

KENTISH COUNCIL

Promoting
Tasmania's Outdoor Art Gallery



From the Office of Mayor Kate Haberle

27 February 2025

Mr Jeremy Smith AFSM
Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner
By email to TFES@dpfem.tas.gov.au

Dear Commissioner,

TFES REFORMS – STATE FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the TFES reform paper which was provided to elected members and discussed at a recent forum with councillors. We note the commitment to establishing the SFESC. The full scope of the paper is beyond what Council believes it can provide informed comment on, however the following matters are considered pertinent.

A suggestion was made that consideration should be given to including a representative from Ambulance Tasmania on the committee due to their involvement and need to support emergency personnel and their activities. An option could be the Manager of Emergency Management and Special Operations (EMSO).

It is considered appropriate for the SES volunteer units to be funded centrally and potentially through a levy and not by each municipal council.

The risk with each council funding the volunteer unit is that vastly different levels of service and funding are provided across the state. Some councils may be generous, whilst other units may not be proactive in engaging with their funding council and hence run at a disadvantage compared to others. This also has negative implications on attracting new members.

Various MOU's and funding arrangements exist across the state and are known to be problematic for SES staff to coordinate and to ensure their Unit Managers are aware of the peculiarities relating to each MOU.

It has become apparent that consistent, strategic and value for money resourcing outcomes can be made at a state level, and that procurement on a wider scale together with 'sharing' of quite serviceable lightly used items from larger units to smaller units could be improved. This is already an identified function of the SFC and should also be directly applicable to the SES. The SFC also includes a function to 'coordinate the development of all fire services throughout the state', a function extremely difficult for SES with the current funding arrangements and asset ownership model for the volunteer units.



It is also noted that there is an increased incidence of vehicles, property and volunteers being deployed out of region. ie the host Council is paying for capital and operational expenses outside the municipal area which funds them. There is also a risk that volunteers used more globally may have reduced availability to attend for local events. Whilst in principle this makes sense on a service delivery platform, it is not equitable and transparent for the ratepayers funding the units activities.

With regards to the SFMC, Councils most active ongoing involvement is through the Fire Management Area Committees. Councils may not hold the level of knowledge, experience, personnel, or skill-base to be in a position to represent the municipal area and potentially chair meetings with respect to fire management. It is noted that the committees are well supported by a small number of SMFC employees who remain vigilant in their endeavour towards compliance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Haberle".

Kate Haberle
MAYOR