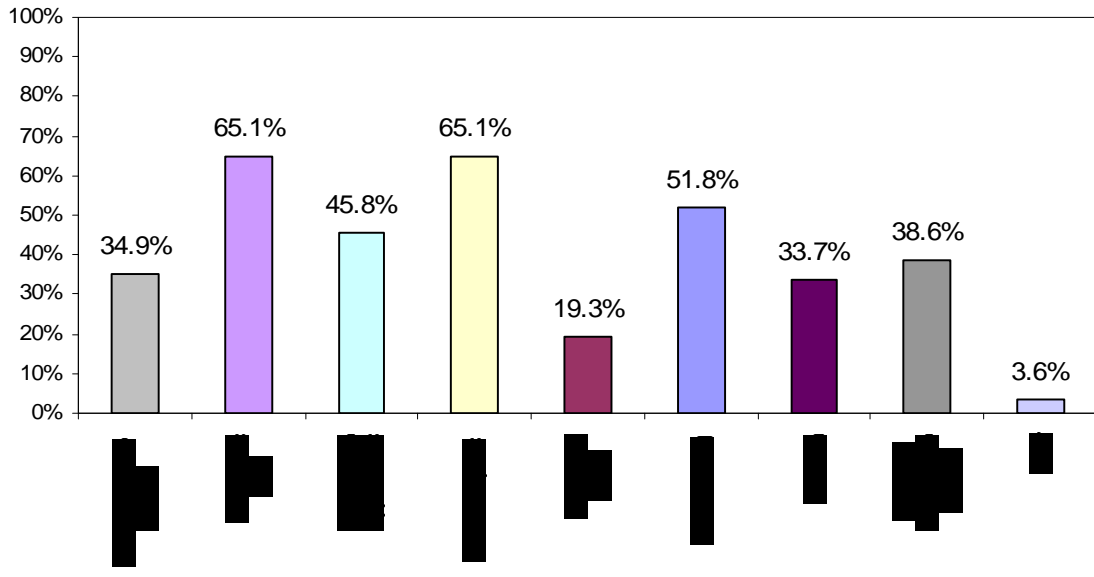


Question 4: How long have you been a Volunteer / Retained Firefighter?

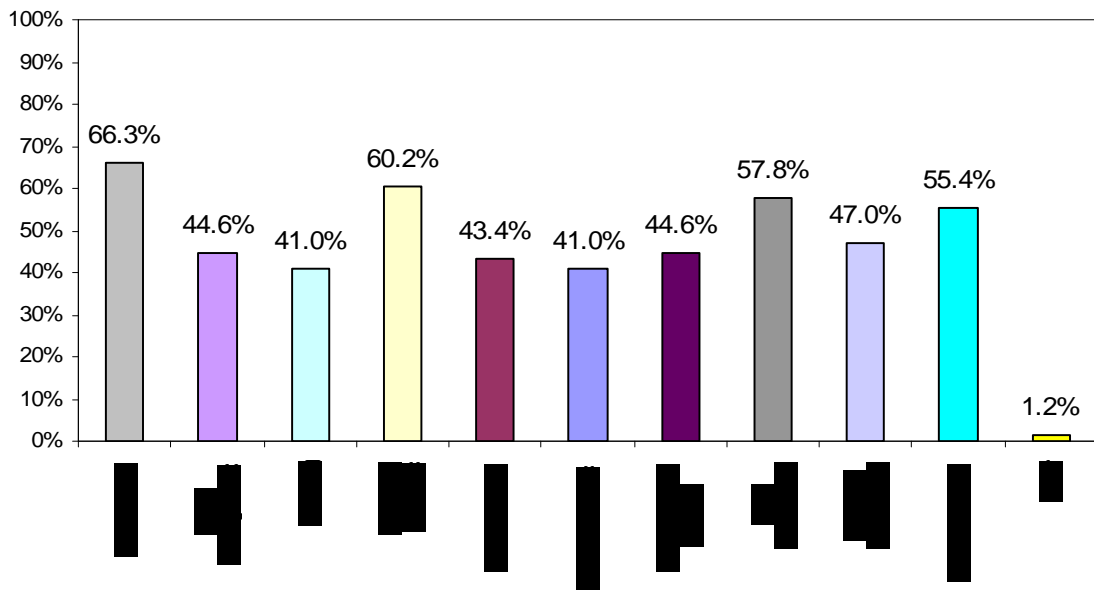


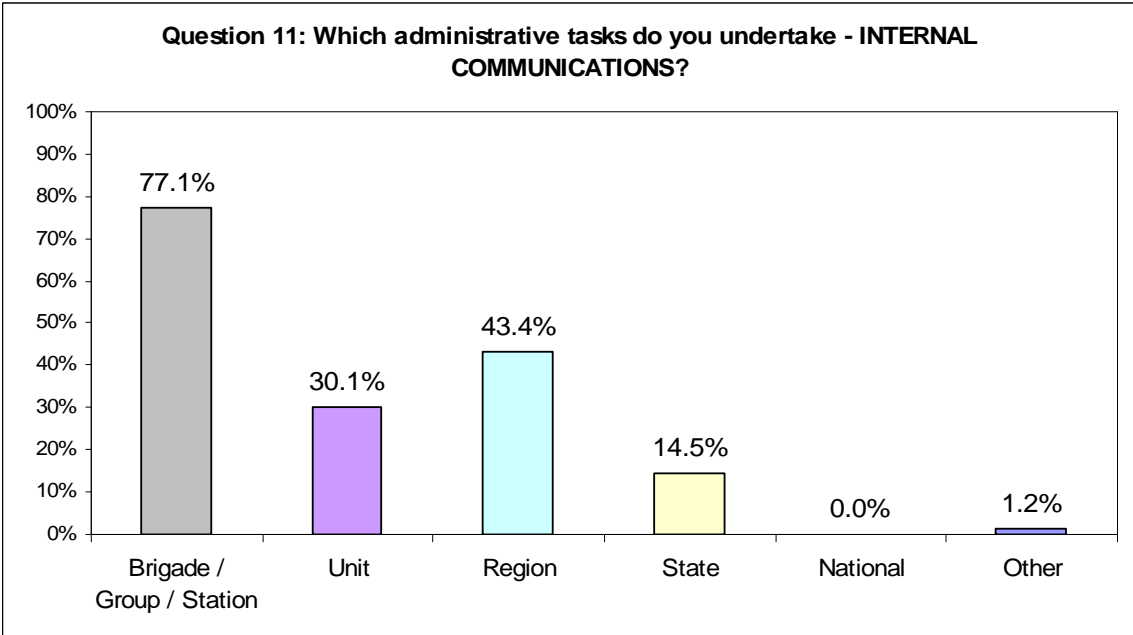
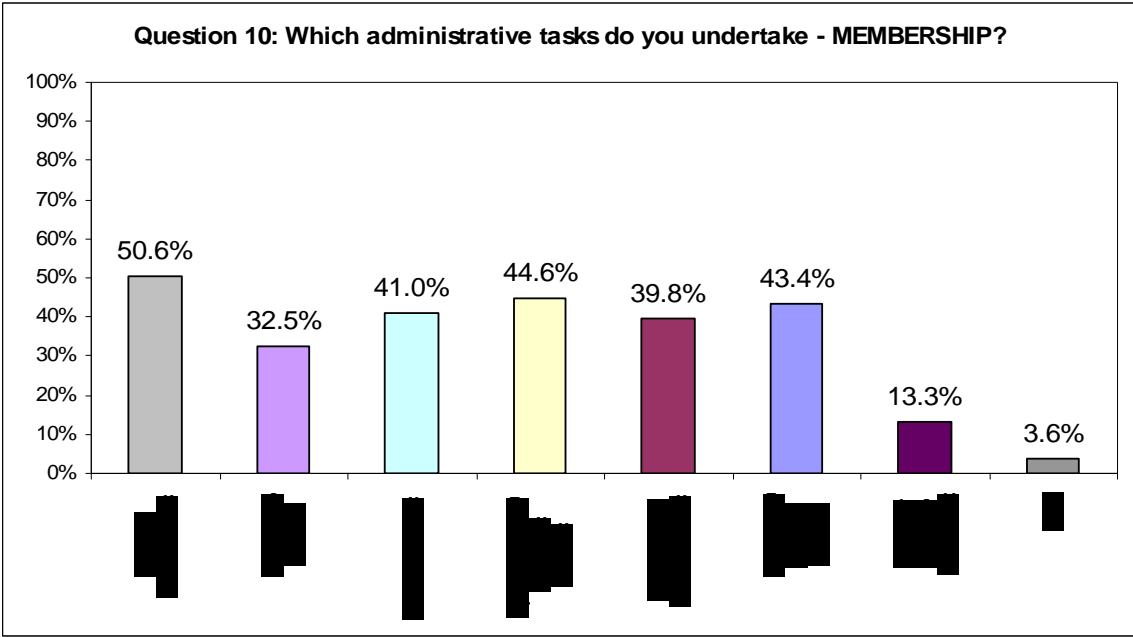


