

**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into the impact of public land management practices on bushfires in Victoria**

King Lake —18 June 2007

Members

Ms J. Duncan  
Ms T. Lobato  
Mr P. Walsh

Mr C. Ingram  
Mr J. Pandazopoulos  
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Chair: Mr J. Pandazopoulos  
Deputy Chair: Mr C. Ingram

Staff

Witnesses

Mr P. Creak, Operations Manager, CFA Region 12, Country Fire Authority; and  
Mr G. Conway, Operations Manager, CFA Region 13, Country Fire Authority.

**The CHAIR**—We might commence and thank everyone for joining us for the hearings of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee on the impact of public land management practices on bushfires in Victoria here in the Kinglake region. I welcome Peter Creak, Operations Manager, CFA Region 12, and Geoff Conway, Operations Manager, CFA Region 13. I ask people to either turn off their mobile phones or put them on silent mode, including those in the gallery, and remind Peter and Geoff that all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript in the next couple of weeks. Mr Creak and Mr Conway, would you care to make a presentation to the committee before we ask you questions, but we thank you very much for joining us today for the Kinglake hearings. Thank you.

**Mr CONWAY**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. We have a brief presentation and I understand the committee has received a great deal of information already from CFA personnel. Our comments will be very much in the context of the local area. Briefly, some administrative arrangements to clarify: Peter Creak is responsible for CFA's Region 12 which takes in the Shire of Murrindindi. My responsibilities relate to Shire of Nillumbik and the Shire of Yarra Ranges and the relevant issues there. Peter has been in his role operating from the Seymour regional headquarters for a little over 12 months. I took up my position here at Lilydale in early December. It was a very interesting time to start in a new region. As you are probably aware, the area where we are discussing today, Kinglake, is on the boundary. This is often the case where a lot of our challenging issues arise. The boundary between two regions is also the boundary between two CFA areas. It is also the boundary between DSE North East and DSE East Port Phillip. As a consequence that offers a number of additional considerations for emergency service managers in this particular area.

I would like to make some brief comments on joint planning and incident management arrangements and hand off to my colleague Mr Creak for some other observations. In particular I would like to make some observations in relation to the relationship between CFA and DSE. There is extensive joint planning undertaken both at an agency level and through the emergency management arrangements in Victoria. These involve the establishment of plans for the preparedness for and response to management of wildfire in particular. The response arrangements that we have in place general reflect those that you would find elsewhere in the state but there are some specific issues that we have identified in this particular location because of the nature of the topography, the nature of the land use and the nature of the vegetation that I understand you have had an opportunity to look at earlier today. Those responses relate to weight of attack and the key issue in relation to how we approach situations which is a concentrated attack on new outbreaks to keep them as small as possible. Perhaps the other thing that is worth making an observation about is our efforts to engage the community in preparing for that response. A great deal of effort is gone to both by the CFA and DSE to ensure that communities here understand what they can expect from us in the way that we respond to and manage incidents, and also understand the hopes and expectations that we have of the community in the way that they respond. Mr Creak will make some observations in relation to the work that has been done.

Other planning that we have undertaken here relates specifically to communication during emergency management events. Because of the nature of the topography, the use of radio communications for incident and emergency management is occasionally problematic, and there are a number of locations because of topography that do create interesting challenges for us. This is despite the efforts that have been made and the funds invested in communications infrastructure both on our own part and by DSE. As a consequence we have done a lot of planning for deployment of additional communications resource in this area and that has been done jointly between the two agencies. The other thing that I think is worth noting is the emergency management planning arrangements both at divisional and municipal level. Both CFA and DSE work cooperatively in that environment with the police emergency response and management coordinators at a divisional and regional level. The planning that has been done there has proved particularly worthwhile and has been tested in recent times and proved to meet the needs of both organisations quite successfully.

Some very brief comments in relation to the incident management arrangements for this part of the world. Because of the boundary issues which I referred to earlier, we have had to ensure that the planning we put in place does meet the needs of fires, particularly wildfires moving from one administrative area to another. We have established incident management capacity including incident control centres at Kangaroo Ground which

has been tested unfortunately a little too often in recent times. There are also incident control centres at Broadford and Alexandra DSE offices. The facility at Kangaroo Ground is a joint facility run by both CFA, the Shire of Nillumbik and DSE. Those arrangements that we put in place generally reflect the cooperative agreements between CFA and DSE at both corporate and a local level. As I mentioned before, the focus of those arrangements relates to aggressive initial attack on new outbreaks and the support to both those incident control centres and incident management personnel on the ground has been particularly worthwhile. CFA and DSE have both put in place appropriate infrastructure to support those arrangements. That includes the provision of mobile communications vehicles that operate both from CFA Region 13 and CFA Region 12.

