

ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS 2015-16

Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Hon Adele Farina asked:

- (1) I refer to the Commissioner's Foreword and the reference to greater cooperation between fire agencies and ask:
- (a) What has been done in the past year to improve this and what specific measures have been taken in relation to each agency?

Answer: The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) has held events with the Department of Parks & Wildlife (P&W) immediately following the 2015/16 southern summer bushfire season and prior to the *Report of the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire* (Ferguson Special Inquiry) being released. These events were to continue discussions concerning interagency relationships and identifying where cooperation, joint processes and systems could be enhanced.

From these discussions and in line with Recommendation 8 from the Ferguson Special Inquiry, a two-day workshop was held between senior DFES and P&W personnel. The purpose of this workshop was to begin planning and development of state bushfire preformed Incident Management Teams (IMTs), to operate and be jointly staffed by P&W, DFES and include personnel from Local Government (LG), Volunteer Bushfire Brigades and DFES volunteer groups.

To meet the Ferguson Special Inquiry recommendations and opportunities, DFES, P&W and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) have been working collaboratively to develop state preformed bushfire IMTs. DFES and P&W have formed a working group that meets weekly to progress other consequential activities to support preformed IMTs such as common doctrine and financial management arrangements.

DFES and P&W are continuing to liaise with WALGA, LG Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Bushfire Control Officers (CBFCOs) to seek agreement and to allocate roles to LG volunteers and staff by 1 December 2016. DFES has also held a Level 3 Incident Control (IC) workshop which included attendance by P&W, WALGA, the Association for Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (AVBFB) and the Emergency Services Volunteer Association (ESVA), and others. DFES is working with P&W to arrange further familiarisation and pre-season training days for LG volunteers and operational staff.

DFES is also working with P&W to develop a new Incident Resource Management System (IRMS). This system has been recommended by a number of previous major incident reviews. The purpose of the IRMS is to enable the registration, tasking, tracking, management and coordination of emergency management personnel, vehicles, plant and aircraft. DFES is currently finalising system requirements and solution architecture and is targeting a 1 December 2016

rollout date for its interim enhancements. DFES and P&W will also undertake a review of the IRMS requirements post bushfire season and commence a nationwide review of other agencies systems to ensure Western Australia has a 'fit for purpose' system to effectively manage resources into the future.

DFES has been working closely with the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and P&W to ensure Ferguson Special Inquiry Recommendation 6 'Strategic Control Priorities' are reflected in Westplan Fire and inculcated within agency operational procedures and training regimes.

DFES is committed to working closely and cooperatively with P&W, WALGA and all volunteer groups and is continuing to identify and develop structures, processes and training to ensure all agencies are able to work together effectively during incidents.

(2) I refer to the Commissioner's Foreword and the reference to the recommendations from the Waroona inquiry, and ask:

(a) Why has the vehicle location equipment (AVL) not been fully installed yet when funding was supplied in the 2013/14 budget for crew protection and was supposed to be completed within 3 years?

Answer: The Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system is the final component of the comprehensive crew protection package funded over four years. It follows the resolution of appliance standards and the roll out of priority protective measures including heat resistant panels, curtains, lagging, blankets, in-cab air and deluge systems.

To deliver a robust outcome, DFES has worked through the very challenging technical and ICT architecture requirements as the AVL system must be:

- Future proof, in a rapidly changing communications network environment;
- Interface with the Department's incident mapping system;
- Interface with computer aided dispatch systems; and
- Interface with the Department's incident communications systems.

Original specifications for an AVL system were limited to a GPS device only however analysis of user requirements and in particular, the experience of firefighters, determined that greater benefit would be achieved by providing integrated distress alerting, as well as a contemporary AVL functionality such as allowing integration of mapping, inter-computer aided dispatch, enhanced situational awareness, fire ground data collection and inter-vehicle communications in the future.

(b) Even accepting that DPAW had a smaller fleet, its AVL installation is already completed. Why doesn't DFES undergo a joint procurement process with DPAW?

