



**Country Fire Service
Volunteers Association**
"Representing the Interests of CFS Members"

**WORKING TOGETHER
WITH
REGIONAL COMMITTEES**

25th February 2015

BULLETIN

**TO ALL CFS VOLUNTEERS
NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BECOME COMPLACENT
THE SECTOR REFORM IS STILL A MAJOR ISSUE!
MINISTER PICCOLO'S GRAND PLAN FOR YOUR CFS LACKS TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY
CFSVA FACTS VS MINISTER'S MYTHS**

Overall, nothing has changed. The spin of "I am now willing to negotiate" is an attempt to quieten the fear, unrest and anger within the ranks of the CFS and members of the public. The fact the Minister now states he is willing to "negotiate" is an admission that he has driven the process to his agenda only from the beginning which supports our claim of a flawed process. The Minister's letter offers no certainty for CFS volunteers, no protection for CFS volunteers and continues to demand that a Commissioner be appointed despite there never being discussion or agreement on the same. Should a ranked Commissioner be appointed it will provide the ultimate power to control the CFS and its volunteers – despite rhetoric from the Minister, it will in fact create a "One Fire Service" model.

After 8 months of flawed consultation, "trust me" is not acceptable. A business case and rationale for implementing this reform has still not been supplied. This process continues to be city and union centric and poses extreme threats to the volunteers and the function and efficiency of the SA Country Fire Service.

Below is the text of the Minister's recently released letter to members of the emergency services sector along with the CFSVA response to his comments –

Dear Member

From the beginning of the reform process, I made it very clear, that on the ground, the three services (MFS, CFS and SES) will retain their separate identities and enjoy their operational independence.

- ***From the beginning, the Minister thought the “operational structure” of the organisation meant implementing the Australasian Interservice Incident Management Systems (AIIMS), which is only a principle of operation not a structure. He is willing to destroy the structure we have from Regional level up. In this statement he clearly states “on the ground” meaning that he is still willing to compromise our structure from Regional level up***
- ***Does the Minister mean at Brigade level, Group level or Region level?***
- ***The Minister's answer has never been clear nor consistent on this matter***
- ***The Minister states that there will be integration / co-location at regional level, so maybe CFS will remain at Group level, but then it is indicated that there will be no CFS groups, so operational independence for CFS volunteers will literally be only at ground level.***

Despite having given this assurance many times, the feedback I am receiving is that the identity and operational independence of the individual agencies continue to be two areas of concerns for personnel in the sector.

- ***The Minister doesn't get it – our “identity” and “operational independence” applies to the ENTIRE structure – from the newest frontline volunteer to the Chief Officer. As per his previous paragraph, he is willing to compromise both of these.***

Therefore, as outlined at the Emergency Service Reform Reference Group meeting on 23 February 2015, I am proposing that the Chief Officer positions be retained in the operational stream of the three services.

- ***This is only a change of title from the proposed Assistant Commissioner under sector reform to Chief Officer because current legislation requires a Chief Officer for each CFS / SES / MFS.***
- ***Again, this leaves the true operational structure & identity compromised***

While this will hopefully reassure volunteers and paid personnel, it will also mean that the Chief Officers will have less non-operational work and can focus on the operational aspects of their respective services.

- ***Remember that despite this assurance of “Chief Officers focussing on the operational aspects of their respective services”, a RANKED COMMISSIONER will be above them who will have the power to DIRECT operationally. This means our highest ranked officer is in fact the Commissioner and not our present Chief***
- ***So while the title Chief Officer is retained because of legislative requirements the duties statements for each of the Chief Officers will be brought into line with the Assistant Commissioner duties as outlined in the Minister presentation in December 2014***

In addition, working within the current legislative framework (the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005), I will move forward with the first phase of the reform by removing duplication in non-operational areas. As such, key appointments will soon be made in the South Australian Fire and Emergency Commission to look after the corporate streams of the services.