**Question 8: Which administrative tasks do you undertake -
CORRESPONDENCE?**

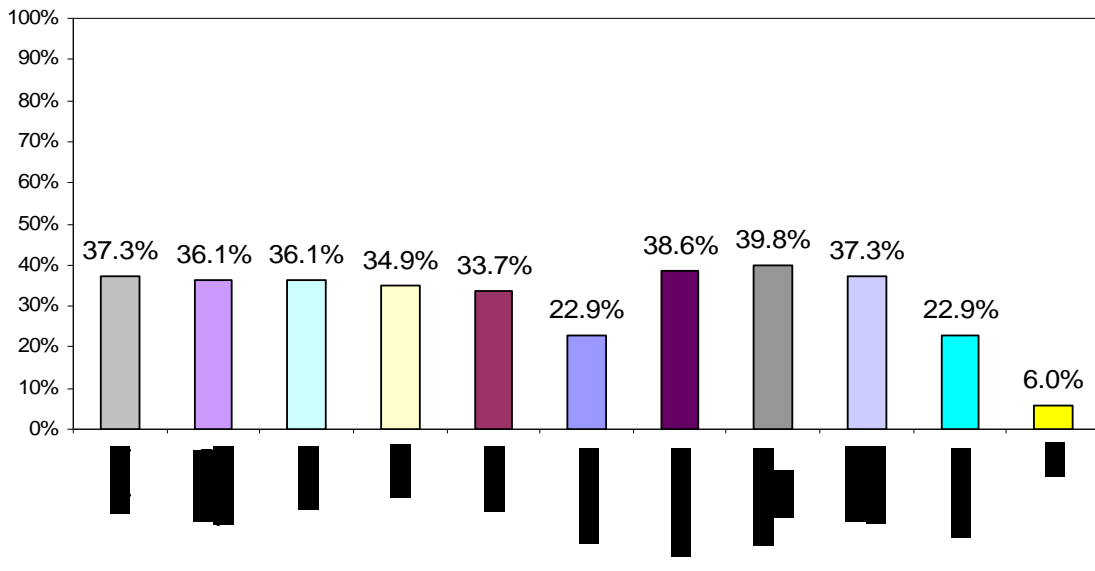


**Question 9: Which administrative tasks