

Strategic Reform Agenda(SRA)**(Suggestion Box Submission)**

Dear Sir/Madam

I attended the first of the round table meetings on Wednesday 18th of January 2017 and from this got an idea of how to make suggestions through the suggestion box, by answering three main questions.

What do I want to keep?

What do I want to improve?

What do I want to add?

Because the only clear agenda, that I can see, of the SRA is to reform Comcen (remove fire fighters on the 01 July 2017) I will address my suggestions to this matter. To qualify my statements, I have been a Comcen operator for 4 years and a Comcen Supervisor for 5 years for ACTFR.

What do I want to keep?

I want to keep ACT Fire Fighters and Station Officers in Comcen. Why do I want this can be broken into two parts, ACT Fire Fighters in Comcen benefit ACT Fire & Rescue as an organisation and ACT Fire Fighters in Comcen benefit the Emergency Service Agency and the Community.

ACT Fire Fighters in Comcen Benefit ACT Fire and Rescue as an organisation

To be a Fire Fighter in Comcen you must hold the minimum qualification of **Certificate III in Public Safety (Fire Fighting Operations)**

To be a Station Officer in Comcen you must hold a minimum qualification of **Diploma Public Safety (Fire Fighting & Emergency Management)**

The primary role of the Comcen Station Officer is to manage call collection and response of ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT State Emergency Service to emergencies within the ACT and surrounds.

To become a Comcen Station Officer within ACT Fire & Rescue you need:

- Minimum of 7 years service (progressing through the various rank structure)
- Found competent and hold a **Certificate III in Public Safety (Fire Fighting Operations)**
- Complete a rigorous application and interview process as a Senior Fire Fighter for the rank of Station Officer
- Complete an 8-week Station Officer induction course
- Found competent and hold a **Diploma in Public Safety (Fire Fighting & Emergency Management)**
- Ideally complete 12 months as a Station Officer on operational appliances
- Apply for and found suitable to become a Comcen Station Officer
- Complete 2 weeks of training in Comcen operations (Computer Aided Dispatch CAD)
- Complete 1 month in Comcen as a super nummary (Shadowing)
- Complete a rigorous assessment to be found competent
- Complete 1 week training as a Comcen Station Officer
- Complete 8 days as a super nummary (Shadowing)
- Complete a rigorous assessment to be found competent

As an organisation ACT Fire & Rescue benefit from well trained Comcen Staff who posses skills, nationally recognised qualifications and years of experience which enable them to appropriately interrogate incoming calls, provide emergency advice, issue public warnings, dispatch appropriate resources, manage and maintain communication, provide notifications in a timely manner and support responding crews.

A secondary role of the Comcen Station Officer (and by no means less important) is maintaining the day to day rostering system (Disposition) for all four platoons (A,B,C & D). The rostering system used by ACTFR is a simple spreadsheet for each platoon which shows who is at work on a particular day, who is on overtime and who is on various leave. The roster is sent to ACTFR rostering at the start of each shift (by the Comcen Station Officer) morning and night seven days a week 365 days a year.

Rostering uses this spreadsheet to compare with KRONOS, which is the ESA employee data base to record employees pay, leave, overtime and entitlements.

The Comcen Station Officer is responsible for receiving and recording all types of leave reported to Comcen and responsible for filling this leave by moving personnel to cover the absence or contacting personnel to cover this leave on overtime. The Comcen Station Officer is not only responsible for his or her own shift but is responsible for maintaining appropriate manning on all shifts whether this is filled with overtimes or spare Fire Fighters. This becomes important during the declared bushfire season when additional appliances need to be crewed on heightened fire danger days.

If ACT Fire & Rescue does not have a Comcen Station Officer fulfilling this role a new way of maintaining the shift rostering system would have to be created, this might very well mean employing a rosters clerk during business hours and operational Commanders maintaining the roster out of hours. A rosters clerk would require funding of around \$60,000-\$80,000 per year added to the ACTFR budget and Commanders would not be able to fill rosters when incidents occur, this flow on affect would increase unplanned overtime due to absences not recorded members not being contacted to move to different stations etc.

ACTF&R benefit from Comcen in another way which is not publicly acknowledged as much as I think it should be. Comcen for ACTF&R is a place where Fire Fighters and Station Officers (who are suitable qualified) can work with minor injuries that prevent them from working on operational appliances. This has been a common practice as long as I have been employed by ACTFR. The benefits of this arrangement, I think, are vastly underestimated by ACTF&R Senior Managers.

These injured Fire Fighters are able to fill an important role, which if they were unable to do so would have to be filled by spare Comcen Staff or overtimes. These injured staff (majority of injuries occurred outside the workplace and do not involve workers compensation) would not normally have a place to work within ACTF&R on the 10-14 shift rostering system, allowing them to work in comcen saves ACTF&R money, allows injured staff to work and not use up personal leave, is better for the mental health outcomes of employees who have injuries if they are allowed to work and feel useful.

Comcen has also been used by ACTF&R employees as a place to work whilst pregnant. The rigors of Fire Fighting on operational appliances is not recommended for persons who are pregnant and to remain on a 10-14 rostering system Comcen is the only alternative, if ACTF&R loses Comcen these employees will have to work a day shift roster which may not be conducive with their family situation.

ACT Fire Fighters in Comcen benefit the Emergency Service Agency (ESA) and the Community.

The benefits that the ESA and the community get from ACTF&R staff in Comcen are the same as what ACTF&R receive as an organisation (refer to my first five paragraphs under 'Benefits to ACTF&R'). The skills and experience that ACT Fire Fighters and Supervisors bring to the roles gives the ESA and the Community the best outcomes when it comes to call collection and response.

Trained Fire Fighters join ACTFR as a life career and you tend to see Comcen Operators and Supervisors with 10, 20 and even 30 years experience. Civilian call takers tend to be a transition employment role, where staff turnover is high, and life time career in these roles is very rare.

ACTF&R keeps staff in the Comcen by managing fatigue, by rotating staff from front line appliance to call taker and supervisor roles regularly. ACTF&R also manage fatigue by allowing staff to 'rest or retire' during non peak times (between 10p and 6a). Staff can be brought back into Comcen when and increased demand requires it.

This practice I believe reduces stress that is associated with emergency call centres. It is commonly reported that civilian call takers in emergency call centres suffer from 'burn out' and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

I believe the way ACTF&R manage its staff in Comcen by rotating staff from operational appliances to call taking roles and allowing staff to rest and retire during non peak periods, reduces burn out and in my opinion the potential for PTSD. I have always been told that the rest of Australia has gone to Civilian Call Takers and this is the standard that ESA should go to. My response to this is:

The ACT is the 'tail that is wagging the dog', I believe we have the gold standard in our Comcen at the moment, yes the emphasis should be on being efficient in receiving calls and responding appliances, but as managers we need to look after our people. We should not burn them out, we should manage and mitigate chances of PTSD in the work place, flexible work practices as displayed by ACTF&R should be adopted in '000' call centres around the country.

What do I want to improve?

In 2011, it was proposed that ACTF&R Comcen operators and Supervisors should hold National qualifications in Call Centre Operations. This proposal was put forward to senior management and was rejected without reason. At the same time ACT Ambulance Service sought the same qualifications and now it becomes mandatory for ACTAS Comcen Staff to hold these qualifications.

I would like ACTF&R Comcen Staff to be given the opportunity to receive the same national qualifications as the ACT Ambulance Comcen staff.

What do I want to add?

Finally I would like to add 'my two cents worth'. The following is based upon my opinion only. [REDACTED]

As much as I have tried to understand the SRA, the outcomes and what ESA hope to achieve, it has never been successfully explained to me. The SRA has been going on now for two years and there does not seem to be much headway or sign of completion. Today I attended the first of the 'Roundtable meetings' which I thought was well organised and answered some of my questions. But why do this now and not two years ago? Is this the start of a new SRA? What has been going on for the last two years? Are these meetings just set up to tick the box of involving the workforce?

Those questions aside, the only concrete plan the SRA has come up with, that affects my work, is the transition of Comcen from Fire Fighters to Civilians as of the 01 July 2017. I am currently one of the [REDACTED] and this proposed transition has me concerned. Up until today's meeting I did not understand why the push to remove ACTFR from the Comcen and replace with Civilians.

This question was answered by a member of the ACT Bush Fire Council. Who said it is the Bush Fire Council who wants Civilians in Comcen, as they have done in South Australia. From what this person was saying, it was clear that the Bush Fire Council has no faith in ACTFR Comcen operators, suggesting call tampering (sending ACTFR appliances instead of RFS appliances to incidents) and influencing RFS personnel at incidents.

This person suggested that Civilians in Comcen would correct this. I am lead to believe that ACT Bush Fire Council prepared a report for Government about their concerns. This was the first time I had heard of this submission. As a Comcen Station Officer I took his words as a direct attack on my integrity as a Comcen Station Officer with the ACT Fire & Rescue Service.

I am concerned that one organisation (ACT Bush Fire Council) has so much influence on this matter. Especially during the Roundtable meeting today feedback from ACT Ambulance, ACT SES, ACTFR, ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT Parks and Conservation all indicated that they were happy with ACTFR in Comcen. This posed some more questions for me.

Does the ACT Bushfire Council represent all Volunteer Fire Fighters? Does the ACT Bushfire Council seek regular input from its members? Why is the Bush Fire Council so negative towards ACTFR? Why did the ACT Government and ESA put so much weight to this report?

Is it because the Emergency Services Minister, at the time, and the President of the Volunteer Bush Fire Association were both members of the same Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade (The Rivers)?

This is all I want to **add**. This SRA has been going on for ~~400~~ long and it is damaging all parts of the organisation. All I ask for in my work place is security and strong leadership. This I believe has been lacking.

Yours faithfully

ESA round table – comments and suggestions for assisting

Volunteer Fire Fighters

1.0 Introduction

There are many good reasons for the ACT Government, through ACT ESA, to bolster the role of volunteer Fire Fighters (VFFs) as part of the emergency response and community liaison in this region.

