From:	TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent:	████████████████████████
To:	████████████████████████
Subject:	FW: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 2:17 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

1. By making a submission to this consultation you agree to the collection of information you provide in your submission and the use of the information; and non-disclosure of personal information as outlined above.

Agree

2. On who's behalf are you making this submission? (Please select one item only)

I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

Other

Please specify

SME - former Assistant Commissioner with Fire and Rescue NSW, with responsibility for management of AFA false alarm charging and reduction initiatives

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

• Appropriately resource the functional team that will target false alarm reduction – this initiative cannot be run off the side of someone's desk. This includes the resources that will develop and maintain policies and procedures.

• Use false alarm charges to establish revenue-funded uniformed and admin positions in TASFIRE (Building Fire Safety and Community Engagement) focussed on reducing false alarms, improving delivery of the agency's statutory obligations and developing and maintaining policies and procedures.

• Policies and procedures need to identify that false alarms are an operational capacity and capability problem, as well as being costly to fire agencies, the community and the economy. Policies should therefore be able to task local fire crews, who are among those most impacted by false alarms. Mobilising local crews as the credible, trusted voice of authority ensures the agency provides front-line information and guidance to the occupants of high-incidence premises on how to reduce alarms.

• Undertake analysis to identify the premises that are the 'frequent flyers' – the worst performers in generating unwanted alarms – and target reduction activities at these sites first. This needs to be collaborative approach with solutions acceptable to TASFIRE embedded in policy and procedures, including consideration of alarm delay facilities and the possibility of having automatic alarms to the fire brigade connected to the sprinkler/hydrant system, rather than the smoke detection system.

• Engage with the fire protection industry and building owners, managers and occupants to determine what are these best, most reliable and cost-effective technical solutions can be installed to reduce false alarms, and then embed these solutions in policy.

• Policies and procedures should make clear that these is a 'carrot and stick' approach to reducing false alarms. For example, the first false alarm in a determined period (which could be 30 days, 60 days, 90 days?) does not incur a charge, followed by fines for repeat false alarms over this period.

• Policies and procedures need to be developed for charging that reflect the true cost-recovery of fire crews' attending

unwanted alarms, and to ensure the party causing the alarm is the one who pays.

• As an incentive, a clear and easily accessed procedure to waive false alarm charges, conditional on the building owner/management instead investing the funds waived into alarm system upgrades/reconfiguration to reduce unwanted alarms.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

• Use the false alarm incident, when firefighters have the attention of the occupants, to reinforce fire safety and false alarm reduction messages. Ensure fire crews who have responded to a false alarm talk with management/occupants of the building about how to reduce unwanted activations, rather than hop into the truck and get back to the station ASAP.

• Local crews to schedule follow-up pre-incident planning visits and education/awareness sessions for occupants of premises that have a high rate of false alarms, supported by the central unwanted alarm reduction team.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

• For building owners and managers, recommended technical solutions, as well as consumer information to help change occupant behaviours that trigger unwanted alarms.

• An agency false alarm reduction webpage containing all available information, accessible through a QR code that can be used on 'calling cards' for buildings targeted for false alarm reduction intervention.

• An engaging, informative professional presentation (PowerPoint, video, etc) that local crews and the unwanted alarm reduction team can use in their community engagement with high-incidence premises. This material should also be publicly available.

• Tips on how to reduce unwanted alarms on a fridge magnet, which can be handed out to occupants following an unwanted alarm.

• Regular social media posts on the problem and how to help reduce it.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

• Calculate the charge based on the principle of cost recovery, requiring the fire agency to know the average cost of responding to an unwanted alarm.

• Be aware there are strong indications that false alarm charges drive perverse behaviours i.e. 1. building alarm systems being isolated during business hours, when there is the greatest life risk, and being switched on only when the building is unoccupied; and 2. isolating zones and sections for extended periods.

• Fire agencies can also become dependent on the revenue generated from unwanted alarm fines, giving at least the perception there is minimal motivation to reduce false alarms because the charges fill a budgetary need. A simple, solid waiving process and positive collaboration with building owners, managers and occupants to reduce false alarms will help dispel this perception.

• Ensure that the person causing the false alarm is the one being charged – 'user pays' principle.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

• Work with the building owner, management and occupants to educate people and upgrade systems in ways specifically designed to reduce unwanted alarms. Preventing the false alarm from happening reduces the need to levy and pay a charge.

• Have in place an easily accessible waiver program that allows the value of false alarm charges to be used to upgrade systems and implement local unwanted alarm reduction initiatives.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

• Consider encouraging the installation of an alarm delay function, allowing residents, workers or building management to clear a non-emergency problem (e.g. steam from a shower or fumes from cooking) before transmitting an unwanted alarm signal to TASFIRE.

• Where this is an option, encourage building owners to have their alarm connection to TASFIRE installed on their wet/sprinkler system, rather than their smoke detection system.

• I would welcome further discussion with the project team, if this can assist - my contact details (not for publication):