do you undertake -
MEETINGS?**

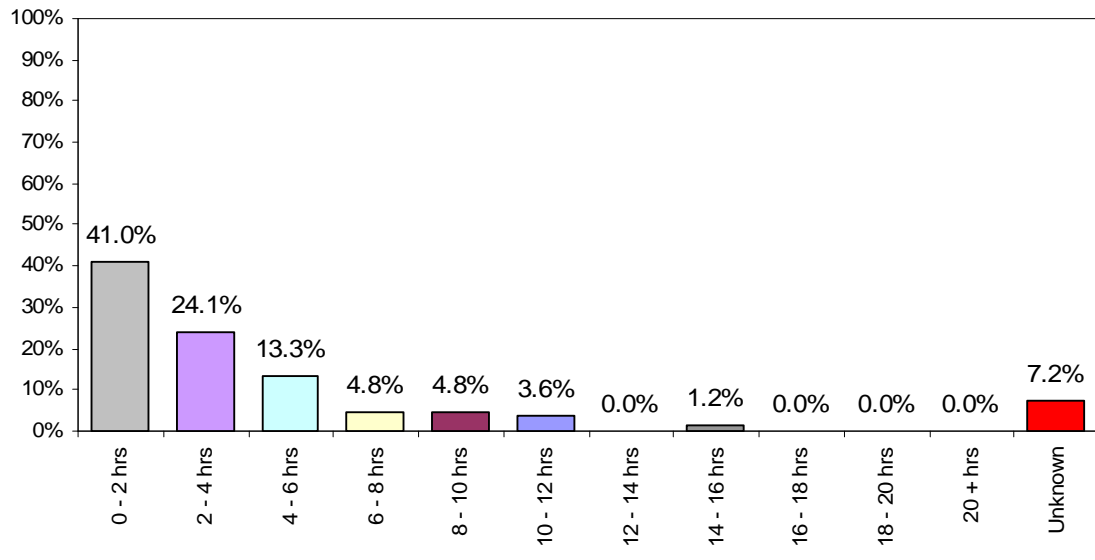


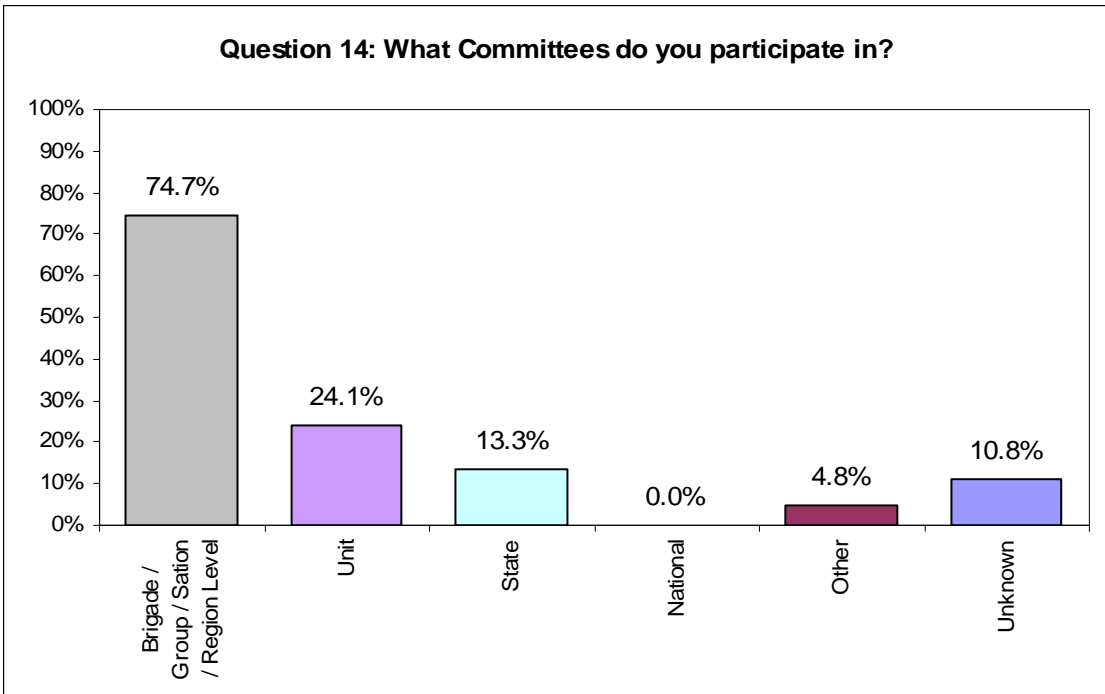
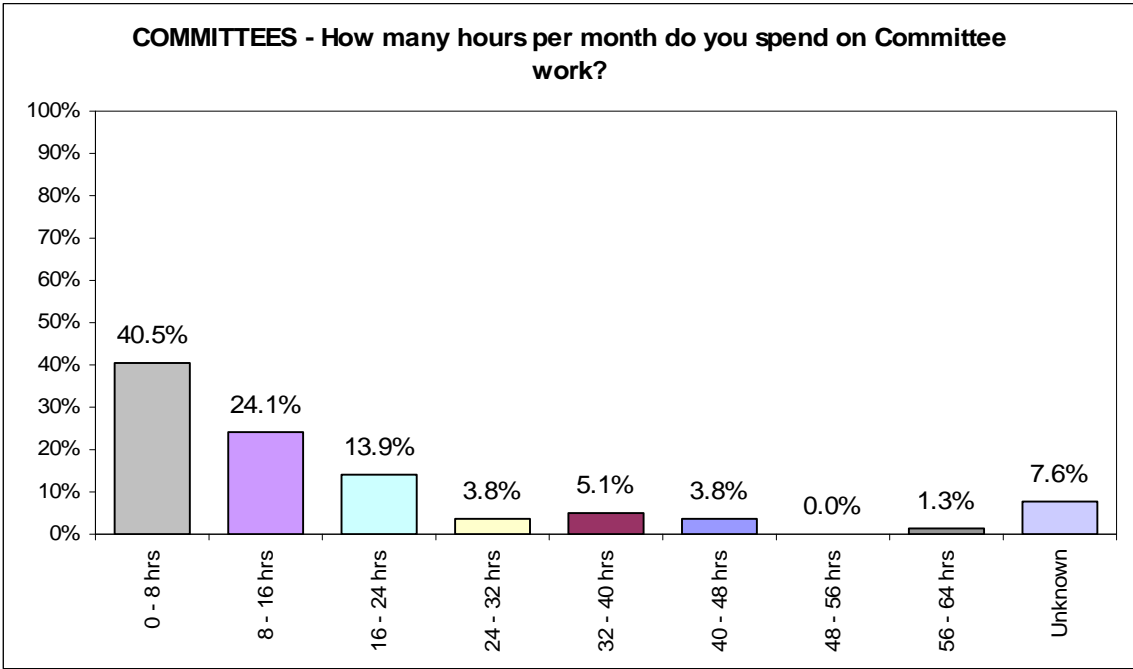