A cost benefit analysis would be interesting given the considerable savings that accrue to the ACT through the time provided by (unsalaried) volunteers, working independently and collaboratively with other emergency service agencies to support the ACT community.

To give these comments context its worth reflecting on the role of the RFS volunteer who participate operationally in the control of grassland and forest - wild fires, hazardous tip fires, hazard reduction burns, on occasion vehicle and structural fires, assist with damage arising from floods and wind storms, missing person searches, support for a wide range of other agencies and community work et cetera.

It's a role:

- that puts individuals into dangerous situations that can result in serious injury and on occasion death;
- which exposes the volunteer to a range of toxic and often unknown chemical hazards, both respired and through physical contact;
- where there is an expectation to work at least 12 hours shifts for operational matters, but in reality, can extend well beyond this length of time;
- where the volunteers will often do identical work - side by side - with other paid counterparts and on occasion be asked to work when other comparable paid workers have been stood down;
- that requires a high level of vigilance over the extended period of the fire season rising on high Fire Danger days when they may be called on to respond immediately;
- where the volunteer willingly accepts a commitment over the fire season to be on call 24/7 and be deployed at short notice;
- which places the volunteer in the center of a moral dilemma having to frequently choose between responding to operational matters and the demands of their family and work;
- where the volunteer is required to maintain a level of physical fitness;
- which requires extensive training with regular re-certification;
- is expected to stand up on high fire danger days where they often spend long hours of inactivity (as a rough guide 50 hours of stand up might equal 1 hour of fire fighting);
- that leaves the active volunteer with many out of pocket expenses for; travel, meals, additional clothing, equipment costs and gym costs et cetera; and

- cumulatively, the above demands and experiences have been identified as leading to post traumatic stress, anxiety and other psychological problems.

Of course, many of the above statements are just as relevant for other emergency service providers.

So the discussion here is premised on the question -what can be done to better support the Volunteer Fire Fighter?

2.0 Data

Anecdotally it has been stated that VFFs stay for an average of 5 years (ESA personal com.), generally when they have a good level of experience and training and are highly productive. However on the limited data I have the retention curve (number of volunteers verses length of membership) is skewed strongly to the left, with a peak at two years and declining rapidly after three years. So the five years may be the **mean** but it is certainly not the **median**.

It would be wrong to assume the retention profile is a normal bell curve and all that this would imply. It would be good to have more detailed data on retention rates and evaluate what these really mean. However, it is clear that retaining active members for longer has benefits for both the Brigades and the ESA.

Some of the issues that affect volunteers and their retention as active operational members are discussed below and I believe warrant the attention of the Government and ESA with changes in both policy and better resourcing.

3.0 The Issues

Recruits – considers issues specific to new recruits, why their expectations are not met and why so many don't stay.

Training – aspects of the training that are not particularly volunteer friendly. Accessing training has been difficult for many and there are consequences for both the volunteer and their Brigades.

Out of pocket expenses – the dollar costs of being a volunteer are disproportionally high noting that volunteers can not claim work expenses in the same way their salaried counterparts can.

Use them or lose them – more time on the fire ground is critical for both the retention of volunteers and so they can develop and maintain their operational proficiency and safety.

The future – developing a more cohesive Rural Fire Service (RFS).

3.1 New Recruits and procedures

My (limited) data shows that many new recruits stop participating relatively soon after joining the RFS – with this being a prelude to formally leaving – usually within the next 2 years. When new recruits leave, after just one or two seasons, it costs us dearly with:

- a significant loss of effort and dollar costs put into training and equipment by both ESA and their Brigade;
- fewer active members with which to share the workload;
- a reduction in the pool of members that might otherwise go on to more senior roles, seriously affecting succession planning;

- reducing the opportunities to sequester valuable experience and skills - skills and experience that more often reside with a few dedicated and frequently older members and
- a reduction in the diversity within the Brigade.

There is an opportunity here to look at ways we can improve the retention of new recruits and be more **recruit friendly**. Part of this process should be to ensure that those entering the volunteer ranks **have realistic expectations** and by providing them with a **clear pathway and a defined time line** through the training process.

Potential new members should receive a realistic precis of what a VFF does, explaining that:

- its not all about putting out fires, heroics and saving the community;
- while in a bad fire season you might spend many days firefighting this needs to be balanced against the reality of a benign fire year where they might not attend a fire;
- their involvement is also required at community events, station duties and stand up;
- they need to maintain a basic level of fitness;
- they need to attend training regularly and participate in HR burns as part of maintaining their skill levels and to develop the working relationships with other members – critical when on the fire ground and
- they need to consider family and work commitments to get the balance right before committing.

Being a VFF is a package that can be extraordinarily rewarding, however if you join, do it with a clear understanding of your responsibilities and the reality of being a volunteer fire fighter.

One of the best ways to welcome new recruits is to provide a guaranteed pathway through the basic Fire Fighting course.

This should include:

- the Basic Fire Fighting courses need to be run as required which might be several times a year so recruits do not have a long delay – say no more than 3 months;
- courses should be completed along with the assessment within a set period - say 1 month – guaranteed, and
- assessment using Hot Props should be used as a last resort, when weather precludes an assessment burn, so these “newbies” can then participate in their Brigades operational response – make their first experience a positive one.

From our discussions with departing new members, one of the frequent stated reasons for leaving the RFS is the infrequent use of volunteers to fight fires. Put simply it is **“use them or lose them”**.

Discussion on this follows below (3.4) but is mentioned here as this issue is just as relevant to new recruits just as it is for the retention of all members.

3.2 Training

I am aware that the ESA is working assiduously on many of the training issues, and their attention is welcomed noting a range of problems and potential improvements.

Over the last few years there have been real problems getting onto training courses with limited options, short notice and or, having them cancelled at the last minute.

This has created substantial bottlenecks for volunteers wishing to progress within the Brigade with implications, not only for the volunteer, but also for the Brigade where their operations can be compromised by a lack of trained members in critical areas, for example qualified drivers and crew leaders.

It also compromises operational activities where volunteers are unable to maintain their certification in areas such as a chainsaw operator and First Aider etc. Where once, nearly all members had a First Aid certification, a recent show of hands indicated only one of the ten present had a current certification. I believe this is unacceptable for the volunteers who will be placed in hazardous situations and potentially in contact with injured members of the public.

Training issues for volunteers include:

- the infrequency with which training packages are offered. If you miss the course, or it is cancelled, you could be waiting a year for the next one. This really impacts on volunteers with some just giving up their certification and thereby the opportunity to move into more senior roles. This has real consequences for the operational capacity of the Brigade;
- limited choice of times – mostly weekdays, this is really important issue for volunteers where most will have competing family and work commitments;
- cancellation of the course at short notice – often due to lack of numbers. This is a really big issue for volunteers who have negotiated with work and family to have the time off and planned other activities around the course date only to find that the course is cancelled, and
- enrolling volunteers for training where they are yet to acquire the necessary experience for the course they are undertaking to be meaningful and valuable.

The ESA needs to significantly increase the resources provided for training and I would emphasise the following:

- training courses should be scheduled with at least 6 months notice (12 months would be better) and generally outside the peak fire season;
- increasing the frequency that courses are offered with options to attend on weekends/after hours;
- provide an option to run some courses, such as First Aid, at the Brigade on a weekend or a regular training night;
- when numbers for any course fall below the capacity of that course then, where practical, the course should run with smaller numbers – with adjustments for shorter more intense training, or, perhaps using a standby list of members that can fill the vacancy;
- courses should only be cancelled as a very last resort, with an alternate course date announced at the time of cancellation;
- where appropriate, courses should require a specified level of experience – some, such as first aid, might be zero, but crew leader might be 5 years (with exceptions possible based on relevant experience);
- notification to volunteers, well ahead of time, when a certification is due to expire;

- solve the persistent issues with lost paper work and
- look at sharing training with NSW RFS and ensure certifications are easily transferable between ACT and other jurisdictions.

Volunteers incur significant out of pocket expenses. Many are not redeemable, and where they are, the process is ponderous and less than user friendly. Most volunteers just wear these expenses.

Un-recovered costs include:

- **travel costs** - there is no alternative other than to use your own vehicle to get to and from the Brigade shed. This might be at least 3 or more trips a week for stand up, pager call-out (at any hour), training, community liaison, station duties, management meetings etc. Travel, when calculated against the ATO rates, can easily exceed \$1000 per year for many and for the most active of the volunteers the cost is significantly higher;
- volunteers will also be out of pocket for clothing, additional equipment which will often include better quality PPE than that provided by the ESA (eg face masks, safety glasses, gloves et cetera);
- **personal mobile phones** are essential for Brigade operations. Usage includes, communication (often when radios wont work), up dates on weather and fires, geo location, maps etc. When at a fire it is easy to chew through a lot of data as well as exposing the phone to significant damage;
- **meals** – you never quite know when you will be at a fire, have stand up extended or a range of other reasons find you have missed a meal. While most will carry some emergency food, in reality volunteers will often have to buy food. I understand that it is possible to claim these costs, but given the reimbursement process sometimes takes months, most will not bother. This system is begging for a better one.
- There is no support for the general volunteer to cover gym costs – yet we are required to pass an annual fitness test and many do visit a gym regularly. There are benefits arising from strength and endurance training – fitter members less prone to injury (reducing work cover insurance and rehabilitation costs) and extending the active service of older members.

Over all the cost of volunteering can be high and there have been years when I calculate my out of pocket expenses would be well over \$2000 and expect many others have similar costs.

The ESA should look at the way it supports volunteers to reduce the out of pocket expenses and there might also be options for corporate support such as that provided by McDonalds. In the past BP has also gifted fuel to volunteers. I don't believe any volunteer is seeking full cost recovery – just something to ease the out of pocket costs of volunteering - something that is available to their paid counterparts.

3.4 Use them or lose them

Nothing kills the enthusiasm of a volunteer more than not participating in fire fighting. Fire fighting is after all, the main reason most people join and something widely used in advertising as an inducement to join.