In recent times those planning arrangements that we have put in place have been tested. The fires that occurred in this area in January 2006 certainly tested the arrangements and gave us a number of opportunities to clarify and improve on the ways that we had organised ourselves for emergency management and incident response. Multiple lightning strikes through January to March of this year because of the extreme weather we were dealing with also gave us opportunities, and generally they worked extremely well. Emergency management within the municipalities has also been tested and found to be working quite well, although there are certainly opportunities that we have found for improvements in those arrangements and they have been pursued through both divisional and municipal emergency management committees. I would like to pause there and hand over to my colleague Mr Creak who has some other observations he would like to add.

**Mr CREAK**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will continue. The first bit that I would like to discuss is the work that CFA does with communities. I guess this is an area where you have people that live very close to some fairly vulnerable areas, quite close to the bush. One of the focuses that we have is trying to empower communities to take on responsibility for protecting themselves from fire, whether that fire originates in public land or private land. Our focus there is to build a level of confidence within those communities, they are aware of the risk they face and are aware of steps to take if fire is in their area and the preparation beforehand. This area here, we have a number of active community fireguard groups through the Kinglake and Glenburn areas. Across the Shire of Murrindindi and also the northern parts of Nillumbik there are around 57 self-reliant, self-sustaining community fireguard groups that work with each other locally to protect themselves from fire and to establish local arrangements as in how to deal with preparedness, and also how to deal with protecting themselves if fire comes along. The focus there is at either a street level, a road level or a small part of a subcommunity level, if you like, up to 20-odd houses. The other thing that we have done a lot of, and we continue to do, is our Fire Ready Victoria Campaign. That is a joint campaign with DSE. That is about providing some information to the community about what to expect if there is a fire in the area, how to prepare. As an example, in the lead-up to this summer we ran 29 sessions across this local area and we have had around 700 people attend those. We are getting people along, talking to them about fire behaviour and what to expect if a fire is in the area.

One of the things we found following the 2006 fires in this area was an increased level of interest which was good. Through the Shire of Murrindindi, a Bushfire Recovery Committee was established. I think that was pretty beneficial. There was a facilitator that was appointed by the shire as part of that process. That committee drove some of the community recovery type stuff, but also helped promote interest in some of our community programs, like Community Fireguard. What we have found is after that and the engagement from that committee, we found that there was an increased number of Community Fireguard groups that were established. One of the things that I would like to reinforce is that there are communities and areas through here, and if you drive around you can observe it, that by their very nature are pretty vulnerable to fire. There could be a fire start at short notice and people may get literally no warning that a fire is close to their properties. What we are trying to do with the public and people in the community is to say that, 'You need to have realistic expectations of what the CFA can do to protect you. You need to have a level of protection yourself. Don't expect to get adequate warning because a fire may start at very short notice. Don't expect to have a fire truck on your door to protect you. You need, in your own plans, to be very aware of the risk that surrounds you.' There are examples in this area, Kinglake, further north towards Flowerdale, further south in the Dandenongs, all close to public land and private land as well where we may not have much warning of fire that is threatening assets and houses and so forth. Fire behaviour on those days is very much dictated by the weather. If we get extreme fire weather and we have fires starting at those times, we are going to have difficulty in getting that type of forewarning.

Some of those community aspects leads me into the next point which is the Integrated Fire Management

Planning Process. The Integrated Fire Management Planning Process has been referred to in the submission from the government's submission that CFA was part of. We are looking for that process to try and improve the planning and get more consistent planning through these areas where you have public land, private land, forested land, open country to try and improve some of the planning, that it is more consistent and more streamlined across those areas. We are looking to deal with that, what we call the interface country which is the interface between forested area and open farmland. It needs to be able to be customised so we can look at a local area and say what is going to suit this local community rather than saying one size fits all. I will move on.