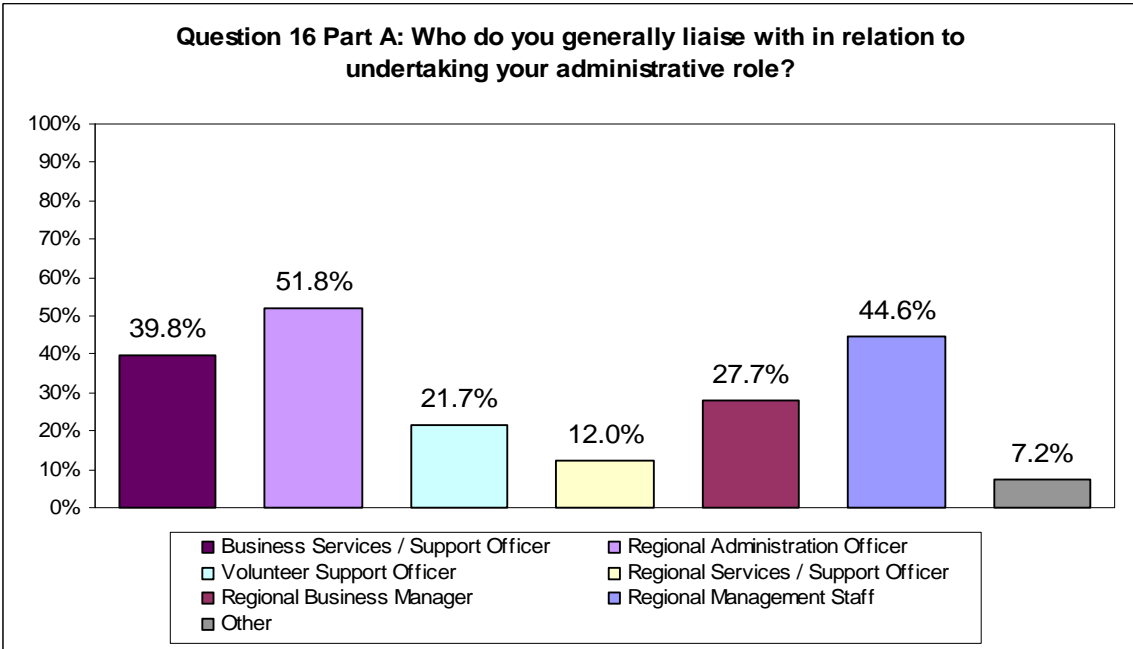
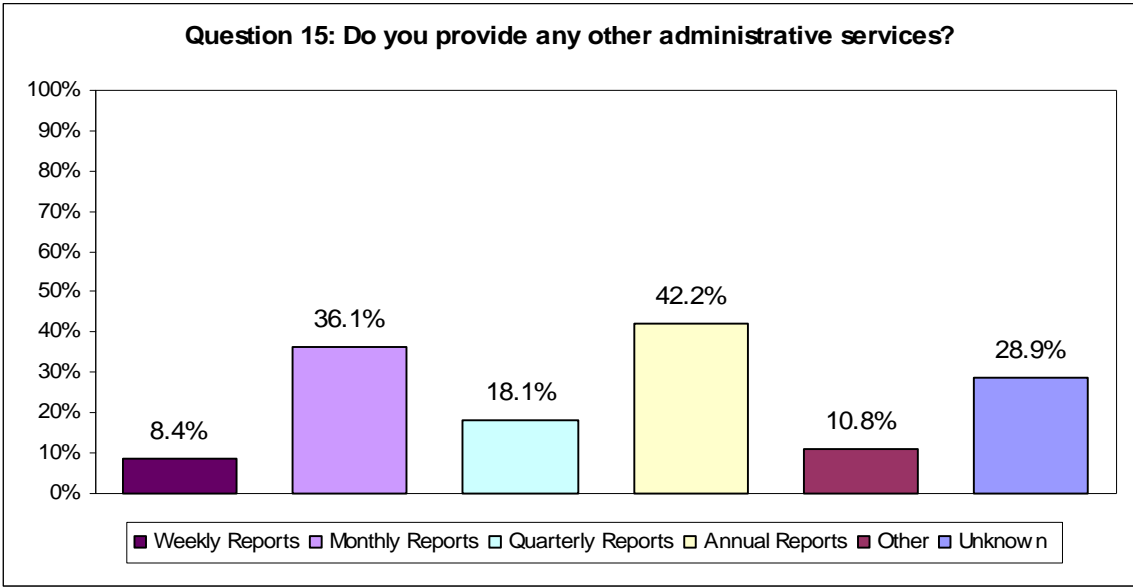
Question 12: Which administrative tasks do you undertake - FINANCE?



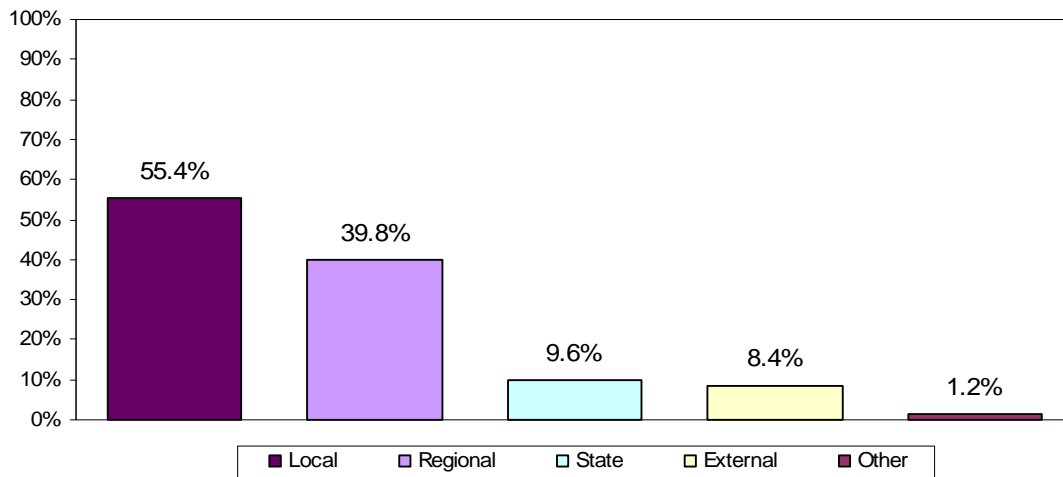
Question 13: COMMITTEES - How many hours per week do you spend on Committee work?