Attendance at fires has dropped from the historical levels for a range of reasons including:

- the ESA have identified an overall decline in the frequency of fires (prior to 2016) making it difficult to get an opportunity for many to attend a fire. But it is worth noting here this seasons high numbers of incidents which may be foretelling the future and the expected impacts of climate change;
- competing agencies – within the RFS – Parks;
- competing agencies – outside the RFS – Fire and Emergency – noting their unions push to play a bigger role in bush fires;
- the way the CAD and COMCEN allocate incidents;
- the way many RFS crews reposition themselves when a white(Fire) is called. In effect self responding and there by excluding others who might otherwise be responded to that fire;
- the over use of the requirement for arduous fitness level on fires. This is questionable when those volunteers who attended remain perplexed for the arduous requirement – “it was a cake walk”. The requirement for “arduous” needs to be carefully considered and challenged when it is simply being overly cautious. By excluding a large number of VFFS because they only meet the “medium” level of fitness not only impacts on those volunteers who miss another opportunity but also limits the capacity for the ESA to use this large resource, and
- issues within the volunteer Brigades – reluctance to commit to a formalised response on level 3 days- although our Brigadeindividually has always met this requirement.

Overall the experience for volunteers can be very disappointing with many claiming that it is just about impossible to get to a fire. My data support this with the reality of a normal fire season say 2014-15, most would have been lucky to attend a single fire where there is actual running flame. It is easy to understand their disappointment and loss of interest.

For the Brigades the high churn in membership has many consequences including:

- lack of qualified and experienced members – with this work falling to a dedicated few;
- burn out for those experienced members who must shoulder a disproportionate amount of the work;
- lack of qualified members in specific areas, crew leaders, chainsaw operators, drivers et cetera;
- crews having a higher proportion of inexperienced and untested members with no big fire experience and
- a lack of a cohesive succession plan within Brigades.

ESA needs to take a strong stand on the erosion of the role of volunteers and ensure that they regularly get to fires. This is critical to volunteer participation, to maintain their skill levels, the retention of members and safety.

4.0 The future

In our life time we have seen a number of small rural Brigades, mostly made up by rural land holders with a vested interest in fire suppression, grow into a large Rural Fire Service which is made up of paid professionals (Parks) and Volunteer members now predominantly drawn from an urban

environment. It will continue to evolve and I can see scope here for a closer operating environment between Parks and the volunteers. There are opportunities to better:

- coordinate stand up and improve the coverage by the RFS stood up vehicles;
- integrating agencies response to fire;
- shared training;
- sharing local knowledge and personnel and
- common and compatible equipment.

5.0 Outcomes

Pursuing the changes suggested here have both operational and financial benefits for the ESA and the Government.

Effecting changes that increase the retention of Volunteer Fire Fighters will provide:

- a better trained and more experienced front line fire fighting resource – pushing the retention plot more towards a normal distribution;
- will save the considerable costs incurred from constantly recruiting new members only to see them depart a year or two later and
- the potential to develop a waiting list for future volunteers to buffer the process ensuring those who join really commit to the service and stay longer.

So it is my contention that better resourcing for the volunteer is likely to be off-set by a better retention rate – more experienced and capable fire fighters – a win for both the volunteers and the Government.

I am happy to speak in support to the above and will be present at the round table meeting set down for the 5th of March.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Guises Creek Brigade

[REDACTED]

Summers, Carmel

From: Annebelle Davis [annebelle.davis@outlook.com]
Sent: Monday, 6 March 2017 9:47 AM
To: Summers, Carmel
Cc: Jones, Mark; Holmes, Joanne
Subject: FW: Round Table meetings

Carmel

~~Summers, Carmel~~ original email (below) for the file please.

Thanks,
Annebelle

From: ~~Summers, Carmel~~
Sent: Sunday, 5 March 2017 10:53 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Subject: Round Table meetings

Hi Annabelle

Thank you for another well run meeting today.

I would like to use this forum to give you some point of views from my SES perspective.

The two meetings that I have attended have hared on the COMCEN review and how civilising the COMCEN will mean F&R members losing there jobs. I would like to make some very clear points that might not have been brought up as yet. There are;

1. COMCEN is a message receiving and sending area - it is not a Command centre. Definition of Command and Control under the AIMS structure is;

Command is the internal direction of the members and resources of an agency in the performance of the organisation's roles and Responsibilities, by agreement and in accordance with relevant legislation. Command operates vertically within an organisation.

Control refers to the overall direction of emergency management activities in an emergency situation. Authority for control is established in legislation. Control carries with it the responsibility for tasking other organisations in accordance with the needs of the situation. Control relates to situations and operates horizontally across organisations.

F&R might use the COMCEN as an operation room for their incidents but SES and RFS setup there operations room in the Incident Management room next to COMCEN.



2. Members of F&R have stated they joined F&R to fight fires then why are they in COMCEN? When they joined F&R it was to fight fires not to be a radio operator.
3. By civilising COMCEN it would certainly reduce the cost as I am sure a firefighters wage is a lot more than a civilian radio operator.
4. By civilianising it would allow about 40 fully trained firefighters to get back to the job they enrolled for - fighting fires.
5. Training - ACTSES basic training has been eroded. They are saying that they are being de-skilled. Some basic training like Electrical Awareness and Elevated Work Platform courses have not been seen for over 3 years. Over 3 1/2 years ago a request went in to train the volunteers on the hazards of solar panels. We received some brochure's but no actual training.
6. Fitness for Service - the ACTSES has a fitness regime that says to do certain SES work you need a fitness level. We have 3 levels - light, moderate and arduous. To get one of these levels you need to:

- Light - walk 1.8 kilometers in 15 minute -

Duties mainly involving field activity where light physical exertion requiring basic good health can be expected. Activities may include climbing stairs, operating a vehicle, long hours of work, as well as some bending or light lifting. Individuals can almost always govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

- Moderate - walk 3.6 kilometers in 30 minutes carrying an 11kg pack.

Duties involving field work that requires complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 11 to 20 kg, climbing, bending, twisting and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

- Arduous - 4.8 kilometers in 45 mins with a 20kg pack.

Duties involving field work that requires physical performance calling for above average endurance and conditioning such as land search in a remote area. These duties may include an occasional demand for strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending and lifting more than 20 kg. The pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.

These levels of fitness are perform on level ground. This fitness regime is out of date and archaic.

Over 3 years ago a report was started into a regime of fitness for task which is much more suitable for what we do. I believe now AFAC has taken over this report and hopefully will role this regime out nationally for all emergency service personnel. Our suggestion is the ACT is so small compared to the other states it would be practical for the ACT to run the pilot programme just so that we can get it up and running and not have to wait 15 years.

Sorry that this is so long winded but feel that these concerns need to be noted. I have been at two Round Table meetings and could not get these out during the meetings.

regards



This email, and any attachments, may be confidential and also privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete all copies of this transmission along with any attachments immediately. You should not copy or use it for any purpose, nor disclose its contents to any other person.

Holmes, Joanne

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 24 March 2017 3:26 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com; Jones, Mark; Holmes, Joanne; Summers, Carmel
Subject: Roundtable suggestions and ideas.
Attachments: Ideas for roundtable discussion.docx

Hi all,

Thanks again for the opportunity to supply submissions via email, and after the round tables have finished. Again I apologise that I was not able to get to the last discussion as I was out of town.

I have written down what I feel are the important ones as time is running out, and I appreciate that you need to finalise the report.

I have attached it in a word document as it seems to be easier to read (formatting) than in email form. However in case there are any issues with opening it I have also placed my suggestions and concerns at the bottom of the email.

Best of luck with the report and the whole process - you guys have a hard road ahead of you and although we may differ on points of view, I certainly admire the effort you have put in.

Thanks for your consideration,
[REDACTED]

Jointly funded investment in:**Fire-fighting equipment****Personnel:****Facilities:**

I think in areas where possible it would be great to save on funding by providing investment in joint facilities. We already do this with the ambulance at a number of stations and the RFS and SES at some. If the opportunity arises for further integration of stations with paid and volunteer staff (ACTAS, ACTF&R, SES, RFS) I think they should be preferential.

Establish ongoing consultation:

I think as can be seen by the re-occurring discussions in the roundtables that ongoing consultation is a huge must. I think the wording and meaning around consultation should be discussed and a definition should be reached. If one cannot then the current industrial meanings should stand.

If the current meaning stands than meaningful consultation has to take place. There should never have been a need for an organisation to have to go to the streets and campaign at an election, just to ensure that consultation actually happens. And this needs to be meaningful consultation. What has happened so far with ACTF&R cannot and should not ever happen again. The meaning and intent is very clear, and in an industrial agreement.

To prevent future issues, I would ensure that consultation as per the definition has to happen. This could happen in a number of forums. Speaking to firefighters, they enjoyed when the Commissioner and SRA Director actually came around to the stations and had meetings with them. Being able to ask questions and receive straight answers is essential.

Further, there must be accountability. Any forums that you open up for feedback must be monitored. Questions must be answered and responded to. I have utilised the ESAHaveYourSay email and have had miss and hit with replies. I have had one response to a question asked, by Matt Mavity a fellow firefighter. The other questions still remain unanswered, and unacknowledged.

When you tell firefighters that you will supply more information, you really need to follow up on your promises. EG1: Email from Kaylee Rutland, 19/2/16) ACTF&R consultation has been postponed due to consistent requests for more information. More information will be disseminated and consultation resumed. That further information was never passed on and consultation never resumed.

EG2: All Staff email, 28/6/16, Kaylene Everett. "The SRA has produced a draft paper that reflects the feedback received through the consultation process. Once finalised, it will be circulated to all staff." Still have not received any paper circulating, regarding the consultation that took place.

In the words of the SRA Director on a peer review of ACTF&R service Management and Command Structures "Visibly and meaningfully engaging staff and their representatives will be vital going forward." This simply needs to happen.