When we had the invitation to the committee, there was a mention of a number of fires that have occurred in the Kinglake area over the last 10 years. I will mention that we are concerned with the fact that we have had a number of suspicious fires in this area, both on public land and private land. We are working cooperatively with DSE, Parks Victoria and Victoria Police to ensure that any unexplained fire that we get in this area is thoroughly investigated. We build evidence for investigating any suspicious fire activity. It is probably worth saying the other main cause of fires that we have been getting in this area, particularly in the last year or so, has been lightning strikes. We have had a large number of days where we had multiple lightning strikes in this area earlier this year. We had a large number of starts, probably because of the dry condition of the fuel, but we were able to keep the majority of those to pretty small fires which we were very pleased about. A couple of factors there: firstly the weather in early January, mid-January through to early March the weather was slightly more humid and there was less wind than the really dry and hot conditions we were getting after lightning in early December. The other thing is that in this area we have a very good capacity of aggressive initial attack and we can throw a lot of resources at fires very quickly. We have good, strong support here with firefighting aircraft, particularly fire-bombing helicopters that come either out of the Melbourne area or northern Victoria or the north-east, so that we can get fire-bombing aircraft in here pretty quickly.

The last thing I want to mention is CFA's involvement locally with prescribed burning. CFA brigades here are already involved in prescribed burning in a number of areas. We are involved in native forest areas that are either on private land or council reserve. Now, often those areas are contiguous with public land, adjoining public land. Effectively we, in our involvement there—the arrangements for that type of prescribed burning are very similar to the arrangements for prescribed burning on public land. What I would say in talking to members of our brigades that our brigades are, in general terms, keen and willing to assist in prescribed burning activities on public land. A couple of examples in my area, certainly in the autumn burning period that has finished, a number of our brigades assisted in the Glenburn area. We have had some examples also at the southern end of Mount Disappointment over the last couple of years as well. Brigades are generally willing; they see it as a good opportunity to get some training and improve their experience in forest firefighting. However it is probably worth saying that there is not unconditional support based upon the availability of volunteers to get out there and assist. CFA brigades to say, 'Yes, we'd like to be involved,' but there is still some limitations in terms of the time that they can commit. They certainly do not want to see, by themselves committing their time, that that in any way lessens the commitment of other agencies in burning-off. Those time availability things can be an issue, particularly given the small window that exists for prescribed burning. I think in the future if we are to maximise the involvement of our brigades in prescribed burning, brigades and groups need to continue to be involved in the planning process, both the planning process for the overall program, on an annual rolling basis, and on the planning process closer to each individual burn to maximise our involvement. Obviously there are times of day and times of the week when we have more capacity to be involved. To be more involved in the planning process, yes, would certainly assist.

**The CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Conway and Mr Creak. The committee would like to ask you a few questions. If I could ask first: you mentioned, Mr Creak, about prescribed burning on some freehold land.

**Mr CREAK**—Yes.

**The CHAIR**—I am wondering around the regime of how that works, how effective is it, noting that one of the fires that did start not long ago in the region was outside of public land.

**Mr CREAK**—Yes.

**The CHAIR**—Having had at least one submission that says that burning on private land seems to be inconsistent in Victoria, covered by local by-laws et cetera, your views on burning off in effect on freehold land.

**Mr CREAK**—Yes. I would say that my colleague Geoff has more details on the—

**The CHAIR**—Yes. Either one of you can tell me now if you want to—

**Mr CREAK**—In general terms what I would say is the planning needs to be consistent across public and private land, and particularly where you have privately owned forest that adjoins publicly owned forest, I think we need to treat that in the same planning process.

**Mr CONWAY**—There are a couple of comments I would like to add. There is a divergence in the standards that are applied to public and private land in some circumstances. Often that relates to the nature of the fuels that are being involved. One observation I can make is that when we are undertaking fuel reduction burning as fire brigades on private forested land, we apply the same standards that we would apply on public land. For example, the work that we do within Region 13 involves applying the principles in the code of practice and undertaking burn plans and applying those burn plans in the same way that you would on public land. However I think we would all acknowledge that there is a difference between the work that is done by fire brigades in the fuel reduction burning that they do and the work undertaken by private individuals on their own property. Often, as I said, that does relate to the nature of the fuel as it does the nature of the land tenure and the land use.

**The CHAIR**—Thanks for that. I might start off—you did not want to do a follow up on that, did you, Peter?

**Mr WALSH**—Yes, thank you. This is to either Peter or Geoff. You spoke about the availability of volunteers to do control burns on public land. The issue that I would like to explore with you is this issue of the fact that the CFA is funded by an insurance levy on private insurance to defend private property against fire. There is this conundrum of private people funding the CFA infrastructure to then be used on public land fire prevention when—and I know you have qualified that by not wanting to seek cost shifting to the CFA, but it is a real issue as to how we make sure that does not happen and you add value to the control of fires rather than substitute for someone else. Can you express any views you might have as to how we can make sure that does not happen and how we address this conundrum of insurance levies funding a CFA to do control burns on public land?

