



"BARCLAY, Brett"

06/07/2017 12:37 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Submission to: Fire Services Review Committee

1 attachment



Submission to FSR committe.docx

Dear colleague;

Attached in my personal submission to the Fire Services Reform Review Committee, I respectfully request this be forwarded please to the committee. I prepared this at home over past days, I would have liked more time to do further reference/ research, though I appreciate the time constraints,

Thank you for allowing public submissions,

Rgds
Brett Barclay

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----- Message from "BARCLAY, Brett" <BBARCLAY@mfb.vic.gov.au> on Thu, 6 Jul 2017 02:21:52 +0000

To:



Subject

: Submission to FSR committe.docx

Submission to:

The Victorian Fire Services Reform Select Committee

5 July 2017

By Howard Joseph Brett Barclay

To the committee,

The following submission presents considerations I feel that are pertinent to the Fire Services Reform proposal. My interest in this matter is the service provision of a more 'integrated' fire and emergency service that addresses changing demographics and the spread of the metropolitan area which leads to increased risks and call volumes and a need for integrated planning and systems that will eventuate under the FRV proposition.

Appropriate to my submission is that I advise I am presently employed as a manager in the MFB Finance department, I hold degrees in Economics and Accounting with post grad qualifications, GAICD (with merit), CPA and have always had a keen interest in emergency services provision; to the extent on private travels to USA I have taken time to visit fire services in Santa Monica, NYC, Boston etc to better understand their processes and protocols.

I am apolitical in my considerations and this submission is basis my views for the potential for improvement to emergency service provision.

The proposed reform involving the creation of FRV, the amalgamation of the 35 CFA career firefighter integrated stations with the 47 MFB career fire stations I believe from my business understanding of the proposals will create benefit for Victorians with minimal or no discernible poor outcomes.

A Comparative:

The much publicised proposal to amalgamate Victorian metropolitan and rural ambulance services pre July 2008 is a case in point. There were various concerns raised in the discussions at the time over the VicAmbulance combined metro / rural service.

Post the amalgamation; the Victorian Auditor General tabled a report *Audit summary of access to Ambulance Services* (tabled 6 October 2010). Despite concerns pre the joining up of the service, the report noted some key points:

Excerpt from Conclusions : " While AV has achieved much since amalgamation – including moving towards 'state of the art' call taking and dispatch for the whole state, and greatly improving strategic planning for rural regions"- (the preceding reference to "while" is in respect to worsening response times related to significant demand for service increases).

In the AV instance, the amalgamation lead to improvement and continues to do so.

The report further states to the strategic 'sound techniques' to deploy paramedic staff and fleet resources which was a 'major improvement' on past methods of allocating rural and regional resources.

Importantly the report states:

"This deficiency is now being remedied and rural and regional areas will both benefit from a more highly developed strategic resource allocation model, as well as new technology that will despatch ambulances as efficiently as the metropolitan area".

A change academic at APIM (Aust Institute of Police Management) advised that change comes from a shift, a shift in the paradigm, and that gradual change without a shift is slow and may be ineffective.

The 'shift' in respect of the AV case was the amalgamation of metro and rural which lead to improvements in strategic planning, approach. (It is noted in the report that AV response times worsened caused by significant demand increase, but the benefits in the shift to amalgamation were evident in systems and processes applied). A comparative 'shift' in respect to fire and emergency service provision, is the proposed fire services reform and creating FRV; it can, I feel will, be a catalyst for change for improvement in respect of strategic planning, resource allocation, co-ordination and improved integration of service provision to the community.

Additionally, implementing the FRV proposals will inevitably create scope for further beneficial change in areas of administration and support services to the operational function. As administrative and support personnel from both the CFA/MFB work together in support and under the umbrella of FRV, this creates further scope for change, sharing concepts and approaches and leading to further improvement in service provision. In time (longer term) I anticipate there would be efficiency savings that may also eventuate (as an economist I feel from my past experiences in other organisations and studies, that economies of scale will benefit over time).