Discover wider:

Resourcing

I think this is an important issue. However I believe it needs to be undertaken by professionals with the input of workplace experts. There are so many services that we provide to our community without cost recovery – However some of them provide us with cost savings in return. The decision to charge organisations for services within the same government may mean we have an income, but the return services will mean we have greater expenditure: EG training AFP in BA, once we started charging them for it the no longer came to us for training and started charging us in return for services.

I believe that recovering funds from NSW would be an option, considering we respond to Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra, Lake George for road crash, and halfway to Cooma for road crash as well. With the expansion of Googong, Environa and Tralee it would appear that ACT is covering more and more of NSW legislated response areas without remuneration. I believe this could be an opportunity to secure funding, however it must be looked at holistically and the advantages vs disadvantages must be weighed up (consideration of if our Bronto is out, cost of hiring from NSW, NSW Hazmat expertise being charged to us)

I think the way the ACTRFS is resourced should be looked at. In 2001 ACTRFS had 1 heavy tanker and 1 light unit stationed at Gungahlin fire station. Since that time the area they service for fire protection has been drastically reduced. 11 new suburbs have since been created, 2 suburbs have significantly increased in size (Mitchell and Ngunnawal) and a large amount of rural lease hold land has been acquired by the government for future development and now either falls under ACTF&R or TAMS/Parks and conservation for fire protection. Since 2001 though, even with that huge reduction in response area, Gungahlin RFS station now contains 2 medium tankers, 1 heavy tanker, 1 CAFS tanker, 1 Command vehicle, and 2 further support vehicles. With such a significant response area reduction, where does the justification for 5 more vehicles come from?

I would suggest that the ACTRFS resourcing should be based on models from other states/regions that have similar vegetation, topography, support services and response areas.

Structural and organisation reform:

I suggest the ESA be disbanded and ACTF&R become a statutory authority, as per the recommendations of the inquiry from Mr Ron McLeod and report from the Coroner Maria Doogan following the 2003 bushfires. ACTAS could be moved to the health directorate as already has been investigated. The ACTRFS could come under an operational Superintendent, and 3 Commanders. The ACTSES could also do the same. This would reduce the FTE staffing from 20 to 12. This would save on Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer salaries, bringing them back to FB8 salaries. It would also almost entirely remove any organisational duplication of roles and resourcing.

Concerning proposed ACTF&R structural organisation reform and changes

Any structural and organisational reform should be based around solid data.

The data collected around ACTF&R utilisation has only been from response to incidents and time spent at incidents (ORH Review). To suggest that utilisation is 'relatively low' (SRA Information paper on proposed changes to ACTF&R structure) and to make reform without having any other data on the service's usage is ridiculous. There is no data on how much time is spent checking and maintaining equipment. There is no data on times spent training. No data on time spent familiarisation with equipment, local built up areas or high risk buildings. There is no data on how much time is spent on other legislated responsibilities and requirements, including community education, preparedness and recovery. There is no data on the amount of time spent on industrial requirements like station cleaning and administration. The decision to reform ACTF&R structure and to propose change to it has been made by looking at a picture with more than half of it missing.

The paper also states that response to incidents has declined annually by 10% since 2008-09. There is no data in the ROGS history to support that claim.

I believe that if we are to discover ways to reform ACTF&R we need to get an accurate picture of what it is that ACTF&R provide to the community and the full cost that comes with it. This includes capturing accurate data on time spent training, meeting legislative and industrial requirements, community engagement activities, time spent on preparedness and recovery, requests to attend events (like the Canberra show). Merely using response to emergency incident data for reform is not acceptable. I would suggest that a plan to capture and analyse this data is actioned before deciding to make reform to an organisation.

Increasing diversity in firefighting service

I think this is a fantastic idea - and I believe that some States around the Country have great examples of doing this well. However I am also concerned at some of the strategies implemented by other States.

I think women should be encouraged to apply and I believe targeting females at certain stages in life would be extremely beneficial. I think a short, medium and long term plan should be established to encourage and target women into the service. I also think that a greater diversity in ethnicities would benefit the service. There is talk on station about having an additional two spots for indigenous people to be in the job – a great idea. I truly believe however that no standards should be changed, and there should not be a quota of 50/50 for any college. The best person for the job should be selected. As an example, NSWFF&R now has two streams for applicants. Male and female. The best 8 are chosen for each. If a great enough audience and the right audience is targeted, and you should have enough suitable applicants. You are then restricting the maximum female positions to 8. What if 12 of the best 16 applicants were females? You are ensuring that 4 females are missing out on a position simply because you have put a quota on numbers. Melbourne female firefighters have spoken out against quotas for colleges.

Tasmanian male and female firefighters have spoken out against ensuring 50/50 colleges. ACT female fire fighters have also spoken out against 50/50 colleges and all female colleges. You should be seriously consulting those groups of people and listening to their concerns. As a plan and way forward, I would envisage something along the lines of

Short term: I believe targeting specific areas would be extremely beneficial, as per the last recruitment program. Target gyms, boot camps, females of the defence force, PT/fitness industry, TAMS/Parks and conservation employees. Also retained firefighters in the surrounding districts of Yass, Queanbeyan, Jindabyne, Cooma, Braidwood, and Goulburn. However there also needs to be an understanding that a firefighter's role can be a dirty one, one that may involve picking up body parts, dealing with blood, getting hydraulic oil on your hands, under your nails and in your hair. This should message needs to be delivered to applicants - whether it is at the initial 'grab' of the recruitment phase or at a recruitment meeting. All applicants need to understand that there are difficulties associated with the job.

Medium term: As a medium term plan I think targeting high schools and colleges would be a fantastic idea. Schools hold career pathway days, where industry experts come and explain their industry to students and try to encourage them into their field. I believe we are missing out on a massive target audience/area of applicants due to a lack of visibility - we are only thought about if someone is unfortunate enough to encounter an emergency. Increasing our visibility with people who we are targeting, and who are about to make career choices should be a priority. An additional part of this plan could be resuming delivering road crash programs to colleges, and as a part of that, having a section on possible career choice/options. Having women and non-anglo-saxon firefighters in these roles would be helpful. It may take additional funding to staff a non-operational pumper, but they could be seconded dedicated to this program.

Long term: Target primary schools now, for the long term future and interest in a diverse range of applicants. Develop a program that would be delivered to primary and pre-school students (It could run in conjunction with the medium term plan, year round), changing the culture and perception of a firefighter being a white male job. Utilise women in the job, off shift or seconded to the program, to attend pre-schools and primary schools, showing and encouraging all students that anyone can be a firefighter. Show examples, the new London Fire brigade Chief is a women. Utilise a spare/non-operational fire truck, get the participants to shoot water, climb in the truck, roleplay simulated firefighter tasks. Get them interested early, show that anyone can do the job, mums or dads, of any race. I would see the program as needing to be developed professionally and presented using professional resources and trainers/instructors. I think it is essential that this be developed and run professionally, not left to operational firefighters, to maintain high standards and the quality of the program. This could be an additional pathway, area of secondment, role a pregnant or injured firefighter could fulfil.

Holmes, Joanne

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 9 February 2017 5:42 PM
To: Holmes, Joanne
Subject: ComCen staffing/structure re SRA [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Joe

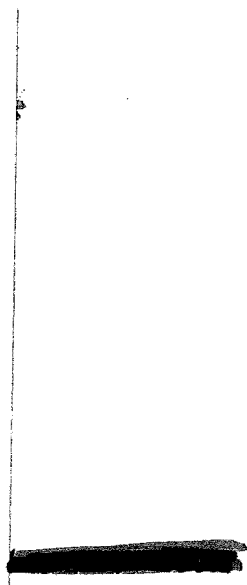
I didn't get to voice my opinion in the round table meeting Tuesday morning regarding ComCen staffing. It's my opinion after serving as ComCen SO over many years that we use the wrong model. We use 3 operators that all take, dispatch and monitor incidents. I think this arrangement leads to information being missed and a lack of management structure within the room.

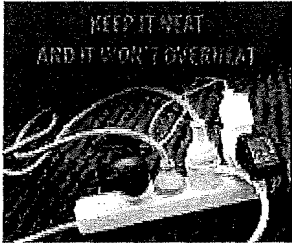
Using the headings from Annabelle's "Considerations" poster I provide the following comments :

- What do we have to keep ?
Experienced firefighters as dispatchers and to monitor incidents with an ACTF&R SO as manager.
- What do we need to change ?
We should adopt the Call taker and Call dispatcher model as used by ACTAS.
- What would we like to add ?
ESA call takers to keep costs down so that we can standup experienced SES and RFS dispatchers during their peak workload periods of the year, and on recall as required, out of season. This would be for the same reasons we use to justify having firefighters in ComCen. I think this would alleviate/negate some of the frustrations with F&R personnel providing the communication/dispatching needs of another service they don't know enough about.

We keep saying "only a firefighter knows what a firefighter needs". The same can be said for the other services.

regards





No trees were harmed in the making of this e-mail, but a serious number of electrons were terribly inconvenienced.

To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
 Cc: Lane, Dominic
 Subject: ESA Roundtable input

Annabelle, thank you for the opportunity to discuss some of the issues yesterday.

I thought that I would drop a line on a couple of others. Some are quite RFS specific and probably better to be done separately.

I also just wanted to clarify my comment on this a skill registers as I probably didn't explain that well enough. To help understand this better, here are three examples;

- we have a shortage of bushfire investigators. We don't know who has an investigative background/competencies, maybe AFP or others. With some skill development on specific fire specific investigations, we could supplement the pool very quickly.
- in peak periods, workshops are often stretched. I am sure we have mechanics in the volunteer ranks who could potentially supplement these periods.
- radio communication support. I would be confident that there are volunteers with good radio technical skills that could assist if required, however we don't know who they are if we needed them to setup a remote repeater etc.

Whilst I wouldn't see volunteers even trying to replace paid employees, some skills that volunteers have may be useful on adhoc requirements, such as a specific engineering question.

The other points I would like recorded are below. These are a series of questions, some with possible solutions. Happy to discuss further if they do not make sense.