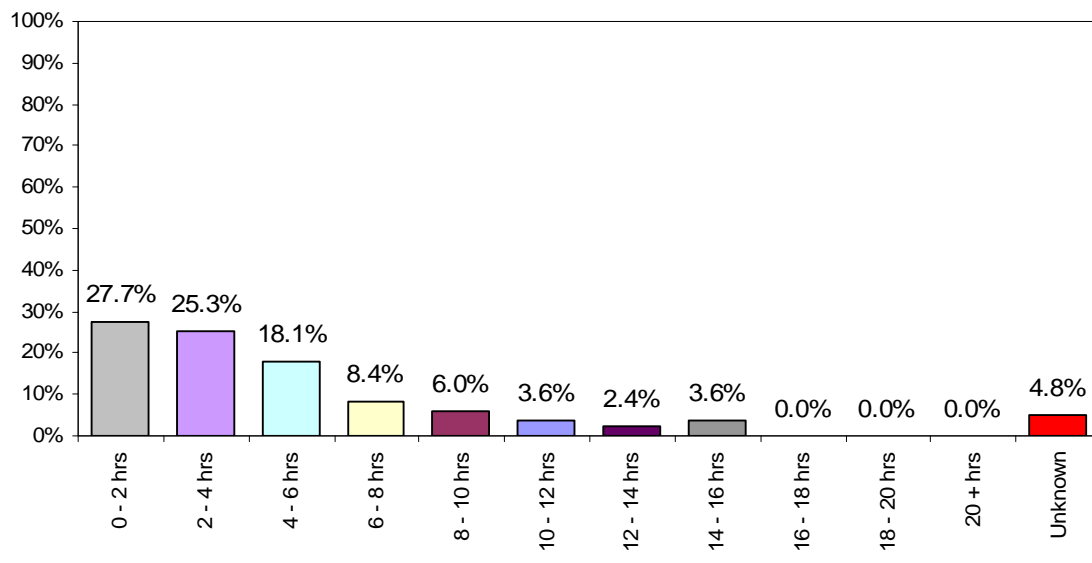


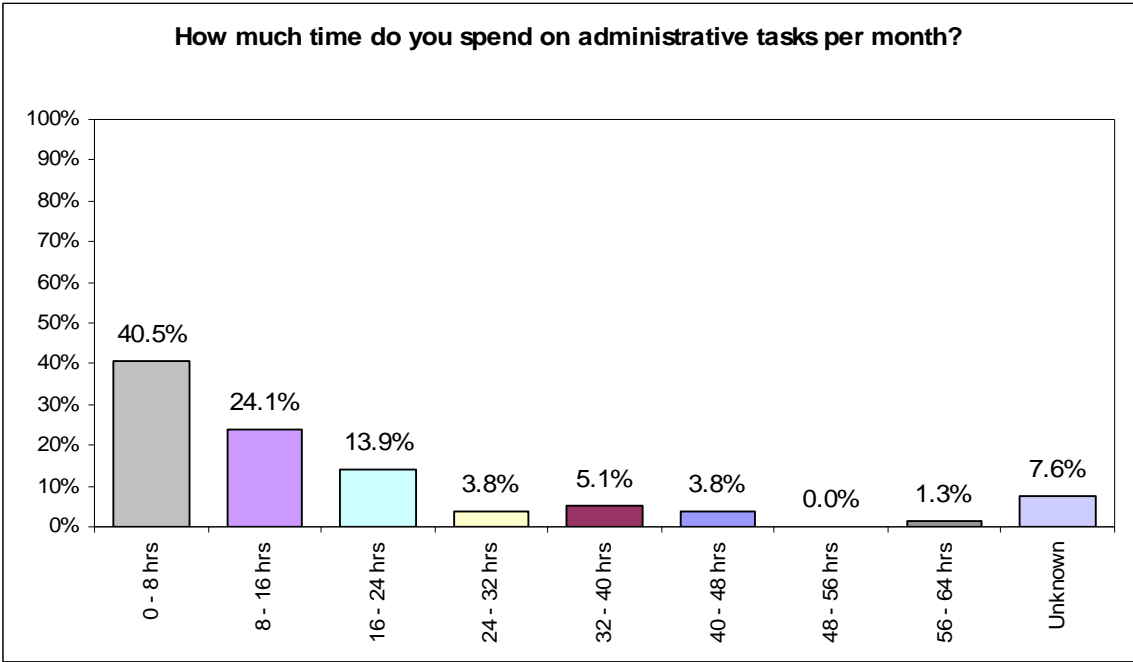


Question 16 Part B: What level do you generally liaise with to undertake your administrative role?

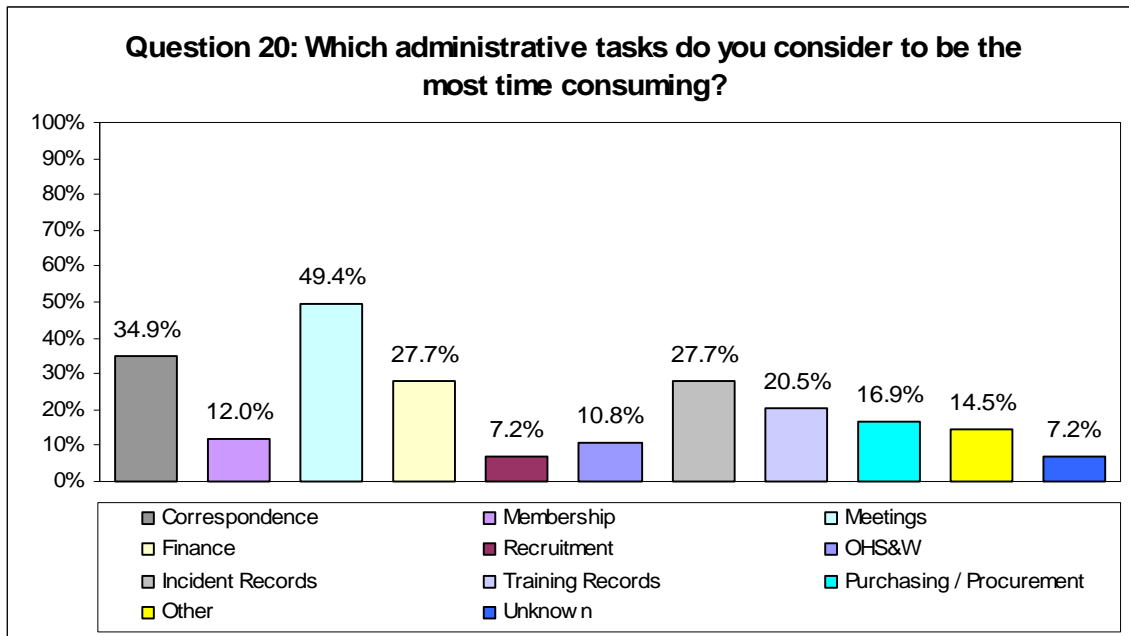
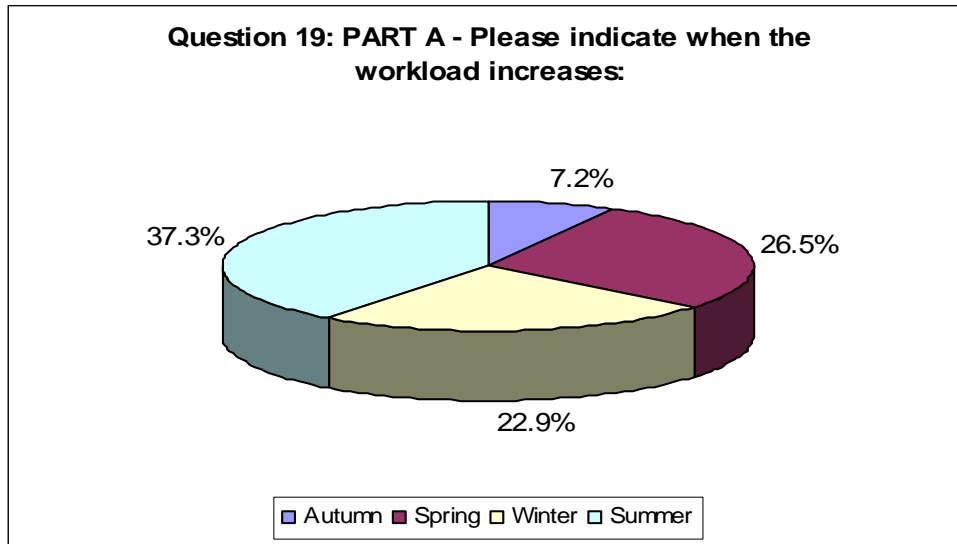


Question 17: How much time do you spend on administrative tasks per week?