Answer: DFES identified specific operational needs, particularly in relation to crew protection aspects and a future expanded situational awareness capability, consequently a decision was made to source a fully supported "off the shelf" proven and demonstrable solution that could be deployed ahead of the coming fire season.

Both DFES and the Department of Parks and Wildlife's AVL systems will share and exchange data to allow all vehicles to be displayed on either system regardless of the fire status or incident stage.

DFES is obligated to adhere to State Supply Commission policies to test the market given rapid technological change to ensure fit-for-purpose and value for money outcomes.

- (c) How is it there has not been enough monies allocated to complete the process within the time frame of 3 years?

Answer: AVL is one component of the comprehensive suite of crew protection systems currently being installed in appliances in high risk bushfire areas. This program is currently funded through the Royalties for Regions fund.

DFES will be seeking funding assistance through the Mid-Year Review and the 2017-18 budget processes to install crew protection systems in all relevant emergency services appliances in the Perth metro area.

The fundamental reason for the need to expand the program to all areas is based on the premise that all personnel involved in an emergency response should be afforded the same level of safety and protection. Additionally, appliances from lower risk areas are deployed to assist with major incidents in higher risk areas.

- (d) How many appliances have been fitted to date and what are the locations of those still requiring installation?

Answer: The installation of AVL hardware into vehicles commenced in the Avon region to enable procedures to be documented across the range of appliances in the firefighting fleet. As at 7 October 2016 AVL equipment has been fitted to 38 vehicles in the Avon region.

By December 2016, the current schedule anticipates that AVL will be installed on over 700 DFES and local government firefighting appliances. An additional 200 portable AVL units will be available for ad-hoc vehicle deployment needs such as farm vehicles, contractors and local government heavy equipment.

- (3) I refer to Recommendation 12 of the above inquiry and ask:

- (a) What has been done to implement this recommendation;

Answer: DFES will be reviewing an Options Paper developed following a similar recommendation from the Keelty Review. DFES currently does not have the capacity to implement the recommendation as the safety concerns identified in the initial Options Paper require careful consideration.

- (b) what still needs to be done;

Answer: A number of actions are required to progress this recommendation including:

- Evaluation of the process used to establish 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort' in other states. Consideration of the suitability of the current policies in other States needs to be identified to establish guidance for future program management and developing a local policy approach.
- Undertake community consultation, education and engagement in all aspects of planning, design and operation of 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort'. This includes its purpose, operation, closure and transition processes, which needs to be discussed with stakeholders.
- Following an agreed approach, production of documentation for use by LGs setting out technical design and engineering criteria and other considerations to be applied in relation to site identification, fuel hazard assessment, and annual review guidelines to ensure compliance with a future 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort' policy.
- Planning and coordination for the activation and operation of 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort' at the local level involving the community in partnership with local government, agencies and emergency services. Systems and processes must be developed and be simple and easy to use to ensure local ownership and sustainability.
- Implementation of a Pilot Program to test the suitability of a proposed local policy approach including the construction of one or more trial 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort'.

(c) is a list of those places accessible to the public?

Answer: No, Western Australia does not officially have these facilities in place as SEMC did not endorse the Options Paper submitted by DFES in September 2013.

(d) What is the time frame for implementation?

Answer: Three (3) years is an approximate time frame, given the requirement for a thorough community consultation process. The three year time frame has been identified due to a variety of reasons:

- Previous learnings from the 2009 Black Saturday Fires Royal Commission Victoria. The first trial of Community Fire Refuges commenced in 2013. This past work has helped highlight the complexities and timeframes involved in implementing similar recommendations.
- Enable examination of the legal implications and any legislative requirements.
- Determine who will be responsible for enforcing/publishing the policy and guidelines – DFES, Department of Planning, and Department of Commerce through the building codes or LG.
- Obtaining the necessary human and financial resources to complete this as a project.
- Substantial time required and the importance of consulting with other Government agencies, LGs and the community. As an example, the Policy and Planning Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas took over a year of consultation from the release of the 2014 drafts to the final versions in December 2015.
- A draft policy is required mid-way through the project to enable further consultation/development.