1. Why has ESA not developed the Level 3 IC and Ops capability for RFS? This is a significant gap.
2. Why does F&R operate dual cab tankers plus a light unit for a crew of 4? The light units would possibly be better positioned at RFS Brigades. We should consider reviewing bushfire fleet resources across ESA.
3. Why is the nearest RFS brigade not automatically attached to bush and grass fires within the BUA, even though F&R are for bush and grass fires in the Rural Area?
4. Why is access to the ESACOP so restricted, even for operational people who need it to do their role effectively.
5. Why don't we transfer fire behavioural/weather staff from Parks to ESA for the season? The current approach is disjointed. RFS is meant to be the lead agency, yet we continually see Parks leading, either intentionally or unintentionally.
6. Why do we always have a backlog at workshops. We should employ more staff during peak periods to meet this seasonal demand. Maybe an idea would be to transfer ACTION mechanics during summer when school busses are not running.
7. Why are volunteers not trained in BA to provide support F&R at hazardous fume fires such as tips/coal/asbestos. This is both a WHS issue as well as common sense.
8. Why is the RFS lacking in vision and is risk adverse, Eg decision to use innovative technology such as monitors on trucks This is a challenging process that should not be. The ACT RFS used to be an innovative service.
9. Why don't we have a proper fire prediction/planning capability within the RFS?
10. Why does it take over 4 years to progress new PPE for RAFT and general purpose?
11. Why do we spend so much on overtime for F&R when volunteers Brigades routinely fill the standup gap? This isn't taking jobs away, just being better fiscal managers.

Volunteers

12. Why are RFS volunteers treated to a lesser standard than other services, eg
 - Having to clean our own facilities, toilets, vacuum, wash floors etc. These are no longer facilities that volunteers can treat as their own and are now deemed 'government facilities'. As such they should be maintained to ACT Government standards.
 - Having to maintain the externals of the facilities, incl mowing, weeding, cleaning
 - Personally washing our fire PPE at home. There is no facilities at Brigades to do this.
 - No WIFI at some brigades. If we did we would have more people work from there (many volunteers can now work remotely) and provide a more responsive turnout.

- facility maintenance/repair. Eg Jerrabomberra Shed is still waiting for roofing repairs as it leaks when it rains. This has been ongoing for at least 3 years with ceiling tiles out and buckets permanently in place. I am sure this would be unacceptable at any other ESA facility.

Cheers



This email, and any attachments, may be confidential and also privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete all copies of this transmission along with any attachments immediately. You should not copy or use it for any purpose, nor disclose its contents to any other person.

ESA roundtable suggestion

My suggestion is to get rid of the multiple layers of bureaucracy sitting in and over the ESA?

Would it not be better to have chiefs of ACTFR, ACTAS, SES and RFS report directly to the Minister for emergency services and have complete control of their services? The current Chiefs are people who are more than capable of running their own organisations and should not need commissioners, deputy director, advisors and the like having their input to what is essential is an operational service providing insurance to the community.

This disassociation with JACS was even highlighted in the coroner Doogans report to the 2003 bushfire (Vol 2 page 216 recommendation 7)

mel**Subject:**

Lane, Dominic
Friday, 6 January 2017 11:37 AM
annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Summers, Carmel
FW: Roundtable meeting [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED, DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Annebelle,

I just got this email address thanks, [REDACTED] is one of the key people we will be keen to engage with through the roundtable forums.

Regards

Dominic Lane AFSM

Commissioner

ACT Emergency Services Agency

Phone: 02 6207 8383 | Fax: 02 6207 8447

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Address | 9 Amberley Avenue, Fairbairn Business Park Majura ACT 2609 | GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

dominic.lane@act.gov.au www.esa.act.gov.au



From: Lane, Dominic

Sent: Friday, 6 January 2017 11:34 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Summers, Carmel; Davis, Annebelle; ESA Ministerial Services; Murphy, Joe; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Roundtable meeting [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED, DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Thanks for the feedback, yes we will be forwarding a broad agenda, with themes based around the commitment given in the parliamentary agreement. Noting that we do not want to constrain the roundtable to just these topics as we want to allow other issues of concern or innovative ideas to also come forward.

We will also be recording the information/outcomes over the four days for broader circulation.

Regards

Dominic Lane AFSM

Commissioner

ACT Emergency Services Agency

Phone: 02 6207 8383 | Fax: 02 6207 8447

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Address | 9 Amberley Avenue, Fairbairn Business Park Majura ACT 2609 | GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

dominic.lane@act.gov.au www.esa.act.gov.au

Dominic

thanks for this, up to your reply looking at the media etc coverage during and after the election, one was given the impression that the Comcen Review was cancelled and re the BAZ we were back to square one.

I had a call from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] re the meeting dates etc and are much happier with the additional info (there are 3 other dates that will suit volunteers) plus I suggested that perhaps a broad agenda be sent out and minutes from each meeting also circulated to keep people informed.

Re the 18th that will always be one of those dates that people will find personal etc

regards
[REDACTED]

On Thu, Jan 5, 2017 at 11:01 AM, Lane, Dominic <Dominic.Lane@act.gov.au> wrote:
[REDACTED]

The ACT Government's policy prior to the 2016 election was to reform the COMCEN and replace fire-fighters with professional COMCEN operators. Last winter, the Government also sponsored amendments to the *Emergencies Act* which clarify the role of the RFS in the BAZ.

The recent ACT election does not change the policy on either of these two matters.

However under the new parliamentary agreement does commit the ESA to undertake a series of round table meetings. In the interests of ensuring all views across the ESA are captured in relation to these and other important areas, including some of the points you express in relation to volunteer experience.

We will be doing these round table forums over January and February.

Regards

Dominic Lane AFSM

Commissioner

ACT Emergency Services Agency

Phone: 02 6207 8383 | Fax: 02 6207 8447

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Address | 9 Amberley Avenue, Fairbairn Business Park Majura ACT 2609 | GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

dominic.lane@act.gov.au www.esa.act.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, 4 January 2017 7:21 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Roundtable meeting

[REDACTED]

be good if you ([REDACTED] gets an invite)

As to my expression of concerns I find blunt works as there is no doubt about what I have said. The round table reminds me of the old ESB consultation method - organising meetings during work hours or on dates where volunteers can't make it, then claiming they have consulted.

Some things for you to research/look into before the meeting if you wish -

In the lead up to the ACT election the UFU mounted a significant scare campaign that worked and there are 2 in particular that affect volunteers. Noting the Labor, The Greens and Liberals basically signed off on all the UFU demands [REDACTED]

1. Under A strong organisation means: [REDACTED]

Keeping firefighters in Comcen; [REDACTED]

We have had volunteers spending a huge amount of their time discussing & talking to consultants, the Commissioner and going to meetings and to what avail?

2. A strong Plan

To prevent similar findings again being made in the event of another tragedy, we strongly advocate that:

The Bushfire Abatement Zone be restored to its original intent, so that if a fast moving fire is assessed by ACT Fire and Rescue as having the capacity to impact upon the built up area, ACT Fire and Rescue can assume incident control.

Again - how will our volunteer officers get and maintain there competency/currency particularly the up and coming new CL as required in the new training Unit, ACT Fire and Rescue will now be the incident controller at any fire west of Duffy and the volunteers no doubt will be left to mop up.

Worst and this is a potential significant safety issue, with volunteers relegated to mop up and a second response Fire Service what happens when the next big one comes out of the west, A lot volunteers if not all will have been denied the vital bush fire experience they will need to survive such an event.

On Wed, Jan 4, 2017 at 2:20 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Thankyou [REDACTED] for bringing this to my attention as I did not receive the original notice.

I share your sentiments, although I may not have expressed them in quite the same way.

By chance I can make myself available for the meeting of 18 January so hopefully as [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I will receive an invitation to this important process.

Please note my contact details below.

Regards

I received this just before Xmas, I thought of being polite , respectful and all those other warm and fuzzy words BUT after reading this invite a number of times I thought why - those that have organised this thing have shown utter contempt, lack of respect to volunteers that make up the majority of the ESA workforce

First thing volunteers have a life a career , a job and a family yet you expect them to come to a meeting during work hours to have some so called meaningful discussion about something with lots of warm and fuzzy words and lose money ????

But what is worse from a personal perspective is they have decided to have it on the 18 of January, seriously are you that stupid and insensitive to have a so called 'lovin' on this date

You guys really need a reality check

[REDACTED]

Roundtable meetings

Hi everyone,

The Government, through the Parliamentary Agreement with the ACT Greens, has committed to establish an ongoing consultation process, including roundtable meetings, to discuss wider resourcing, structural and organisational reform, and increasing diversity in the firefighting service. The establishment of the roundtable meetings will be inclusive of all staff, volunteers, unions, and other interested stakeholders, and offers another opportunity to provide ideas, comments, concerns, and feedback, which will be used to inform decisions on future reforms.

I consider it important that all of the ESA's 24/7 workforce have the opportunity to attend a roundtable. For this reason, four roundtable meetings are planned, to provide flexible options for staff and volunteer engagement. An independent facilitator will be engaged to conduct and facilitate the roundtable meetings.

The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18 January 2016, at the ESA's Hume Training Centre, between 9:30am – 3:30pm. I would welcome your participation for all or part of the meeting.

This email, and any attachments, may be confidential and also privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete all copies of this transmission along with any attachments

Emergency Services Commissioner

Dominic Lane

GPO Box 158

CANBERRA ACT 2601

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Dominic,

I am writing to raise my concerns about a number of issues within the Rural Fire Service. Writing to you is something that I have agonised over for a number of months and something that I have not undertaken lightly.

I should state that the views expressed in the following document are my own and do not form part of any formal representation by my brigade [REDACTED] where I am currently a [REDACTED]

While much of the data I have relied on is based solely on [REDACTED] my general discussions with other RFS members, confirms that the issues are of concern in other Brigades.

I am happy to make myself available to discuss these matters should you wish and have included my contact details above.

