



The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

"Representing the interests of CFS Members"

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 15th January 2015

EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR REFORM

An increasing number of CFS volunteers are expressing concerns that the Weatherill Government's emergency sector reform may compromise the integrity of CFS and the high standard of emergency response CFS volunteers currently provide to South Australia. Volunteers fear that under the government's proposed structure the experience and expertise recently provided by CFS to fight the Sampson Flat fire may become a thing of the past.

In 2014 the State Government initiated an emergency sector reform to address the recommendations of the Holloway (2013) report. The Holloway report indicates that the operational components of CFS, SES and MFS are working well on the front line, both in their own right and collaboratively, however despite these findings State Cabinet recently endorsed the Emergency Sector Reform.

Volunteers are concerned by the Weatherill government's persistent determination to reform the emergency sector and insistence to drive the process without providing key detail to stakeholders.

A number of CFS volunteers have expressed their frustration that after 6 months of "consultation" Minister Piccolo has not provided a business plan that justifies such a major upheaval of the emergency services.

Volunteers fear that the State Government international search for a Commissioner of Emergency Services to replace the current Chief Officer of CFS, SES, MFS, and SAFECOM, by July 2015, prior to formulating a business plan, may be catastrophic for emergency services in South Australia.

Recently the CFS Chief Officer Mr Greg Nettleton shared his concerns in regards to the proposed restructuring of the emergency services, a view that is shared by an increasing number of volunteers.

Following extensive consultation by the Country Fire Service Volunteers Association the majority of CFS volunteers have indicated that they will not accept the amalgamation or integration of services at any level that directly impacts on the current CFS Chain of Command and will vehemently oppose any such attempts.

Following the recent Sampson Flat fire, Premier Weatherill and Minister Piccolo must surely recognise that the greatest asset of emergency services in South Australia is the 15,000 volunteer emergency responders. It is both irresponsible and dangerous of the Weatherill Government to forge ahead with an emergency sector reform which is not fully supported by the majority of volunteers.

CFS volunteers call on the Premier to halt the Cabinet endorsed emergency sector reform process until such time as a business plan and cost analysis is established and tabled in Parliament to enable both transparency and scrutiny.

The future prosperity of CFS lies within South Australian communities, and volunteers fear that under the sector reform the safety of South Australian communities will be placed at risk as Government agendas are pursued without understanding the expert nature of the work undertaken by CFS and the other emergency service agencies.

CFS is a highly esteemed emergency service agency, which should the emergency sector reform be allowed to continue without transparency will be lost to politically driven agendas.

It is time for the Weatherill Government to explain to the people of South Australia the justification for this continual overwhelming desire by Government to reform the emergency sector, before the safety of South Australia is truly compromised and another South Australian icon The Country Fire Service is lost.

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