



SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION POSITION PAPER WAROONA FIRE INQUIRY

As a result of the Waroona Fire Inquiry findings the SESVA have put together this position paper.

Overview

The SES Volunteers are not involved in fire management, however they are involved in a support role taking on a number of duties or roles in support of the fire agencies.

Our comments are in relation to the main recommendation of providing a service to respond to bush fire.

The Original FESA Model

We have looked back at the original model for the Fire and Emergency Service Authority (FESA) which began on 1 January 1999.

This service was very successful in pulling together the FRS, BFS, SES and later on the VMRS.

A lot of work was done in the first few years to ensure this Authority worked effectively and many improvements were made to the FRS, BFS, SES and VMRS structures.

The structure was fairly flat, operated like a corporation servicing its customers and stakeholders, the Volunteers as first responders and the community of Western Australia.

Further to this, the top end management levels were not uniformed, unless necessary during an operation, incident managers came from the relevant service for that hazard and each service focussed and trained in relation to their roles.

The use of a representative board was most helpful as there was then a shared responsibility with the community and the Service leaders.

Accountability was then shared with a CEO, Board Chair and other staff and board members. Board members marketed the services and were supportive of the operation of FESA.



The Recommendation for a Stand-alone Rural Fire Service Model

It needs to be noted that if this recommendation is being seriously considered then it begs the question;

Where does the SES fit in across the State?

The current DFES model only has SES as the Volunteers, and the staff are Natural Hazards staff.

This is a drift away from the SES brand, which is nationally recognised by all parts of the general community, including FIFOs, DIDOs, Grey Nomads, tourists and remote and rural communities. They all understand that if information or assistance is required for cyclone, storm, flood, earthquake and tsunami, it is the SES who will assist them in preparation and tell them what to do and when.

There is confusion in WA as they are not following the national brand.

Even the "Emergency +" app on the smart phones refers to SES.

If we are to have an RFS stand-alone model then the SES needs to go back to standing alone.

Rural Fire Service within an Emergency Management Organisation

A return to the original FESA type model of distinct services with their own head (see dot points below), is the only effective way to have empathy with the front line responders (the Volunteers), serve the community and deliver an effective service in the preparation, response and assistance with community recovery by the Emergency Services organisation for WA.

The points raised in the stand-alone model apply to this model as well.

Other Pertinent Points

The current structure has moved away from the old prevention, preparation, response and recovery roles (or part thereof) to what now appears to be response only.

The other matter causing issues with the SES Volunteers and staff, is a result of the UFU taking industrial coverage of all or most staff roles in the DFES Commands.

The Office of the Public Sector Commission needs to ensure industrial coverage for FRS is from the UFU. Industrial coverage for the other services (BFS, SES, VMRS) should be under a GOSAC award.

Please see Appendix below a number of dot points that this Association believes needs to be seriously considered for inclusion in any new organisation.



SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION

On behalf of the SESVA

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Hall'.

Gordon Hall
SESVA President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lin Booth'.

Lin Booth
SESVA Secretary



Appendix

The future Emergency Services organisation WA needs to be similar to the FESA Model of 1 January 1999.

The new organisation to encompass all four services; FRS, BFS, SES, VMRS.

Allowance and recognition for VFES needs to be addressed.

Points for consideration:

- All Four Services need an individual head of that Service, reporting to the head of the new Emergency Services organisation.
- Consideration of recognition for Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services within a structure.
- The head of each Service must have the Service specific background.
- The head of the SES must have an SES Volunteer background.
- The heads of all services must have experience in that specific service area
- There must be a career path for SES Staff.
- Training of Volunteers must be separated from structural fire and be reflective of the role of their Service.
- Industrial coverage for SES Staff must be the GOSAC Award.
- Strategic areas of the new organisation must have an understanding of all service requirements.
- Non-operational departments must have an appropriate resource allocated for each service.
- Volunteer skills must be recognised at Incident Management level.
- Removal of "Volunteer" designation on uniforms as this degrades the public and career staff perception of the Volunteer's high level of skill sets.
- Removal of Incident Controllers outside of SEMC Policy 4.1 must desist.
- Where an incident response involves more than one SES unit, or more than one service, a post incident analyses or major incident report must be conducted within 2 months of that incident,
- A return to the most competent person, by qualifications and experience and not rank, to lead in incident management - Rank cannot override competencies in incident management.
- A return to Community Centre Emergency Management.
- A return to consistent messages across all regions for each service.
- Statistics show that the cost to the state for natural disasters is more than it is for structural fire related events.
- The Cockburn ESC Foyer must have a simple display depicting each of the services (not a fire truck which portrays a fire paradigm to all who enter the building).
- A more effective and timely management of the Local Government Grants Scheme is required to assist SES Volunteers and the community.