Introduction

I have observed an increasing disenfranchisement of volunteer brigade members with the Emergency Services response to grass and bush fires that harbors both short and long term impacts on Rural Brigades and their fire fighting capacity.

Many volunteers now face the dilemma of little or no real time experience fire fighting, often over many years, which has consequences for the acquisition and maintenance of the skills required, retention of new recruits and succession planning within the Brigades, and most importantly - safely dealing with a large bush fire.

Background summary for GCRK

Guises Creek crews attended around 27 fire related incidents in the last 2 years (Seasons 2013-2014 and 2014-2015), although there were many more grass and bush fires in the area that the Brigade could have been responded to.

Of the 27 incidents 4 were deployments outside the ACT which were limited in opportunities for new recruits due to the timing - requiring time off work - and the experience (and level of fitness), required.

Only 16 of the 27 incidents involved fire fighting type duties, 3 were contained mulch and tip fires and only 5 or 6 actually required water on flames. Most other incidents were blacking out and providing other support roles such as carrying water.

Urban crews were the primary responding crew in all but 3 cases. In these 3 instances the Guises Creek Brigade attended as the primary responding unit and all 3 related to investigating smoke sightings, mostly done by GCRK Command.

It's clear that the opportunity for volunteers to attend actual running fires is extremely limited (1&2).

Factors

Clearly there are a number of factors in play here but one of the most important issues is the dispatch system that almost always gives priority to Urban Crews. Even when GCRK crews are stood up we don't get called to grass and bush fires within our response area. It is difficult not to feel that Emergency Service's response to grass or bush fire incidents is predetermined. That is, the response to grass and bush fires is not - the nearest and most appropriate vehicle - but a predetermined pecking order.

Additionally, the increasing profile of ACT Parks in fire fighting and fuel management has relegated the Rural Brigades to an ever increasing support role. While Parks have expanded the number of HR burns these are mostly run during the working week and it is just not possible for many of the Volunteers to attend.

The current SOP's indicate that Parks will stand down at 17:00 hours on Level 2 and 3 days, yet Parks have chosen to stand up until 18:00 hours. This is another, all be it small, opportunity lost to RFS crews where they might have had an increased chance of being responded to a fire with out competing with Parks units.

So the number of incidents that give us (the volunteers) the opportunity to build team work with new recruits in fighting grass and bush fires is small, on average, 4 incidents annually. Even for those of us who stand up frequently the "stars rarely align" and in reality most would be lucky to attend one actual running fire in a season.

As keen as many of the new recruits are it is now common that many will not attend their first bush or grass fire for at least 2 years and in some cases longer. For new recruits the promise of the RFS web page that "from here you will be ready to begin your existing journey as a volunteer Rural Fire Fighter" remains unfulfilled and their disappointment is palpable.

Critically Emergency Services must be aware that all volunteers need actual (not simulated) experience responding to fire and time on the fireground. The benefits of this are obvious to any experienced firefighter. Testing their training, equipment and building a team response in what is a demanding and dangerous job – read as safety on the fire ground.

The challenge is how do volunteers get that experience if, as is now common, many of the Rural Brigades only get responded to just a few, mostly small, fires each year and almost always as a backup crew with very little actual fire fighting?

Consequences

Under the current operating conditions it is not unreasonable to suppose that crews in the Rural Brigades have less than optimal practical skills and an over representation of inexperienced recruits.

The years of experience profiles, that are available to me, clearly show a strong bias and a disturbing loss of recruits after 2 years. Anecdotally I hear that these departing members frequently cite the lack of fire fighting as a compelling reason.

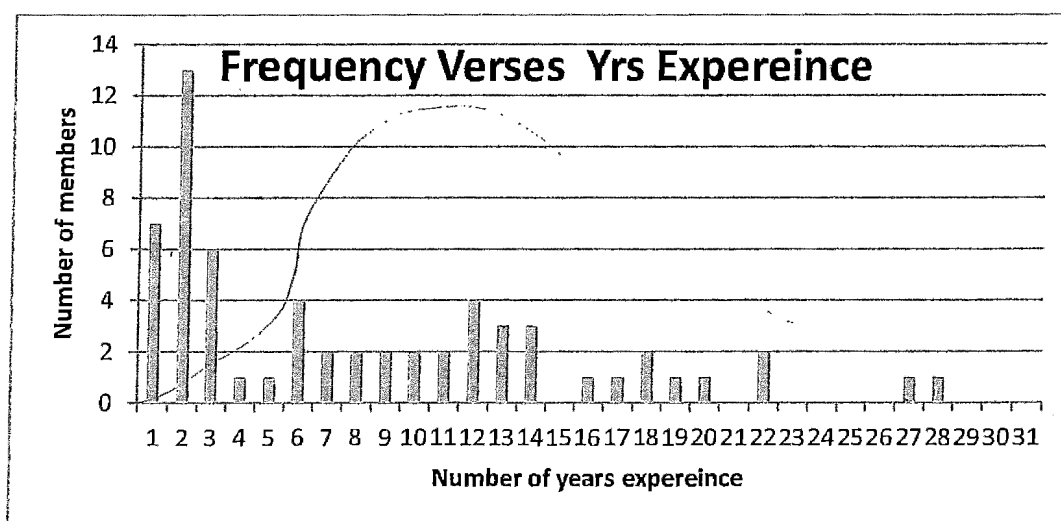


Table: Shows frequency verses the years of experience for Guises Creek Brigade members for Feb 2015

The cost of training and equipping new recruits is considerable. Yet it is clear that only a small number of these will continue after two years and it's difficult not to wonder how we might do this better, conserve the dollar resources and reduce the 'churn' in new volunteers.

Clearly we are now heading for a real problem with succession planning. In the Guises Creek Brigade, even with around 60 members on the books, probably less than 25% are active members. This affects the Brigade in a number of ways:

- The hard won experience resides heavily in the older members who had the opportunity to regularly attend fires under a different operating regime. As the above chart shows, the number of these "old hands" is numerically small and as these members retire from volunteering it is difficult to see how their experience will be replaced as the current operating system just does not deliver volunteers to actual fires in the frequency where that broad experience can be gained.
- Critically the lack of experience must impact on all levels of training and raise considerable concerns about safety. It is not uncommon to attend a formal (RFS run) training program and find some of those attending lack any real time experience on the fireground. Yet to be fair to those people, I don't know how, under the present system, they can get that experience.
- For those volunteers who do stay it is also problematic as they progress through to *Advanced Fire Fighting* and *Crew Leader* roles, many are unlikely to have broad experience in actual exposure to running fires. Yet these positions are critical to fire fighting and the safety of crews.

I have also witnessed the increase incidence for RFS and Parks crews to self-respond to incidents. While SOP 3.2 UDD does allow for this - on page 130 - *'RFS units may, during the initial response phase, "proceed" to a fire within their immediate area without being dispatched by COMCEN.'* The problem is that 'their immediate area' is not defined and you could make a case that you could proceed to any fire in the ACT irrespective of where you are located, or indeed, re-position your crews nearer any smoke or fire sighting. The radio chatter clearly confirms the jockeying for position the moment a "white" call is made.

The operational consequences of this include:

- a one in, all in race to the fire with the potential for chaos on the fireground and
- it reduces the availability of crews in other parts of the ACT.

It is neither an edifying example of professionalism and training, nor is it an acceptable outcome for other crews who might otherwise reasonably be expected to be responded to the sighting by COMCEN.

Setting aside the rush of blood involved in these responses I believe it confirms the lack of faith held by many in the COMCEN dispatch system. A system that has so distorted the role of the bush fire fighting services to the point where many genuinely believe the only way they will get to a fire is to self-respond.

Long term

If Emergency Services has a long term vision for inclusion of volunteer Brigades in their system then it must look at the current operations and understand the incremental and cumulative effect of the current management strategies have on the morale within the volunteer ranks of the RFS.

Clearly Rural Fire Services need to be included in the response to fires in a meaningful way so they can remain viable, get experience, retain recruits and maintain safety on the fire ground.

While we have come through a number of relatively benign fire seasons our history clearly tells us that at some time there will be another conflagration such as 2003. Surely history has also teaches us that a nurtured and competent Volunteer Brigade is something we can't do without.

COMCEN review

I note that some of the issues I have raised were discussed in the recent review of COMCEN by Leading Emergency Services (LES). My experience supports the statement put by RFS Captains, in section 11.7, that the business rules associated with the allocation of resources by the CAD are over ridden to preferentially allocate incidents to ACTF&R. LES goes on to state that "these incidents are infrequent" yet acknowledge they lack accurate data on this matter.

I am not heartened by this response!

LES, does point out that this issue is not at the heart of the review, but my reading of these comments is that LES is dismissive of what is a major issue for the RFS - if you like - confirming our view that there is an existing pecking order within Emergency Services placing RFS at the bottom of the list.

LES, perhaps would not understand that even a small increase in the allocation of fire incidents to RFS crews would have a substantial impact on RFS operations. For Guises Creek just an additional allocation of 4 actual real fire incidents annually would double the exposure of our crews to such incidents and significantly increase their opportunity to participate and gain experience.

If I could emphasise the important issue here - Volunteers give freely of their time and all RFS Brigades routinely stand up vehicles on all weekends when the FDI is High and above. The Guises Creek Brigade also routinely stands up vehicles during the week and responds to pager calls on a 24 hour basis. Yet our participation in emergency response is mystifyingly low. Low, in both an outright numbers, but also when judged against the historical record.

When an "infrequent incident" occurs it has a major impact on crew moral. Particularly so when, on occasion, the stood up crews watch ACTF&R and or Parks vehicles, drive past the Guises Creek Shed to reach a grass or bush fire.

Summary of Issues

The main outcome I would like to see is recognition that there is a problem in the current operational system which has seen RFS Brigades subordinated to a poorly used support role and further, that this system has significant consequences for the operational efficiency and safety with in the RFS.

I don't believe the LES review has adequately identified this issue and, as they state, it was not their purpose. So while some of the proposed changes to COMCEN are welcomed unless the dispatch matrix is changed, nothing will change for the RFS.

