

Government response to the recommendations of the Bega Valley Fire Independent Review

June 2018

No.	Recommendation	Government response
1	<p>Cross agency representation at briefings and press conferences</p> <p>In recognising the success of the work of both the volunteer based RFS and the full time FRNSW members in joint operations – both agencies should be represented at major briefings or press conferences to reinforce successful integrated collaborative efforts rather than individual agency achievements.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>Routinely, both agencies have a joint presence during briefings for major weather events and major operations.</p> <p>It is noted that the Commissioners of FRNSW and RFS have also released two joint media statements describing collaborative changes following the Bega Fires. Joint representation of the Commissioners has also been noted at the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FRNSW’s winter safety campaign launch,• 2018 Australasian Education and Fire Awareness Conference,• Internal agency conferences for RFS district managers and FRNSW zone commanders.

<p>2.</p>	<p>Eliminate fire boundaries for call and dispatch purposes</p> <p>Take immediate steps to eliminate fire boundaries for call and dispatch purposes to create an agnostic approach to the threat of fires from both a departmental and organisational perspective.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners to develop an implementation plan.</p> <p>The Commissioners of FRNSW and the RFS have committed to an over-riding principle that the fastest and most appropriate resource is responded so that the community can have confidence in the delivery of emergency services.</p> <p>The agencies are exchanging location and capability data of their resources, focusing initially on areas of greatest interaction between the services. FRNSW in collaboration with the RFS are testing the RFS mobilisation data being entered into FRNSW dispatch software in support of this recommendation.</p> <p>A Joint Operations Task Force has been established, co-chaired by the Deputy Commissioners of the two fire services, to look at the operational interoperability of the services.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Remove or update relevant policies</p> <p>Remove those policies, guidelines, memoranda of understanding and committees that are made redundant as a result of adopting recommendation #2 while updating any remaining policies that are considered to still be relevant.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners for implementation.</p> <p>It is envisaged that a number of collaborative documents between the fire services will require modification to incorporate the new dispatch arrangements.</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>No appropriate offers of assistance to be rejected</p> <p>The Commissioners of FRNSW and RFS issue an instruction to FRNSW ComCen that while Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) capability is being made available to the RFS NSW vehicle fleet, no offers of assistance by one agency to the other in combatting a fire is rejected or delayed if what is being offered is appropriate.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>As noted above in response to recommendation no 2, the Commissioners of FRNSW and the RFS have committed to an over-riding principle that the fastest and most appropriate resource is responded so that the community can have confidence in the delivery of emergency services.</p> <p>The NSW RFS has placed an officer at the FRNSW Alexandria Communications Centre to improve communications and the flow of information between the agencies relating to incidents and available agency resources.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Ambulance NSW to be benchmark for call, dispatch and situational awareness</p> <p>Use the model and system in place at the Ambulance Service of NSW as a benchmark for call taking, dispatch and the provision of situational awareness to deploy resources overcoming the lack of a feedback loop in current bushfire operations.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners for consideration.</p> <p>The Ambulance Service of NSW have participated as a stakeholder with the review, and has indicated its further commitment to support additional work on this recommendation.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Roll out of automated vehicle location (AVL) to RFS fleet</p> <p>As a matter of priority commence the roll out of AVL capability for the RFS fleet, completing as much work as possible before the 2018/19 bush fire season, capitalising where necessary on current and future work undertaken with the NSW Government Radio Network to ensure both officer safety and situational awareness.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The RFS will commence a trial of automatic vehicle location on the Government Radio Network within the next three months in three locations including Queanbeyan, the Central Coast and the North West of NSW. The timing of further roll outs will be subject to the assessment of the trials.</p>

7	<p>Integrated call and dispatch centre</p> <p>Implement a fully integrated civilianised single call and dispatch centre, that includes a redundancy option outside the Sydney CBD, which will adopt an agnostic approach to deploy the quickest most suitable resource to an emergency. Such a centre should be managed by a non uniformed public servant organisation like the Office for Emergency Management or the NSW Police Force.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners for development of a detailed implementation plan that will canvas a range of options.</p> <p>The analysis of operational management systems to explore interoperability opportunities will commence in July 2018.</p>
8	<p>Continue deployment of RFS officer to FRNSW ComCen</p> <p>Until a single call centre is developed, continue deployments of a senior RFS officer to FRNSW ComCen on a 24/7 day basis. This arrangement should determine the quickest most suitable resource and who is 'in charge' of an incident.</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>As noted above, the RFS has located an officer within FRNSW's Communications Centre to improve communication sharing between the agencies.</p> <p>The Commissioners have committed to the current arrangements continuing.</p>
9	<p>Uniformed supervision of civilianised call centre</p> <p>While the proposal to establish an integrated call and dispatch centre is being implemented, FRNSW should take steps to civilianise ComCen and maintain experienced senior officers from both agencies as supervisors similar to how the NSW Police Force and Ambulance Service of NSW operate.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners for development of a detailed implementation plan.</p>

<p>10</p>	<p>Information sharing capability</p> <p>Explore better options for call and dispatch, telecommunications and information sharing capability across the emergency management portfolio including the adoption of a multi-agency emergency management operations complex.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>This recommendation has been referred to the Emergency Services Board of Commissioners for further consideration.</p> <p>The analysis of operational management systems to explore interoperability opportunities will commence in July 2018.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Engender volunteer culture, ethos and experience</p> <p>Take steps to ensure that both fire commissioners are seeking opportunities to engender a culture in their respective organisations that seeks to attract and foster the volunteer ethos and experience.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Several initiatives are currently in train to support greater inter agency collaboration.</p> <p>The NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW volunteer and paid employees fulfil a range of important functions for the state of NSW, including fire fighting, communications, operational logistical support and community education.</p> <p>There has been commitment from both NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire Rescue NSW to implement new programs of cross-agency fire fighter training and exercising.</p> <p>Arrangements for the mutual exchange of officers, within the respective Community Safety Directorates (looking at Built Environment Fire Safety Inspectors and bush fire development controls) are currently being explored.</p> <p>The agencies will continue to work together to develop strategies and implement recommendations to attract and maintain volunteer ethos and experience across their organisations.</p>

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Review public information arrangements

Review the effectiveness of emergency public information arrangements, and give consideration to embedding an ABC Manager (not a journalist) into the RFS headquarters during emergencies to broadcast warnings to the community that can be pooled to commercial media outlets.

Supported

This recommendation has been referred to the Public Information Functional Area Coordinator (appointed under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*) for consideration as part of the current review of the Public Information Services Supporting Plan (a sub-plan of the NSW State Emergency Plan).

The NSW RFS has assisted the ABC with its internal review into the delivery of warnings by the ABC during the Tathra fire. An outcome of this is that a seating position for an ABC Manager is being made available at the new RFS Operations centre. The operating procedures for this position are yet to be finalised.

The NSW RFS is working with FRNSW to develop training resources for use by FRNSW to assist in outlining how public information and warnings will be issued. For bush fires this will continue to be done with the NSW RFS to ensure a single source of truth is available to the public.