

Introduction

The Tasmania State Emergency Service Volunteers Association (TASSESVA) represents approximately 680 volunteers across the state. We have been advocating for our volunteer members' requirements since the Association's formation, with particular emphasis on sustainable funding, and the issues resulting from the inappropriate allocation of such funding.

The TASSESVA endorses the submission made by the Tasmania Fire, Rescue and State Emergency Responders Alliance.

This submission highlights the perspective of the TASSESVA.

Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Service reform

The TASSESVA supports reform of the Fire Service Act 1979, and formation of the Tasmania Fire and Emergency Service. The roles of the Tasmanian State Emergency Service (SES) and Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) has resulted in closer collaboration over recent years, to protect and preserve the wellbeing of the Tasmanian community. However, the new Act must be able to provide surety that the TFES can function autonomously, to suit operational needs, whilst having financial independence and security.

Funding

The TASSESVA supports a levy based funding model, ring fenced to support the TFES. Funds must be disbursed wholly to support the administration, operations, and future proofing of the TFES, solely the Tasmanian SES and TFS. Funding raised through the levies, in whatever form they are constructed, should be for the single purpose to fund the SES and TFS, and made secure from activities of other agencies, such as Security and Emergency Management, marine rescue and conservation, recovery, and any other roles of other agencies as determined under the Emergency Management Act 2001. Evacuations centres, and similar responsibilities currently provided by local councils, should remain the same, and under the funding by local councils, particularly as they will no longer be required to cover local SES unit budgets.

Total funding, whether through the proposed levy, and/or consolidated revenue, must be sufficient for the TFES to provide effective response, and build capability to future proof the organisation. There is a need to scale up both the SES and TFS, to expand resources, volunteer and career staff opportunities, capital and equipment.

The administration of the funding must provide security to the operation of the SES, its assets, and resources, through a fair allocation, on a needs-based provision.

Chain of Command

The newly formed TFES as proposed in the draft bill must see the appointment of a TFES Commissioner.

It is the view of TASSESVA to enable good governance and continuity of day to day operational requirements and advise, any new Act must contain at least two deputy Commissioners, with representation of both the SES and TFS. The Deputy Commissioners should be able to act as the Commissioner in his/her absence. The Commissioner, and Deputies, must be selected on skilled based experience, both operationally and administratively within their relevant industry/sector's.

Representation

We propose the formation of the TFES Commission, to be comprising of:

- Commissioner of the TFES (Chair)
- 1 nominated member of the Tasmania State Emergency Service Volunteers Association
- 1 nominated member of the United Firefighters Union of Australia (Tasmania)
- 1 Member nominated by the Tasmanian Retained Volunteer Firefighters Association
- 1 Member nominated by the Tasmanian Volunteer Fire Brigades Association
- 2 Members nominated by the State Fire Management Council
- 1 Member nominated by the Local Government Association of Tasmania
- 2 Members nominated by the Minister (skills based)
- 1 Member nominated by Treasury (skills based)

The TFES Commission personnel are to be representatives from front line organisations, as well as skills-based appointments, allowing appropriate governance, oversight, and accountability of the TFES commissioner.

The success of the TFES will also be subject to thorough collaboration and input from key stakeholder on relevant Regulations under the Act.

Regards,

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President
On behalf of
Tasmania SES Volunteers Association
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