Additionally, there are attendant issues leading to the poor retention of recruits which generate significant costs for Brigades in terms of training and mentoring and direct costs for the RFS and ESA. This includes the investment in PPE and cost of running training courses. In many cases it is apparent that neither will ever be used in actual fire fighting.

The key issue is that RFS volunteers need to be given the opportunity to gain experience in dealing with real fires and that will only come with a change to the CAD business rules. A change that promotes the appropriate use of the RFS crews and restores its role in fighting grass and bush fires has many benefits –but perhaps the most important is that of safety.

- (1) I add as a caveat to this discussion that I understand that each year will be different in the demands on the RFS and fire frequency. Also, I acknowledge that our experience, outlined above, may be different in other RFS Brigades. However anecdotally I understand all the Brigades to a greater or lesser extent have expressed similar concerns.
- (2) I want to acknowledge that it is possible that some of the data relating to incidents may not be complete, however, if there is data missing it would be trivial and would not affect the conclusions I have drawn.

ACTF&R has no confidence or trust in Dominic Lane. Sack him.

The SRA is:

- agenda driven
- being made up along the way
- lacking meaningful consultation
- creating dissension
- destroying morale
- creating duplication when it claims to reduce it
- costly and unnecessary
- reducing community safety
- not wanted by the majority of staff and volunteers



SUGGESTION

THAT THE RFS CHIEF OFFICER
INSTRUCT CONCERN OPERATORS TO
COMPLY WITH:

* SECTION D OF THE 2016-2017
FIELD OPERATIONS MANUAL WHEN
THE DISPATCH OF UNITS TO ALL
FIRES WILL BE ON RFS OPS 1,
AND

* SOP 5.3 AND SOP 5.4
REGARDING THE DISPATCH OF
VEHICLES.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
GUISIS CREEK

11

I believe the SRA should head towards a direction of disbanding the ESA.

It is widely known that ACTAS is wanted to go back under ACT Health. ACTSES and ACTRES calls already come through ACTER concern. So why not have SES and RES come under ACTER with a Commander directing these volunteer organisations along side Community Fire Units, Creating in essence a single fire service.

As for all the taxpayer dollars being spent on different consultants to investigate ways of implementing change for the sake of change is appalling and should cease immediately.

SUGGESTION

SUGGESTION BOXES TO BE EMPTIED
BEFORE EACH ROUND TABLE MEETING.

I PLACED A SUGGESTION IN THE
QUISES CREEK SUGGESTION BOX ON
4 FEB 17 AND IT IS STILL IN
THE BOX ON 10 FEB 17. IT WAS
NOT COLLECTED FOR THE ROUND
TABLE MEETING ON 7 FEB 17.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
QUISES CREEK

10 FEB 17



Summers, Carmel

From: Annebelle Davis [annebelle.davis@outlook.com]
Sent: Friday, 17 March 2017 7:35 AM
To: Summers, Carmel; Jones, Mark
Cc: Holmes, Joanne; Mavity, Matthew
Subject: FW: ESA Round Table Meeting today - AM session

Hello Carmel

My reply [REDACTED] email is below.

For your records please.

Thanks,,
Annebelle

From: Annebelle Davis
Sent: Friday, 17 March 2017 7:33 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: ESA Round Table Meeting today - AM session

Hello [REDACTED]

Thanks a lot for the email you sent after Roundtable 3. I have added it to the list of questions for Roundtable 4 as you asked.

I hope to see you today – but if you cant make today please note that it is on the list.

And thanks for putting your name to it. That is much appreciated.

Best,
Annebelle

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 March 2017 9:11 AM
To: Annebelle Davis
Subject: Re: ESA Round Table Meeting today - AM session

Annebelle

I am not sure if I will get to the last round table on 17 March, but could I ask the following question please

- at session 2 you asked a question "do we need COMCEN?" as a followup perhaps a more relevant question is "Do we need ESA?" noting before self government in 1988 the rural fire service and the Urban fire Service operated quite effectively, and I would suggest/argue that since self government all we in the fire services have seen is a growing bureaucracy that is increasingly out of touch with the people on the ground.

And please include my name as the person raising this I don't hide behind anonymous questions

[REDACTED]

On Wed, Feb 8, 2017 at 7:23 AM, Annebelle Davis <annebelle.davis@outlook.com> wrote:

Hello [REDACTED]

Thanks for coming to the Roundtable yesterday. It was good to get input from you and your colleagues. If you get a chance to spread the word, or can come along again, that would be much appreciated as well.

The issue you raise below also came up in Roundtable 1 using slightly different words.

I have forwarded your email to the Project team to profile this issue under Roundtable 2.

Thanks again,

Annebelle

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 7 February 2017 2:11 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Subject: ESA Round Table Meeting today - AM session

Annebelle,

I was one of the RFS volunteers [REDACTED] I would like the following raised/addressed please

I am not sure if you know the significance of 7 February or whether you were around in Jan 2003. [REDACTED]

Today is the 50 anniversary of the Tasmanian bush fires and the 8 anniversary of Black Saturday in Victoria. Those dates are commemorated as are other significant fire events through out Australia, except in the ACT. [REDACTED]

Apart from the 10 year anniversary the government and ESA have ignored the date, I think they hope if no one mentions it people will forget and they can pretend it didn't happen!

I was involved in the 2003 fires, and I am seeing the lessons learnt from those events ignored, as to why I am not sure.

I think (personal view only) that if ESA had commemorated the 18 Jan and people from all the services in ESA participated from management and politicians down a lot of the management issues we are seeing around COMCEN could have been dealt with face to face and perhaps the COMCEN issues that have been around since the mid 1990's could have been resolved

regards
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Summers, Carmel

From: Annebelle Davis [annebelle.davis@outlook.com]
Sent: Tuesday, 7 March 2017 8:30 AM
To: Summers, Carmel; Jones, Mark
Cc: Holmes, Joanne; Mavity, Matthew
Subject: FW: ESA Round Table - Input

Hi Carmel

Here is my reply to [REDACTED] this morning. I chose to emphasise the new important point about getting the context and balance right re consultations across the agency because this one hasn't come up before in this way.

The point about general support for reforming ComCen aligns with the consistent input from everyone except FR&S. Its stated clearly in the email below.

For your records please.

Thanks,
A nebelle

From: Annebelle Davis
Sent: Tuesday, 7 March 2017 8:25 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: ESA Round Table - Input

Hello [REDACTED]

Thanks so much for your participation on Sunday, and for the extra points below in particular. Its hard to explore all issues in depth when there are a lot of people. So it is great that you took the time to get them in.

Your points are important to the discussion – including some key new ones about getting the balance and context right for consultation, and the wide-spread support for civilianising ComCen. This last point has come up in all the other Roundtables too. It is going to be important to reflect this support accurately.

We're wishing you all well for the ongoing discussions after the Roundtables are complete on 17 March 2017.

Thanks again,
Annebelle

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 6 March 2017 7:55 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Subject: ESA Round Table - Input

Hi Annabelle,

[REDACTED] here, an RFS volunteer from the Sunday round table AM and part of the PM sessions. Some input for the sessions from me below – both re-iterating what I said on the day and a few other points. Thanks for your efforts with these sessions.

Re fire fighting equipment:

- RFS has been mulling over CABA (Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus) for some time – would be good to look at this formally and decide if we are going to adopt it or not.

- Smoke / dust face masks – RFS are issued a “P2” class dust mask (the small white paper ones you can get from Bunnings), while F&RS have a much more comprehensive full face mask and/or CABA. Given we attend an overlapping assortment of fires, notably including tip / rubbish fires, it would be good to have matching equipment and SOPs in this area. With tip fires in particular we are fairly certain that P2 masks are not adequate.
- Ladders – these have been slated for inclusion on trucks for some time, but nothing formal has been done that I am aware of. Ladders are used for some village fire fighting scenarios which we already train for.
- Trail bikes, sonic pulse fire-fighting “canons” and other emerging fire fighting techniques – NSW RFS are investigating these, it would be good for the ACT to take part, especially as we are a well-resources and relatively nimble agency that should be able to adopt to such things quickly.
- PPE (Personal Protective Equipment – the yellow operational uniform) – this has been under review for some time, and after agreement was reached ESA directed RFS to go back and get more consultation. Would be good to get this done, and ideally get a consistent set alongside F&RS, ACT Parks and neighbouring rural fire agencies.

Re an ESA equipment working group:

- Should be a ESA-level group to discuss equipment across the agencies – this way, when one agency wants to introduce a piece of equipment, other agencies that already use this equipment can assist, rather than re-inventing the wheel.
- Should aim to standardise across all of ESA as much as possible, which business cases and high-level approval needed if any service wants to deviate from the ESA standard.
- Should assist with equipment life cycle – design, specifications, procurement, in-service support, disposal

Re 10 year plans:

- Agree this is a good idea, and would be a good way to lock in a lot of emerging equipment as stated above.
- Not fussed on 10 years particularly, but a long term plan. Perhaps 8 years to suit the ACT electoral cycle is better.

Re consultation:

- It needs to be reinforced that consultation means input will be considered, but there is no guarantee anyone will get what they want.
- There are times when we are over-consulted: services or ESA need to make a decision within the constraints they face, and we need to accept it and quit arguing.

Re Comcen (sorry):

- Just want to re-iterate support for a 100% civilian, unified Comcen – I believe support for this is widespread amongst SES and RFS.
- There are plenty of justifications for this – the recent Comcen review, national best practice, better stats being achieved by other state civilian comcens, a steady stream of complaints about Comcen’s handling of incidents.
- Many F&R arguments re them retaining Comcen are contradictory:
 - They see it as a short term placement but say long term training is needed (the pregnant fire-fighter example)
 - They say they are experts in the field but it is not their core business
 - They say they are qualified to run it but resists subject matter experts from other services coming in
 - They say they serve other services well but most reports from those services suggest a poor level of service
 - They say they are well trained but omit that civilian operators will receive the same training
 - They argue for long term staffing to retain corporate knowledge, but rotate staff through (whereas civilians staff would be long term)
- Apologies, I realise your team and ESA have heard all this before, but just want to re-iterate again that there is I believe broad support for a civilian Comcen – we just want it done.