- Capacity for the organisation and personnel to progress actions given the amount of work underway on other Ferguson Recommendations.

A full evaluation of a Pilot Program with constructed 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort' should occur post implementation. An evaluation will require circumstances to arise where 'Places of Bushfire Last Resort' are utilised, specifically a bushfire event.

(4) I refer to Recommendation 13 of the above inquiry and ask:

- (a) The issue of ID cards has been a live issue for many years and the subject of discussion in previous inquiries, why has it taken so long to progress?

Answer: The Ferguson Report recommendation to issue identification (ID) cards follows consideration of the difficulties volunteers experienced at vehicle control points attempting to access restricted areas during the incident. Other issues around supporting and feeding volunteers who self-mobilised during the incident were also raised.

A number of challenges impeded the introduction of ID cards including the varying views of Brigades/Groups and Units (BGU) within the Emergency Services sector of the intended outcomes of an ID card concept; resolution of data quality issues particularly for those volunteer BGU for which DFES is not the legislated responsible agency (for example Local Government Bush Fire Brigades) and differing views of accountable authorities for the volunteer sectors.

The Ferguson Report provides the impetus to progress this concept and DFES has consulted with Local Governments seeking their support for DFES to advance this project for their Bush Fire Brigades. DFES has also sought feedback and support from Volunteer Associations for joint collaboration to progress this project as a priority.

DFES proposes to address the issuing of ID cards in two phases:

- **Phase I** issuing cards to metropolitan volunteers as well as those volunteers in the high priority/risk regions in the south west geographic area (Great Southern, Lower South West, South West and Goldfields) prior to the 2016-17 bushfire season; and
- **Phase II** will be the delivery of a sustainable and fully resourced arrangement for issuing cards across the remaining workforce and for the ongoing maintenance of the cards to be facilitated by a third party provider.

(5) I refer to Recommendation 15 of the above inquiry and ask:

- (a) The state government recently indicated this would either be an independent standalone agency or a division of DFES. Has the department been asked to provide any costings or a possible structure plan for either scenario?

Answer: DFES has not been asked to provide any costings or a possible structure plan for either an independent standalone agency or a division of DFES. DFES was represented on the structural working group relating to this recommendation. DFES is continuing to work closely with all major stakeholders to ensure any outcome, when it has been determined, improves service delivery and is accepted

by the community. There are risks and benefits of each structural option which may be considered and the establishment of any Rural Fire Service model would require major administrative, legislative, operational and regulatory change and significant investment, hence it is important that all issues are identified, understood and then carefully considered to recognise the priority demands on resources during bushfire seasons.

- (b) If a separate body were to be formed, how many existing DFES FTEs are principally dealing with rural fire issues and should transfer to the new body?

Answer: Until the nature of the resulting structure and its responsibilities are determined, this cannot be addressed.

- (6) I refer to Page 9 of the Annual Report and the deployment of DFES personnel in the Great Southern and ask:

- (a) Following the Esperance major incident have plans been put in place to increase personnel in the Great Southern?

Answer: No. However during an incident, personnel can be deployed to the affected area to supplement local resources if required. This includes the use of the State Wide Operations Response Division.

- (b) Has this occurred and, if not what are the impediments?

Answer: Refer to (6) (a) above.

- (c) Has any estimate been of the optimal number of increase for the Great Southern region and the costs thereof?

Answer: No. The Reframing Rural Fire Management: Report of the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire has made a recommendation for the formation of a Rural Fire Service. When the State Government considers how to implement this recommendation, the staffing model/levels will be determined as a component of the establishment of the Rural Fire Services.

- (7) I refer to Page 16 of the Annual Report and ageing communications technology and I note that two high priority requirements for DFES are 400 MHz compliance and replacement of its ageing Computer Aided dispatch system and ask:

- (a) What is the cost of this?