Integration Improvements/ surge events discussion.

I noted with interest, a recent interview on 3AW by Neil Mitchell where the respected person interviewed referred to potential impacts on surge capacity between the agencies. I waited for an example or further discussion over such a perceived impact, but the interviewed person did not elaborate on his concerns.

I considered this; over recent years there has been significant mutual support development between the agencies, notably in this matter, the CFA and MFB. They work well together, are supportive and importantly have respect for each other. I understand this level of support and respect exists at the upper echelons of the organisations and at the operational levels. In such circumstances, I fail to ascertain how there can be a perceived impact on the quantity, nor quality of resources (in personnel and physical equipment and support) in instance of a surge events. I am assuming this is why it was not further clarified in the 3Aw interview.

Upon my considerations of bringing 'together' the integrated CFA stations and MFB stations, I see no disadvantage, but advantages. As more personnel and resources will be reporting, rostered and

administered by a singular body (FRV); the cohesion and co-ordination should surely improve, not diminish.

Additionally, from a business perspective, my experience is that operating from a singular system, such as 1 (one) rostering program, 1 recall to work program, 1 payroll/ attendance program and 1 system recording which personnel are attached to which fire appliance and to which incidence (emergency) they are attending, provides a significant benefit in administering and planning. This principle surely must also apply in emergency management, I have no doubt it becomes a more significant consideration.

I am also aware that the MFB has a developing program (system) for fire appliance (trucks) GPS tracking, again this, benefits overall planning and control in emergencies 'if' more personnel and more available resources are included, ie the integrated CFA stations staff and resources combined with the MFB personnel and resources.

My prior and current business employment which involved international conglomerates has exemplified that the more uniform a system and process, the more personnel that utilise the system and the more information (ie resources, appliances etc) that is captured in the singular systems will lead to improved information, it leads to improved planning and management. I consider for emergency control organisations, the significance of this is greater and the impact more profound, as time is critical and resources availability knowledge (using a singular system) is imperative.

Presently MFB and CFA integrated stations systems (rostering, 'at incident' reporting (Fast Card), recall availability systems etc) are separate systems, there is significant benefit to have singular systems to cover all personnel and resources available in the true metropolitan.

The benefits of the above regarding singular systems and subsequent improved planning and control were evidenced in the AmbulanceVic amalgamation as per VAGO report referred

Given this, I am unable to ascertain references to concerns over 'surge' events. Conversely, I see improvement in planning and urgent control strategic actions in daily emergencies and surge events.

I feel strongly if there are perceived risks, these need to be detailed by those parties indicating such to the review committee to determine the materiality and likelihood of such risk/s eventuating and if applicable, the manner they may be mitigated. Albeit, I unaware what these perceived risks may be in today's environment where emergency services are ready to assist and work together for the community.

Important in considerations, is that I truly believe that volunteer and career firefighters / emergency personnel have a predominant concern to do their best for the community; this is unflinching from my experience and from media articles. A change in where they are administered from or under what organisation name or arrangement, will undoubtedly not waiver this strong commitment to the community. I feel this commitment by career and volunteers to the community good will ensure that if the fire services reform proceeds, it will be successful with positive outcomes of improved inter operational arrangements, improved single standard of response and protocol of response, improved strategic planning and thinking, including 'surge events'.

Volunteer considerations.

Volunteers are an integral part of functional, supportive society, they are outstanding in their commitment from my experience in local community work, sporting associations. My family and I actively participate in volunteering in sports team management, community environment groups and I regularly meet regional volunteers at a social level. I hold the utmost respect for the incredible commitment by volunteers.

Accordingly, I feel that further clarification is required in respect to volunteer involvement with the FRV proposition, particularly in respect to those volunteers aligned to CFA integrated stations.