**Mr CREAK**—I have to admit some of those points in relation to funding probably go beyond my level in Region 12. But what I would say is the motivation for volunteers to get involved is about being part of their community and it is about seeing that they are working to address the risks that are in their area. Certainly how people express concern and an interest in seeing some of that work done, if they can be involved ultimately, it means that perhaps more work can be done, although it is fairly localised and some brigades are more keen and more interested in doing that burning than others. Now, whether some of the other brigades consider those insurance issues, I am not sure, to be honest.

**Mr CONWAY**—I would offer an additional observation, Mr Walsh. I know you have heard this observation before, but fire is tenure blind and it will move from private to public land and back again. The arrangements that have been put in place between DSE and CFA allow for the mutual support of both organisations. It could equally be argued that DSE invests a significant amount of their time, effort and resources in suppressing and managing fire on private land. That adds to the conundrum that you have made an observation about yourself. I would support Peter in his observations and I think the vast majority of our brigade members, who are also members of their community, probably do not give that a great deal of reflection and if we did challenge them on it I suspect that most of them would not be overly concerned. I think they understand the nature of fire and are quite happy to tackle fire on public land before it gets to private land if that opportunity arises. The point is well made and acknowledged, but I suspect that our people would have that view.

**Mr WALSH**—Can I follow up, please. If there are controlled burns at a weekend and DSE staff are

there on double or triple time and your people are there as volunteers, has that ever created any issues?

**Mr CONWAY**—It is of less consequence now than earlier in my career. I think most of our people understand the nature of the role that DSE employees play. They know that they are employed to undertake a particular task and volunteers are more than happy to offer their time in a voluntary capacity. I have a personal view which I offer, is that they are very protective of their volunteer status and they understand the nature and the difference. My perception of the people who operate as volunteers within Region 13 is that they are comfortable with those arrangements. There will always be some individuals who will make the observation, but my belief is that generally they understand the nature of the arrangements in place in Victoria and are comfortable.

**Mrs PETROVICH**—Thank you, Mr Chair. Thank you for your submissions, that was most informative. You mentioned that you participated extensively in your autumn burns and you have achieved quite significant burns in the Glenburn and Mount Disappointment area as volunteer brigades. How many hours would your brigades have committed to achieving these burns?

**Mr CREAK**—I would find it hard to put an absolute figure on that. I would clarify to say that that was CFA brigades assisting with a DSE burn program. Most of the preparatory work was done by DSE and we turn up on the day to assist with more people on the ground. Typically, depending on the size of the burn, you would be looking at, for something that is organised locally, one or two tankers, probably 10 people for the duration of the day. You would be looking at 10 people over six or seven hours, up to.

**Mrs PETROVICH**—Okay.

**Mr CREAK**—Now, in some cases we have been involved beyond the lighting day, into the second day for mopping up and blacking out. That would be an increase. It all depends on the number of people that you get along to those burns. We do not require brigades to be involved, it is really an optional thing. We have a contact person in our office that works with DSE and if there is a request we liaise with the brigades and seek their involvement, but we certainly do not require them to be involved. They are involved on their own terms, effectively.

**Mrs PETROVICH**—Further, if I may, you have participated in these burns this year. Is that usual that you have this direct partnership in preventative burning, the cool burns with DSE and Parks?

**Mr CREAK**—This is my first full year in the region so I cannot talk with a great deal of background to what has previously happened in Region 12. But I understand that brigades have been involved over the last three to four years. I am not sure back before that, their level of involvement. But certainly brigades traditionally have had an interest about what is happening in their backyard which in a lot of cases it is about what is happening in the bush as well.

**Mrs PETROVICH**—Thanks.

**Mr INGRAM**—You mentioned the levels of CFA volunteers to prescribed burns. A casual observation here: there are a large amount of dwellings which are built close in proximity surrounded by fairly flammable bushland adjacent to both private forest and public forest. Is there some political issues around some of the community broader, some of the tourism industry in relation to the prescribed burns and has that caused some problems in some areas about allowing prescribed burns and fire prevention work in some of those areas? Do you see that as a problem or a challenge that you are going to have to deal with?