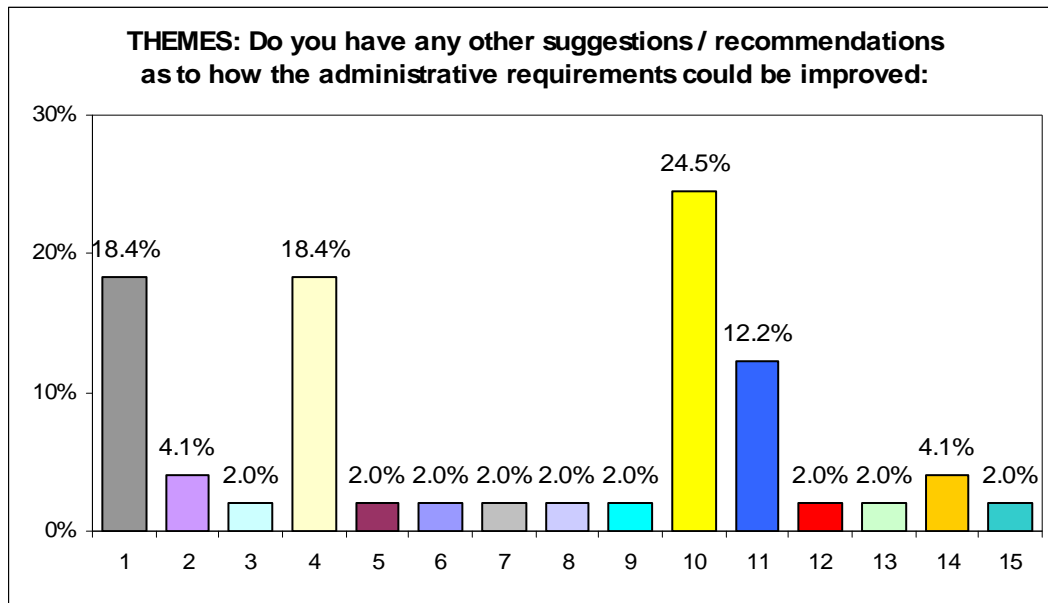
Question 18 - Does the administrative workload increase during specific periods of the year? 60.2% of respondents answered YES to this question.

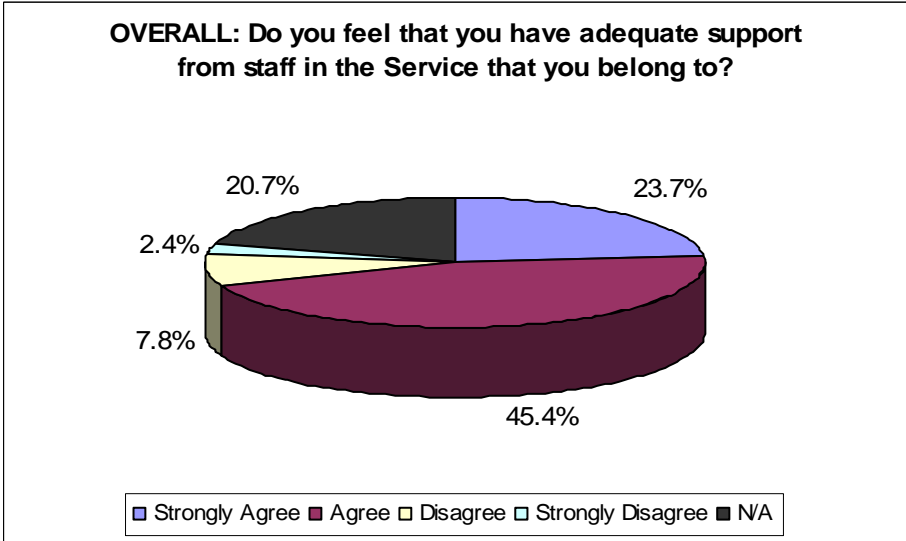
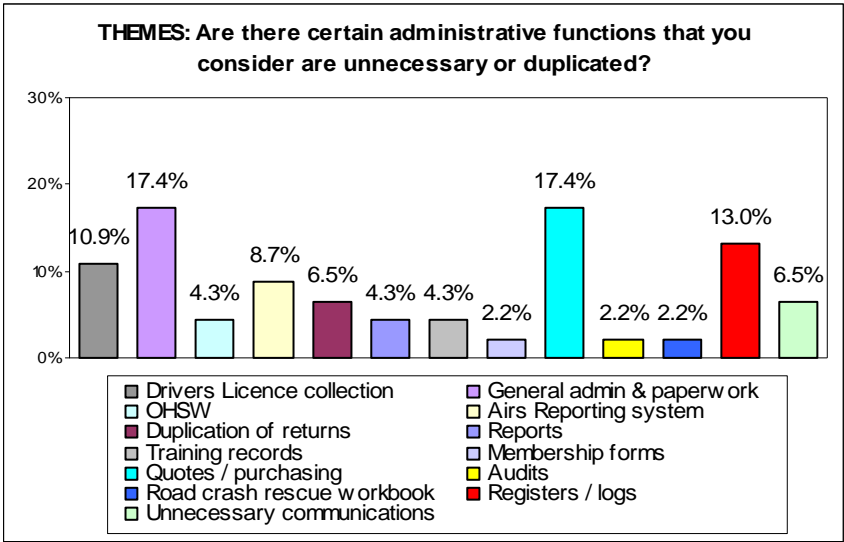


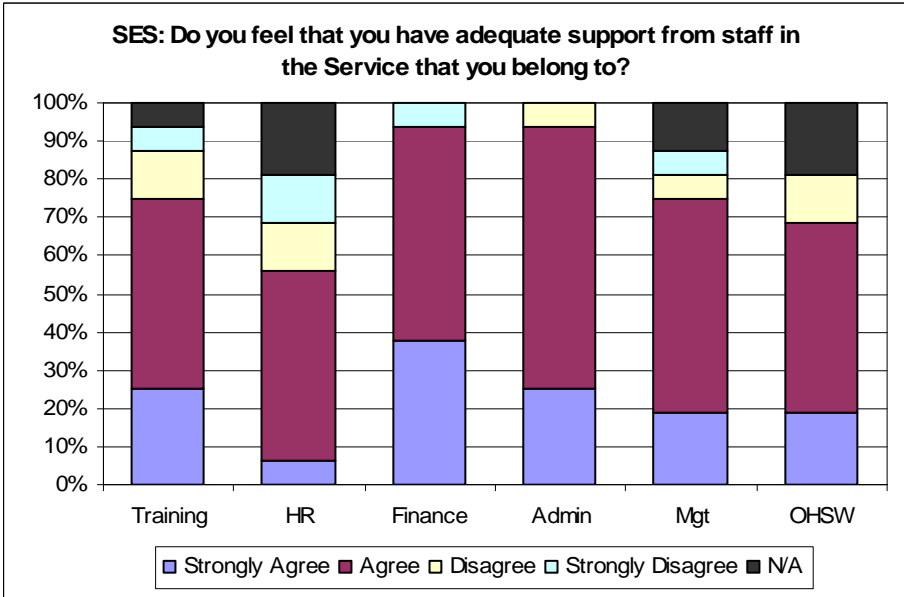
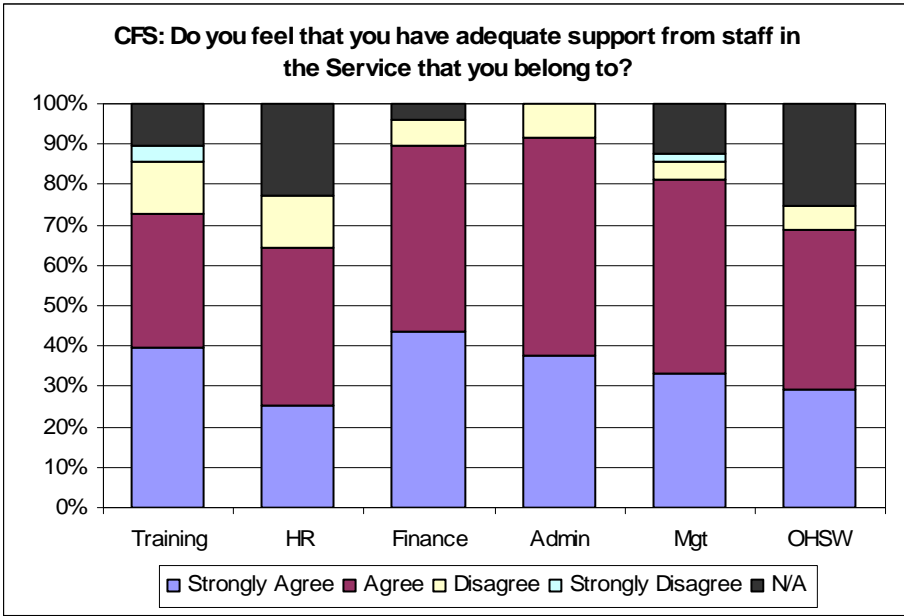
15	Timeframes are unrealistic	1	2.0%
		49	100.0%