The CFA website at time of writing this submission did not provide sufficient information regarding how volunteers that may be impacted at the CFA integrated stations; subsequently I feel this leads to uncertainty and a level of clarification is required over this matter. Volunteers need to have a forum to raise their concerns and those concerns reasonably responded to in a timely fashion.

I anticipate the review committee will address this aspect.

Demographics- time for change.

I noted Mr James Merlino MP referred the need to revisit the legislation developed in the 1950s that defined the Metropolitan Fire District when announcing the FRV proposition. I consider this along with an interview Wednesday 5 July 2017 with Mayor of Casey Sam Azziz who stated that Casey council area was the fastest growing municipality with potential to house over half million people in the near future.

The relevance struck me that the old regulations, legislation are well overdue an overhaul. To limit a response protocol and a region of response such as the MFD (Fire District) when the metro region has vastly expanded is out dated.

From my consideration of the MFB response protocols, including having 7 trained operational staff at incidents, timely response that is announced (countdown at the station); EMR qualifications; I feel this level of emergency response is an absolute need in all metropolitan areas.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics forecast and the State Government planning report *Plan Melbourne* (2015) predict the metropolitan population of 4.2+ million is projected to increase continuously to between 7.6 million (Series C prediction) and 9.8 million (Series A prediction) in 2061.

These are significant changes in the population density and the 'spread' of the metropolitan region and there is no rationality in maintaining fire districts and related response models on antiquated legislation that did not allow for this significant change.

Irrespective, I feel that all those that live in the metropolitan area warrant the same level of service from emergency response organisations and that persons from one metro area serviced well by the MFB service, should anticipate the same level and same 'common' approach/ protocol when they

have an emergency; or are involved in an EMR (Emerg Medical Response), vehicle accident etc in another metropolitan area.

We need to be cognisant that the change is well overdue and the more uniform and integrated the approach to an emergency across the whole of the metro region will bring benefits of certainty of response to the community. It will also introduce benefits of a common approach to matters pertaining to community education and resilience (such as primary school fire education programs, Juvenile offender's intervention programs). I also anticipate that the larger organisation (FRV) would have improved efficiency to allow more time and effort to be devoted to the awareness and resilience programs that the CFA and MFB manage, with resulting benefit to the community.

Supportive mutual arrangements.

From my experience at the MFB and particularly from my assistance as an administrative support person to our District Command Centre (DCC _Finance cell) over the past 8+ years , I have seen a substantive commitment to fully support other Emergency Service Organisations (ESO's). this commitment has increased and I feel strongly will be maintained, such is the cooperation between agencies.

My initial briefings were to provide full assistance in surge events such as Black Saturday where DELWP /CFA etc would request regional administrative support (in conjunction with operational support- though I was not directly involved in operational deployments). Upon requests, calls would be made to key MFB administrative staff with requisite skills to immediately (where practical) proceed to regional command centres to support the incident.

The effort contributed by the administrative support staff was exceptional in assisting in long shifts on tasks allocated.

I feel this is a significant matter for consideration. The level of cooperation between ESO's is a primary focus of agencies and staff and the implementation of the FRV proposals will further enhance this I believe.

Commissioner and advisory board considerations.

My consideration of the FRV proposal to appoint a Commissioner who is informed by an advisory committee is that this will be beneficial. I base this upon consideration that many 'command' type organisations are headed by an official such as a commissioner. Organisations such as VicPol, NSWFire and commonly USA Fire departments have a Commissioner or Chief Fire Officer and they operate effectively. Importantly; the perceived (actual) persona of a designated title such as 'commissioner' has a greater impact on the community and also personnel in the services. A large proportion of society (from my psychology studies at RMIT) places an importance to uniformed individuals and individuals with titles such as a commissioner.

Clearly an advisory committee assisting the commissioner is equally important to ensure governance, guidance and a team of qualified individuals to support strategic policy and planning.

I appreciate the committee allowing public submissions,

HJBBarclay