**Mr CONWAY**—Yes, unqualified. Certainly within some parts of the tourism industry and the agriculture industries in Region 13 there are concerns in relation to prescribed burning and the impact that it has on their industries, most notably tourism; the wine-growing industry to a lesser degree, because as a general rule the grapes have ripened by the time the fuel reduction burning is underway. There are concerns there, but at the same time I would also suggest that there is a growing understanding within in the community about the need for prescribed burning. That debate has been very current within Victoria's media, that the level of understanding that our communities have, particularly our brigades, is pretty clear. My observation would be that there is contention—but it is certainly not to the point—where it would compromise the

prescribed burning program the DSE proposes, nor the prescribed burning program that individual fire brigades may have proposed for those areas of responsibility that they would normally undertake fuel reduction burning. On my limited experience in the region to this date, it has not compromised the burning plans to my knowledge.

**Mr INGRAM**—Do you believe those residents surrounded by bushland in this area are accepting of the risk of prescribed burning? Do you think—is that part of the challenge—that clearly putting prescribed burns around some of those residences would pose some risks and it would sometimes be difficult if you had the wrong weather conditions to keep them out of some of that private land? Do you see that as an issue or do you avoid those areas?

**Mr CONWAY**—No, it is definitely an issue. There is a need for prescribed burning in a proximity to a number of those rural residential subdivisions. I think the people who live there have a mixed understanding of the nature of the risk. Prescribed burning is a particularly complex technical task and getting it right is not a simple thing. There are many, many variables involved and I have the utmost regard for those people who manage that aspect of the work that is done by both CFA and DSE. I think the level of understanding within the communities, based on my conversations with the brigades within the region, is growing. Whether or not that level of understanding is at the point where we believe they fully understand the implication and the consequences of either undertaking prescribed burning or not undertaking burning I would say is problematic. There is still much work to be done by both CFA and DSE in building that community awareness and understanding of the need and also the risks that are inherent in undertaking prescribed burning.

**Ms DUNCAN**—I guess between the two of you, whoever wants to contribute, what do you see are the key fire prevention and suppression challenges for this area in light of what you have been through and what you have learnt over the last few years? What do you see are those key issues you are facing, at this point in time, looking forward to the seasons ahead?

**Mr CREAK**—Yes, I would say the biggest challenge is the complexity that we have with what we call the interface which is the fact that you have people living in very close proximity to forests that we can have quite intense fires in. You have people that live here out of choice because they want to be in a natural bush environment, but at the same time there are days of the year that these areas, within the interface, are very vulnerable. Largely you can have people that are relatively new to these areas. They have moved out of perhaps other areas that are safer and are not fully aware of the risk that surrounds them. Our challenge is to get the community to understand what risks face them, or what risks they are facing, and what they are going to do as individuals and as part of the community to do something about it. In a lot of cases it is not about joining the fire brigade or doing something active like that, it is about saying, 'Okay. Let's look at my property, see how exposed it is. What can I do on my property to protect myself in preparation and how can I assist my neighbours. Then when the fire comes, what can I do about it?'

If you look at, historically, some of the larger fires that we have had in Victoria—Ash Wednesday is a good example—we have had a lot of people lose property in the interface. That happens very quickly. Largely those people that lose property are not prepared for it. That is probably the big challenge we have.

**Mr CONWAY**—If I can add an observation too, as well as ensuring that community is prepared and aware of that, it is also a challenge for us to make sure that we can build and maintain our capability, both within CFA and DSE, to respond to and manage those effectively. Managing fires in the interface is much more complex than it might be in remote forested areas or in open grasslands. There are all sorts of different challenges in relation to the strategies that firefighters and incident managers will apply, and the tactics that even apply at crew level to fighting fires in the interface. There is a lot of work ongoing for both our organisations to make sure our capability is maintained in that environment as well.

**Ms DUNCAN**—Do you mean making sure you have volunteers, or you have volunteers that are well trained and have some experience?

**Mr CONWAY**—Absolutely.

**Ms DUNCAN**—When you say it is more complicated, what exactly is more complicated? Is it the

physical fighting of the fire?

**Mr CONWAY**—Yes. The simple way that you go about managing and choosing and the choices that you have available to you in suppressing the fire and containing it. In a remote forested area you would call in a large D9 bulldozer and you establish a solid mineral earth break from which you can operate. It is a little bit more difficult in one and one and a half acre blocks where you have a lot of built assets that you would have to consider and so on.