Summers, Carmel

From: Annebelle Davis [annebelle.davis@outlook.com]
Sent: Tuesday, 7 March 2017 8:18 AM
To: Summers, Carmel; Jones, Mark
Cc: Holmes, Joanne; Mavity, Matthew
Subject: FW: ESA Roundtable Meeting [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi Carmel

My reply this morning to Will Refshauge. For your records please.

Thanks,
Annebelle

From: Annebelle Davis
Sent: Tuesday, 7 March 2017 8:16 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: ESA Roundtable Meeting [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hello [REDACTED]

Thanks for both your participation and your additional points below. They are important points they reiterate support and rationales for joint training – a key emerging theme, as well as some new input regarding collaboration and cooperation between services at the operational level.

Thanks too for your insights into the need for cultural reform, and for the idea of engaging discussions down the chain with relevant decision makers and others who can influence the discussion constructively. I am hopeful that ideas like these may help to get a better balance between agendas and issues – noting your focus on better ops and relationships.

Really appreciate the time you took to get these all in to the Roundtable data. I have forwarded them to the team for inclusion in the report and the ongoing discussions.

Many thanks,
Annebelle

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 6 March 2017 4:11 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Subject: ESA Roundtable Meeting [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi Annebelle,

I attended the Sunday session of the Roundtables – unfortunately (I think) the morning session. I've heard reports that suggest the afternoon session was much less dominated by UFU discussion.

That aside, a couple of things that I wanted to bring up...

1. One of the big issues between RFS and F&R once we get off the collaborative environment on the fireground is the Separation of the services after the fact. What I am not suggesting is co-location, or combining of services – experiences in other states (and our own) show that doesn't work well. What I'm thinking is that there should be shared training sessions, involvement at a Brigade level with RFS and F&R so that the

members of each service begin to recognise others and start to get visibility of them as *people*, not “members of that service”. I ran my own little social experiment at morning tea on Sunday. I stood near the bench, with a biscuit and a cup of tea and watched people. The aim was to see if any F&R personnel would stop and say hi. The objective was to see if there was any desire to break the ‘invisible barrier’ between services. The result? Not one member said anything – while a couple did acknowledge my existence with a nod. I think that says a lot, don’t you?

2. Something else that might be more appropriately aimed at CO RFS, rather than Ministerial level... but – there is a general feeling that Deputies and Captains have the skills and training to “run” a fire – specifically Level 1 fires (small, single agency response), but arguably up to Level 2 (multi-agency response, size independent). However, as volunteers, we are not getting the exposure to the fires to run (to be Incident Controllers “IC’s”) in order to run them the way that the organisation ideally wants us to do that. What we are seeing is an expectation of perfectly managed fires, but the reality is that with one IC role per season for a handful of volunteers, we don’t even approach that level of acceptable control. I believe that the CL accredited and above members want to do this, but there needs to be the understanding that sometimes we will not do it perfectly – but that *constructive criticism* should always be an expected response from RFS and Comcen.

Thank you for running the show for the roundtables. I can’t imagine that it’s been the easiest gig around, so I would like to ensure that you know that your efforts are appreciated. [REDACTED]

Regards

[REDACTED]
Molonglo RFS

***** IMPORTANT: This e-mail is for the use of the intended recipient only and may contain information that is confidential, commercially valuable and/or subject to legal or parliamentary privilege. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that any review, re-transmission, disclosure, dissemination or other use of, or taking of any action in reliance upon, this information is prohibited and may result in severe penalties. If you have received this e-mail in error please notify the sender immediately and delete all electronic and hard copies of this transmission together with any attachments. Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

① WHAT MECHANISMS ARE
IN PLACE TO ADDRESS
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS
INJURY FOR OUR
VOLUNTEERS?

② ARE THEY COVERED UNDER
WORKERS COMPENSATION
OR DOES THEIR EMPLOYER
WEAR THE COST FOR TIME
OFF WORK IF INJURED?
↓
+ TREATMENT

If volunteers are on our appliances

- what mechanism will be in place to insure that volunteers have an appropriate level of training and that ~~that~~ level of training is maintained.
- who will decide what is the appropriate level of training.
- How will rank apply in this situation.
- How will you insure that there are volunteers available.



Hi

Suggestion box is
a good initiative!

- firstly a definition of
scope - what is in and
out of scope for
round tables is essential

Thanks

RFS.



A change in
mentality of RFS
that ~~their~~ their
role is a First
Responder - Not
support, to ACTF+R.
The more they understand
that the RFS are
best used to
support ACTF+R
the better we
will "co-exist".

www.esa.act.gov.au

Major Sponsor

NRMA
INSURANCE

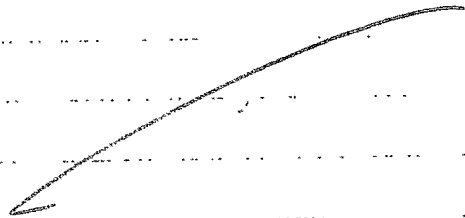
18/1/17

SURP.

The government has committed to no part time stations, however we have seen text that says the new Molonglo station will be staffed on a "demand basis". What is the difference? Please state the government's position on part time stations.

Bring Back

Paul Swain !





Mr Dominic Lane
Commissioner ACT Emergency Services Agency
4 Point Cook Avenue, Fairbairn ACT 2605

Dear Commissioner

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the current round-table consultation process for the ESA Strategic Reform Agenda and fire management issues.

After participation in the first roundtable and interaction with agency officers, members of Council voiced concerns with the process and also discussed a number of suggestions based on Council members experience.

Our suggestions for improvement are based around the method of consultation and the operation of the process. We offer these for your consideration:

- Council recommends that the name of the Strategic Reform Agenda be changed to something like "Strategic Reform Program" in order to remove some of the confrontational connotations that Council members have identified while participating in the consultation.
- In order for participants to be able to focus the valuable time that they provide to the consultation, the agenda would benefit from being more exact on issues rather than being decided on the day by attendees. Many attendees, such as Council members, have limited available time but are happy to provide their knowledge for specific agenda items.
- Similarly it would be logical to have specific roundtables for the firefighting equipment, personnel and facilities discussions. This would particularly enable non-ESA participants to provide maximum value into the consultation.
- Council is concerned that the SBMP linkage to the "firefighting equipment, personnel and facilities" is being too mixed into the general ESA strategic reform discussions, and these would be better served with a wider discussion group such as ACT Parks and Conservation Service and Bushfire Council.

We understand that a Strategic Reform implementation program has been set up and includes bushfire-related reform projects. Could would be provided the details of the projects within this program, including their objectives and outcomes?

Council would welcome any questions about these suggestions and concerns.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

7 February 2017



Summers, Carmel

From: Annebelle Davis [annebelle.davis@outlook.com]
Sent: Tuesday, 31 January 2017 7:21 AM
To: Summers, Carmel
Subject: FW: Round Table meetings [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 25 January 2017 1:04 PM
To: annebelle.davis@outlook.com
Subject: Round Table meetings [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Annabelle,

You may recall that I attended the first of the Roundtable meetings at Hume last week. As discussed with you at that meeting I just wish to place several issues on the table that I raised at the meeting but I may not have been as clear and succinct as I could have been.

The real challenge that we have is that these meetings have been developed to cover two very separate issues;

1. the Roundtable meetings as part of the Parliamentary Agreement and,
2. the Strategic Reform Agenda.

Whilst I accept that the two issues may mould into the one issue for the majority of the ESA, this is not the case for other agencies such as ACT Parks and Conservation service (PCS). The SRA was specifically for the ESA and PCS operate under a totally separate Directorate and not impacted by the ESA SRA. The issue at the meetings that have been arranged is that all the conversation is around the SRA and (in my opinion) do not cover off on the terms of reference for the Roundtable meetings.

The written information about the Roundtable meetings is that they are a commitment by the ACT Government to enable discussion on "investment in fire fighting equipment, personnel and facilities and establish a rigorous ongoing consultation proves to discuss wider resourcing, structural and organisational reform and increase diversity in the fire fighting service". Unfortunately (or fortunately) the Parks Service are not part of the ESA and it is only when we are actually fire fighting (which is a small part of what we do) that we come under the umbrella of the ESA through our links to the Rural Fire Service. **At all other times we are a separate agency responsible for our own equipment and training!**

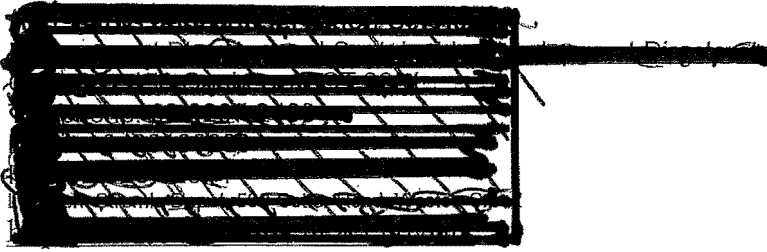
I think there is some confusion within ESA as to our standing as both a brigade (direct links to ESA) and our role as a Parks Service that has nothing to do with ESA. As stated at the first meeting, I feel that we are left on the fence where part of our activities are within ESA but the majority of what we do is on the other side of that fence.

The Fire Unit within PCS ([REDACTED]) has a budget of well over \$12,000,000 per year which is quite significant – of this the fire fighting component that links to ESA is less than 1/10th!

The ESA management need to start realising that we (PCS) are both a Brigade **and an agency** and that any Roundtable is more than discussions around the ComCen – this is a SRA item and not covered by the Parliamentary agreement.

Happy to discuss further and expand on this issue as it is important and often not recognised.

Cheers



This email, and any attachments, may be confidential and also privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete all copies of this transmission along with any attachments immediately. You should not copy or use it for any purpose, nor disclose its contents to any other person.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]