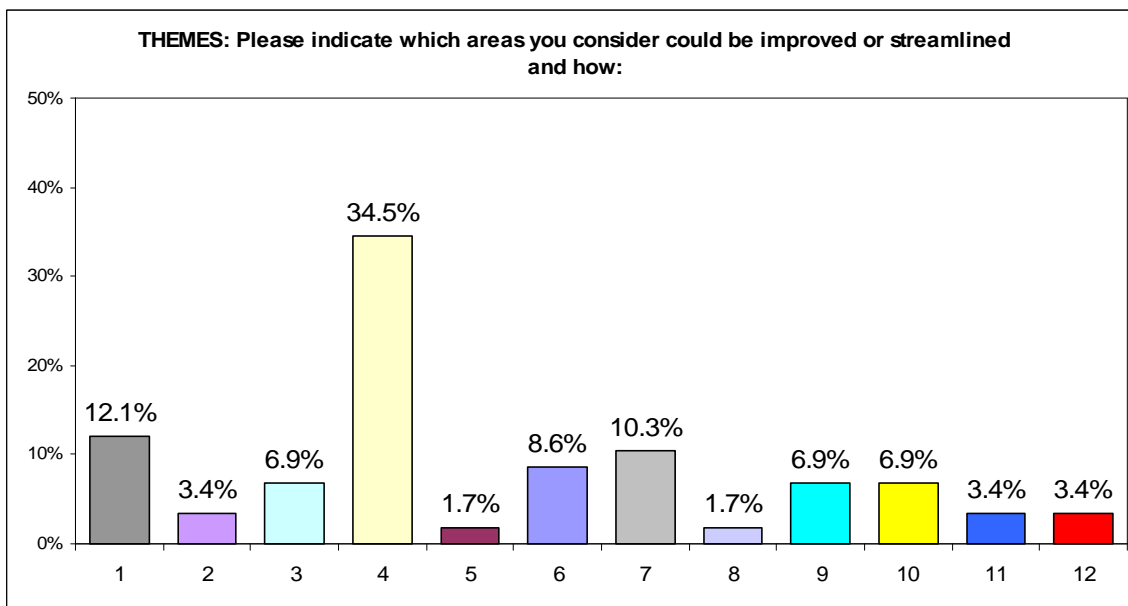
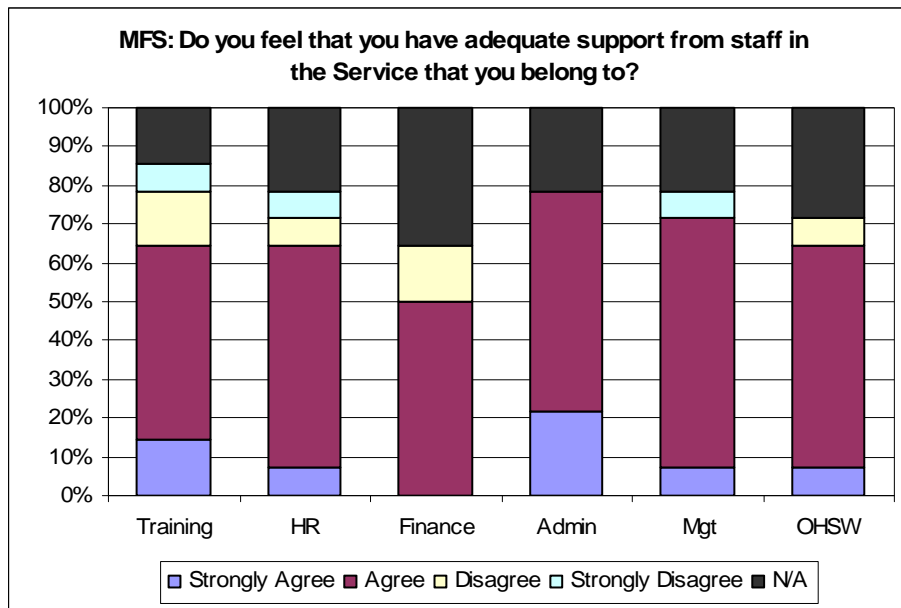
THEMES

Description	No. Responses	% of Total	% of Respondents
Drivers Licence collection	5	10.9%	15.2%
General admin & paperwork	8	17.4%	24.2%
OHSW	2	4.3%	6.1%
Airs Reporting system	4	8.7%	12.1%
Duplication of returns	3	6.5%	9.1%
Reports	2	4.3%	6.1%
Training records	2	4.3%	6.1%
Membership forms	1	2.2%	3.0%
Quotes / purchasing	8	17.4%	24.2%
Audits	1	2.2%	3.0%
Road crash rescue workbook	1	2.2%	3.0%
Registers / logs	6	13.0%	18.2%
Unnecessary communications	3	6.5%	9.1%
	46	100.0%	