**Ms DUNCAN**—The technology you can use is different.

**Mr CONWAY**—Technology, strategies, tactics, infrastructure, skills of the personnel involved—those who are directly involved in suppression activities and those involved in incident management and adopting a strategy for those. It is significantly more complex than other environments in which we work.

**Ms DUNCAN**—If I can continue. What about things like permanent breaks and ongoing fuel reduction burns? Do you see the need for there to be more of all of that in future? Permanent firebreaks, for example, I am not sure, you have some around here from the last fire, but do you want to see more of that stuff? Do you want to see them become permanent firebreaks?

**Mr CREAK**—What I would say is that part of those things are part of the solution, and traditionally if you look at where prescribed burning is done, it has been done around where the assets are. In the interface it is where prescribed burning has been done and will continue to be done. The challenge there is the complexity and the deal of difficulty involved in doing that prescribed burning. Yes, prescribed burning is important, it needs to continue, and in terms of the breaks I think they will be valuable for us in providing a larger strategic option for preventing the lateral spread of a fire or the forward spread of a fire.

**Mr CONWAY**—If I could offer one more observation, permanent breaks are particularly valuable, although they are a lot more complex in this environment as well. Creating a permanent mineral earth break on the boundary between private and public land is particularly useful, but of course in public land you have a lot more scope to find the appropriate place in which to construct that break. The people who originally subdivided these parts of the world, including those who sat in an office in London, did not necessarily give due consideration to the topography, nor did they give consideration to the imagination that many people have in the way that they can develop some of those blocks.

I am sure you are familiar, after driving around here, with some of the approaches people are taking. That adds another degree of complexity over the top of what we have already spoken about. Those permanent breaks are tremendously valuable but not as simple to construct and locate to prove effective. We are very supportive of that but we also understand the complexity of finding the right place and the appropriate methods of construction as well.

**The CHAIR**—I will take a final question from Ms Lobato.

**Ms LOBATO**—Thank you very much. Thank you for presenting here today. I wanted to ask about the level of participation within the brigades locally. We have heard about this area being a popular one for tree changers and I wonder how that affects—with people needing to work in the city perhaps, does that affect the level of participation within the brigades, particularly during the day?

**Mr CONWAY**—Yes, without a doubt.

**Ms LOBATO**—Could you expand on that and talk about how you would encourage those tree changers to perhaps participate more.

**Mr CONWAY**—I will speak about different areas and I will allow Peter to make observations about what is happening in Region 12, but a lot of time and effort is invested by those members of the brigades already in building awareness of the brigade and the nature of the work that it does and trying to encourage people to be part of it, whether it be as active, operational firefighters or whether it is in a support role or being aware of the nature of the work that they do. That is supported quite strenuously by CFA at a regional

and a corporate level, and a lot of time and effort and resources are invested in recruiting personnel. I think the key thing in attracting people goes back to some observations that people made earlier in building that awareness of the risk. One of the most useful motivators for people being involved in volunteer fire brigades is understanding that they themselves are at risk and will benefit from their involvement, both through being able to provide protection for themselves and being aware of the nature of the risk and how they can manage it. That is where our attention has been focused in this part of the world and with reasonable success. But we have no illusions about the challenges of both social and demographic change that is happening within our community. All communities across CFA and all brigades across CFA are reflective of what is happening in the broader society that we live in. We have no illusions but we do have strategies that we are employing to address that.

**Mr CREAK**—I would say similar in Region 12. We have some brigades whose membership is quite strong and you look at their numbers and the membership is very good, but because they are a commuter brigade for a lot of people that are away during the day. At night-time and on the weekend, fantastic strength, but we need to do other things during the day and that might be having other brigades respond to support where there are not the people there during the day. It is not only about the total strength of your brigade membership, it is about trying to recruit people that are available at those times. You often get tree changers or people moving into a district, they still may be away during the day anyway. It is about recruiting the right people that are available at the right time.

Another thing that impacts, it is from time to time—we have one brigade where the employment situation of the brigade has changed. A couple of years ago there were more people at home and now employment situations have changed. In a case where there are now two working people in a house, there is not the people at home during the day to respond. It is an issue.

**Mrs PETROVICH**—Thank you.

**The CHAIR**—Mr Creak, Mr Conway, thanks very much for your presentation. You will receive transcripts of the hearing in the next couple of weeks with some instructions on that. But thank you very much for the presentation and taking questions.

**Witnesses withdrew.**