Answer: The 400MHz compliance project is being run in coordination with other emergency services agencies in Western Australia under direction of the Australian Communications Media Authority, the Federal regulatory body. Channel allocations have been agreed in the area referred to as the Harmonised Government Spectrum in the 400MHz range. Radio infrastructure requires some upgrading in both metropolitan and regional areas, all fixed and mobile radios will be reprogrammed over two years and radio users provided with transition training and support. The cost has not yet been finalised but was estimated at \$1.95 million in February 2016. Internal reviews and approvals are planned to be completed in November allowing activity to commence in December 2016.

The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system used by DFES comprises two systems – one is a legacy system used by the State Emergency Service (SES) and the other is used for all other emergency response needs. Both systems were bespoke developments and cannot be efficiently enhanced. A detailed review and evaluation of the CAD system recently deployed by WA Police was conducted earlier this year. It is a commercially available and supported system that caters for all emergency services' needs.

In principle support has been provided by Cabinet which acknowledges the benefits to interoperability performance between WA Police and DFES with funding subject to Cabinet deliberations.

- (b) What problems are there with the existing system and how long will it take to install a new system?

Answer: With respect to radios, the existing radio channel allocation was open to both private and public users, with routine channel interference resulting where adjacent channels were in use. Incidents that escalate typically see increased radio traffic with resultant congestion slowing or impeding emergency response and coordination. The shift to the Harmonised Government Spectrum has been managed collaboratively by the emergency services sector with channel allocation designed to minimise interference. As it is imperative that all groups of radio users at an incident understand and correctly use new channels, it will take two years to coordinate the transition and manage the change for all DFES radio users to the new channel allocations.

The current CAD system is a bespoke system that is written using software that is no longer commercially supported, is based on a data model that can no longer efficiently accommodate changes to business processes, is time consuming and expensive to integrate with new solutions. Technical specialist support is in place to ensure ongoing capability while the implementation of the new CAD is being progressed. The new CAD system is planned to be operational in 2018-19.

- (8) I refer to Page 21 of the Annual Report and Direction 4, Valuing Volunteers

- (a) Given that a consistent finding from major incident reviews is that volunteers have been very vocal about the lack of respect shown by DFES personnel and of the failure to call upon local knowledge and expertise, how does the volunteer sustainability strategy address those issues?

Answer: Feedback has already been sought from volunteer groups and this collaboration will continue to fulfil the Strategy's aims of being collaborative and inclusive. DFES acknowledges that the recruitment and retention of volunteers is a critical success factor and any loss of volunteers is costly. Given this, DFES is committed to the next steps of the Strategy by progressing the redevelopment of the volunteer portal. The roll out of the Train the Trainer Volunteer Leadership program has already been completed.

The core of the Strategy provides a consultative and coordinated approach to ensure emergency services volunteers are recruited, developed and managed in a

way that provides measurable change and improvement in recruitment and diversity; a decrease in resignations and importantly, increased local community involvement, knowledge and expertise.

Apart from critical forward planning to ensure an ongoing competent volunteer workforce, one of the key elements of the Strategy is continuing the collaboration with local volunteers to take into account regional areas and their specific issues.

(9) I refer to Page 26 of the Annual Report and the Bushfire Risk Management Program and ask:

(a) What local governments participated in the Bushfire Risk Management program in 2015-2016 and which local governments will take part in 2016-2017?

Answer: In 2016-17 DFES is continuing to support and resource the following sixteen Local Governments from 2015-2016 with “high bushfire risk and limited capacity”, to develop their Bushfire Risk Management Plans (BRMPs):

- Nannup, Boyup Brook, Donnybrook-Ballingup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Augusta-Margaret River, Collie, Jerramungup, Boddington, Ravensthorpe, West Arthur, Woodanilling, Irwin, Northampton, Carnamah, Beverley and Chittering.

