

Emergency Services Reform Communiqué 2

Between June and August 2014, Minister for Emergency Services, Tony Piccolo has undertaken a series of roundtable discussions and site visits with key stakeholders within the Emergency Services Sector. This process is in response to the Holloway Review into the *Fire and Emergency Services Act, 2005* and to ensure the Emergency Service Sector is appropriately resourced into the future.

Organisations involved in the initial roundtables included representatives from:

- SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM)
- Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS)
- Country Fire Service (CFS)
- State Emergency Service (SES)
- South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS)
- South Australian Police (SAPOL)
- United Firefighters Union SA (UFU)
- CFS Volunteer's Association (CFSVA)
- SES Volunteer's Association (SEVA)
- Public Service Association (PSA)
- Police Association of South Australia (PASA)
- Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Ambulance Employee Association (AEA)
- SAAS Volunteer Ambulance Service.

At the first combined roundtable held at Parliament House on 12 June 2014, key guiding principles were agreed upon and circulated in a Reform Communiqué. The key principles included:

- One integrated organisation, delivering three services, with the ability to allocate resources and deliver a response on a state-wide basis, reflective of state-wide risks;
- Acknowledging the important role volunteers play in the sector;
- Maintaining the existing high level of frontline services (and increasing the opportunity for greater collaboration/cooperation); and
- Retaining a level of autonomy (and flexibility) at the local level for volunteers and ensure that they have representation at the highest level of decision making in any proposed sector reform.

Key principles were further discussed during roundtable discussions held in:

- The Riverland
- Port Augusta
- Clare
- Kangaroo Island
- Maitland
- Mount Gambier
- Port Lincoln
- Belair
- Hahndorf
- Noarlunga
- Mawson Lakes
- Gawler.

The Minister has also held individual discussions with Emergency Services staff (MFS, SES, CFS and SAFECOM) and their union/association representatives, and with the Volunteer Marine Rescue Council, SES Unit Managers Advisory Group, CFSVA and UFU.

During this period the Minister, Chief Officers/Chief Executive and the union/association representatives have visited over 30 units, brigades, stations and flotillas across the State, meeting with volunteers, retained officers and staff to discuss the reform and other local issues. Furthermore, the Minister has received 60 written submissions.

While SAAS and SAPOL are not expected to be part of any future model, they have been engaging in the process as one of the sector's key stakeholders. In particular, SAAS has previously undertaken a reform process involving both paid staff and volunteers and has valuable experience to contribute.

In his presentation, the Minister has clearly indicated the reform is not about reducing or amalgamating frontline services (brigades, stations or units), but a method of identifying duplication and inefficiencies and method by which to create opportunities and a sector structure that will deliver savings that can be reinvested back into frontline services, facilities, equipment, volunteer support and training.

To date, more than 1,500 people have engaged in the reform process. All roundtables and site visits have been well received with robust debate and valuable input provided into the sector reform.

On 14 August 2014, the Minister convened a second combined roundtable at Parliament House to provide key stakeholders with an overview of the consultation process to date, which will form the basis of a discussion paper. The discussion paper will capture ideas and concepts for consideration and will be circulated broadly for comment during late August/early September.

The Minister will be meeting with several interstate Commissioners and union and volunteer association representatives to learn about their emergency service models prior to developing a model suitable for South Australia's unique circumstances.

The next roundtable will be held in late September-early October once the sector has had the opportunity to respond to the discussion paper. This roundtable will comprise a broader stakeholder group. At this point a project team with key expertise will be established to develop concepts, establish working groups and consider implementation processes.

It is envisioned that recommendations about a sector model will be prepared for government consideration later this year. Should government agree to the model developed by the sector, implementation will be carefully managed to ensure it does not interfere with frontline services during the fire danger season, and will be phased in over one or more years.