

Media Release



Topic: FESA not ready

Statement to be attributed to: Association President, Mr Terry Hunter AFSM

Volunteers are outraged at the continual political rhetoric being generated in recent media articles. Clearly this demonstrates the union movement may be controlling FESA and there has been no cultural change within the organisation.

The career Fire and Rescue Service/FESA only provide the state with approximately 3.2% of the fire fighting resources compared to the Local Government Bush Fire Brigades who provide 80% and Department of Environment & Conservation who provide 15%.

The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades(inc) who represent the biggest volunteer fire fighting resource, is calling on all sides of government to dismiss this continual false and misleading campaign.

We need to build community resilience by giving controlling powers back to the agencies who are experienced, have the local knowledge in protecting their community. We have trained/qualified volunteers from all walks of life, as does Local Government personnel, yet we are continually fighting a bureaucracy that stop these skills, qualifications and experience from being recognised and utilised, which includes restrictions stopping volunteers from accessing appropriate courses.

Department of Environment & Conservation have far more experience and depth than FESA in rural interface, broad acre fire, fuel and land management activities; this was again demonstrated recently in fires up north.

The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades(inc) is extremely concerned that the state would be exposed by giving control to city centric, urban based fire fighting organisation and call for this to be rectified.

The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades(inc) reminds government that the trial of bringing the administrative arms of government agencies together under one umbrella (FESA) to improve the administrative efficiencies and provide more support and guidance has not worked. What has been created appears to be a union controlled bureaucracy that is control focused. We would be better served by Fire Liaison Officers who understand and work with Volunteers.

The Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades(inc) is concerned that the intent of what was raised by the Keelty enquiry, "*That FESA needs a cultural change*", is being used as an excuse to get more centralised control which is not in the interest of volunteerism.

The Keelty enquiry did not say there was any issue with the Local Government Bush Fire Brigades or Department of Environment & Conservation culture and the restructuring must be focused on the FESA culture, not centralised control.

Volunteers are saying enough is enough and call on all sides of government to stop using Emergency Services Levy funding as a means of trying to get control of the community volunteers. Give us the equal funding, respect and recognition we deserve.

Volunteers are just that, Volunteers, formed by their communities for their communities and giving all the control to one city based agency is dangerous and not supported.

- Statement Ends -

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Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades (inc)

<http://www.bushfirevolwa.com.au/>