- ***Another case of the Minister acting alone – he is restructuring the organisation without consultation and to his own agenda. The ruse was that the Commissioner would do this but surprise, surprise, the Minister is slipping changes in BEFORE anyone is appointed to the Commissioner role***
- ***All non-operational areas will be removed from CFS and placed into a central agency. Non-operational is yet to be defined, but in short training, I&L, aviation etc will be moved to a central agency as will CFS' budget allocation for each of these areas.***
- ***Watch closely who is appointed to these positions & what their union orientation is***

The three corporate areas that I propose to begin progressively from April 2015 are: • Capability and Support;

- Volunteer Services and Community Resilience; and
- Strategic and Corporate Services.
 - ***Within 2 months the dismantling of CFS will begin, although the Minister has indicated that the reform process will be slowed down.***

The reference group and Emergency Services Reform Office will be pivotal in assisting in identifying the non-operational areas, such as training and human resources, which will be moved into to the streams above.

- ***The Reference Group has been made a “lame duck” – it is purely a way to appear to offer input to the process. There have been no votes and to this point is has been a presentation forum only for the Government. The meetings are short and infrequent***
- ***The people in the ESRO who are “pivotal” to your future are :***
- ***Pamela Lee – Project Director – Commenced employment January 2015***
- ***Toni Richardson – Project Manager – previously VSB SAFECOM***
- ***Julie Spencer - Project Support Officer***
- ***Make NO MISTAKE, the ESRO OFFICE IS JUST IMPLEMENTING THE MINISTER'S AGENDA RATHER THAN LISTENING AND ACTING ON BEHALF OF THEIR MEMBERS!!***

These additional steps in the processes are bringing together the key leadership groups in preparation for the appointment of a Commissioner, who will continue to work with the sector to help transition into the new organisational structure.

- ***The Minister has indicated that once the Commissioner is in place he / she will have the ability to implement change and future direction as he/she sees fit. Once legislation is changed to accommodate a Commissioner he /she will have the ultimate power to make any and all decisions in relation to all the emergency services***
- ***Think about this power when it comes to potential UFU biases and what impact it could have on CFS operations and its volunteers***
- ***The Minister has claimed from the start that it is not a “One Fire Service” Model and yet here we see complete and absolute operational control from the Commissioner down to manage ALL OPERATIONAL ASPECTS of the CFS, SES and MFS. You only have to check the content of the UFU Wordback documents to work out the true agenda!!***

As the sector will continue to operate within the current legislative framework the SAFECOM board will also be retained under the leadership of the new Commissioner. To help maintain stability and drive the reform process, I intend to recommend that the current board be reappointed in the short-term.

- ***So, if the Minister speaks the truth and can prove that the identity and operational structures and autonomy will be retained from the bottom to the top, the existing SAFECOM structure can manage the “shared services” of the agencies.***

WHY WOULD YOU NEED TO APPOINT A COMMISSIONER???

- ***The Minister is required to work under the current legislation, he has no other option. Change of legislation can only be made through Parliamentary process.***
- ***The CFSVA nominee to the SAFECOM Board Mr Wayne Thorley has tendered his resignation from this role. The CFSVA is providing a new nomination to the Minister.***

I look forward to you providing feedback at the reference group meeting on 3 March 2015 after discussing these matters with your membership.

- ***The CFSVA also looks forward to the meeting on the 4th March 2015 - we can only hope it is not just a feedback session and that the Minister starts to listen and act on advice from those who know what is best – the volunteers and staff of the CFS!***

I reaffirm that the reform of the sector will progress in line with the broad concepts approved by the Government with the continuing goal to provide the best emergency services to protect the community and maximise support for our frontline personnel.

- ***It's interesting the Minister continues to progress “the broad concepts approved by the Government”, yet continually fails to address concerns raised by CFS volunteers – the same frontline personnel who will be most impacted by this flawed sector reform process.***

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