A further twenty-two Local Governments with “high bushfire risk but with some capacity to develop their BRMP’s” have been offered training and support in 2015-16 and 2016-17 to adopt their own BRMP process, being:

- Cities of Busselton, Bunbury, Albany, Mandurah, Cockburn, Rockingham, Swan, Wanneroo, Armadale and Gosnells; and
- Shires of Manjimup, Capel, Dardanup, Denmark, Wagin, Coorow, Toodyay, York, Gingin, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Kalamunda and Mundaring.

DFES’ BRMP Program will continue to support the thirty-eight Local Governments identified above. Additional funds have been requested to expand the program to offer training and support to a further nine Local Governments with “high bushfire risk but with some capacity to develop their BRMPs” in adopting their own BRMP process, being:

- City of Greater Geraldton;
- Shires of Harvey, Murray, Waroona, Plantagenet, Esperance, Dandaragan and Northam; and
- Town of Kwinana.

(10) What is the cost to train a career fire-fighter recruit at the Academy?

Answer: The direct cost to train a career firefighter recruit at the Academy is approximately:

- Metropolitan firefighter recruits - \$55,000
- Country firefighter recruits - \$71,000

This direct cost comprises the following elements:

- Wages – Trainee Firefighters

- Allowance for meals and accommodation for country recruits
- Additional instructors (and provision for overtime, 11.15 FTE per period of school)
- Personal protective equipment and breathing apparatus
- Initial on-station requirements – on-station kit, uniforms and footwear
- Events/Graduation ceremony

Other indirect costs for firefighter recruit training include:

- The use of Academy premises, training props and relevant assets and equipment including appliances and Road Crash Rescue vehicles/tools
- LPG gas for hot fire training
- ICT equipment and stationery allocation
- Cost of training compliance
- Permanent Academy staff involved in trainee firefighter schools include (but are not limited to):
 - Superintendent Operational Delivery
 - Specialist Instructors and District Officers (eg Driver Training and Bushfire; Breathing Apparatus and HAZMAT; Rescue and First Aid; Urban Structure and Communications; Natural Hazards and Volunteer Marine Rescue Services)
 - Administrative support
- Corporate support.

(11) I refer to Page 114 and the reference to mitigation and ask; if it is possible to separate the costs of prevention from the costs of mitigation, what is the cost of mitigation alone?

Answer: DFES provides Western Australia with an integrated multi-hazard emergency service capability consequently it is not possible to separate the cost of bushfire prevention and mitigation from DFES' total outlays on prevention and mitigation services.

(12) In reference to response to 000 calls and complaints that Eastern States operators do not have up-to-date street information for new developments, which creates confusion and delay – what is being done to address this issue?

Answer: Calls made to 000 are all received initially at Telstra's 000 Emergency Call Centres on the east coast. Basic information is collected such as the town or suburb and type of service required to allow the call to be directed to the correct state and emergency service organisation. There is no requirement for mapping at the Emergency Call Point level. The Telstra operator redirects the 000 call to the requested service and does not release the call to the emergency service and disconnect until they are certain the call has been answered.

The DFES Computer Aided Dispatch system automatically receives locational data in 000 call transactions and this data is linked to mapping products provided every three to four months by the Western Australian mapping agency Landgate. There are isolated times where development may exceed Landgate data collection. DFES 000 call taking staff often refer to other mapping products for additional information to assist emergency responders.

With the planned replacement of the dispatch system, DFES will be able to further improve its service by using the modern dispatch system deployed by WA Police on 4 October 2016.

- (13) Will the Department provide a list of scheduled capital works planned for the next five years?

Answer: The DFES Budget Papers for 2016-17 reflect scheduled capital works in the forward estimates period in Attachment A. Any capital works projects beyond the forward estimates period are subject to future budget processes and Cabinet deliberations.

- (14) I refer to Page 143 and the reference to diversity and ask, what is the representation of CALD background career fire-fighters currently employed?

Answer: As at 30 June 2016, there were 1,117.8 career firefighters and 21 firefighters identify as being from a CALD background, representing 1.9%.