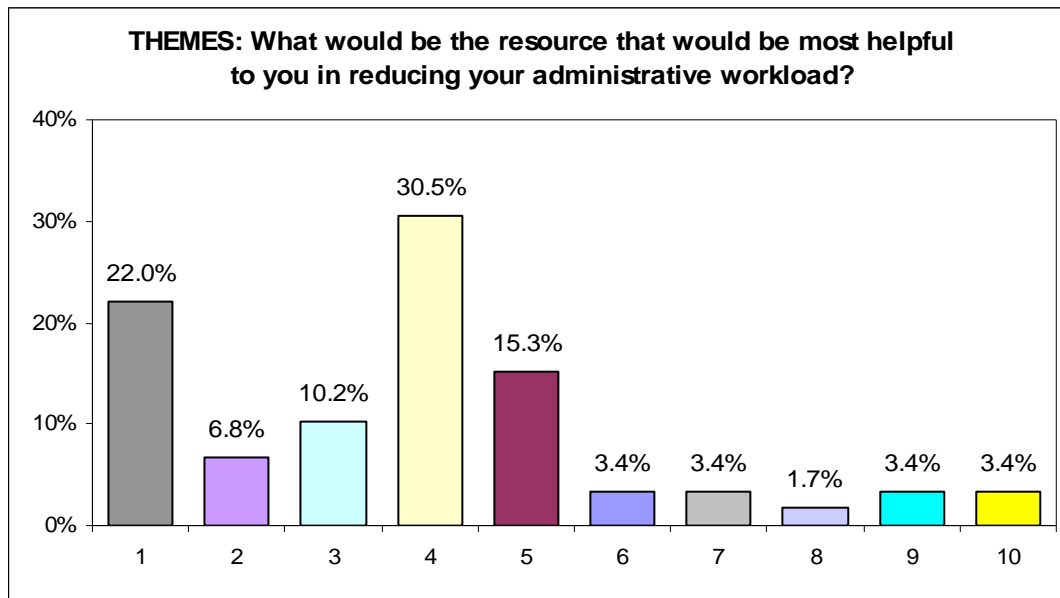
THEMES

No.	Description	No. Responses	% of Total	% of Respondents
1	Communications	7	12.1%	13.7%
2	General admin & paperwork	2	3.4%	3.9%
3	OHSW / WorkCover	4	6.9%	7.8%
4	Online forms / templates / reporting	20	34.5%	39.2%
5	Recruitment publicity	1	1.7%	2.0%
6	Reports	5	8.6%	9.8%
7	Training	6	10.3%	11.8%
8	Procedures	1	1.7%	2.0%
9	Purchasing	4	6.9%	7.8%
10	Paid staff / more Volunteers	4	6.9%	7.8%
11	Processing forms and	2	3.4%	3.9%

	standardisation			
12	Accessing information	2	3.4%	3.9%
		58	100.0%	

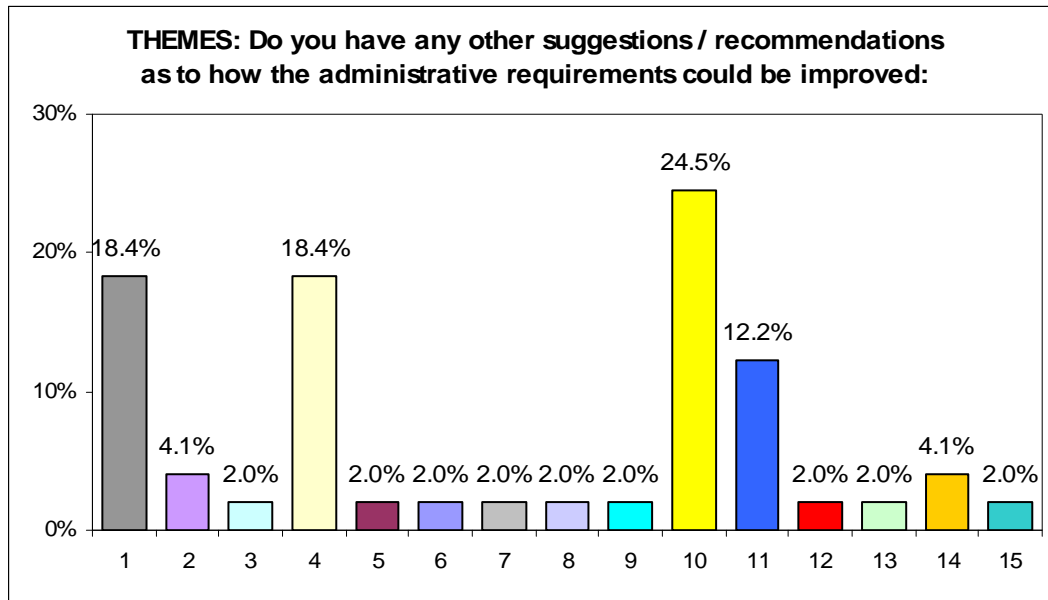
THEMES

NO.	Description	No. Responses	% of Total
1	Computer with high speed broadband & internet access	13	22.0%
2	Less paperwork	4	6.8%
3	Office equipment / laptop for home use	6	10.2%
4	Paid staff to do admin functions passed onto Volunteers	18	30.5%
5	Online forms / templates / reporting	9	15.3%
6	Efficiency by paid staff	2	3.4%
7	More training	2	3.4%
8	Less meetings	1	1.7%
9	Improve / reduce Annual Returns	2	3.4%
10	Policy makers need to think of impact on Volunteers	2	3.4%
		59	100.0%



Question 25 - Do you have any other suggestions/recommendations as to how the administrative requirements could be improved?

THEMES		
NO.	Description	No. Responses
1	More staff	9
2	Policy makers need to think of impact on Volunteers Volunteers should be treated the same as paid staff under	2
3	WorkCover	1
4	Less paperwork	9
5	More paid staff we get the bigger our workload gets	1
6	Budget information comes out too late	1
7	Travel long distances for meetings - vary location to ease burden	1
8	Since Government has taken over our work has tripled	1
9	More filing storage requiring a bigger station	1
10	Online reporting / communications	12
11	More training	6
12	More consultation and action on concerns	1
13	Should be asked not told	1
14	Happy with level of support and workload requirements	2
15	Timeframes are unrealistic	1



Appendix 4 - Draft Communication

Draft communication to be sent to volunteers and retained fire-fighters who participated in the project through focus groups and the survey

Dear

As you are aware, we recently commissioned a project to review the administrative workload of volunteers and retained fire-fighters across the emergency services sector.

We would like to thank you for making time to actively contribute to this project by attending a focus group or completing the survey. Your contribution has been invaluable to the project consultants in developing their findings and report.

The report will be considered by the Commissioner and Chief Officers within the next month and we will be communicating the outcomes to you as soon as possible after that.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact [\(Project Steering Group to determine appropriate contact person\)](#)

Yours sincerely,

David Place, Commissioner SAFECOM
Euan Ferguson, Chief Officer - CFS
Stuart Macleod, Chief Officer - SES
Grant Lupton, Chief Officer - MFS