

# House of Assembly Standing Committee on Community Development

## Inquiry into the State Fire Commission



Submission by the State Emergency Service

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## Introduction

Tasmania's State Emergency Service (SES) is part of the Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) and is established under the provisions of the *Emergency Management Act 2006*. The SES maintains a skilled and motivated volunteer work force of around 530 skilled and equipped volunteers to provide front line emergency services such as storm or flood response, road crash rescue, search and rescue and many emergency support functions. These support roles include traffic management, rapid impact assessment, staging area support, recovery/evacuation centre support, scene lighting, logistics, transport and communications.

SES also provides many broader emergency management functions involving emergency management planning, education/awareness, emergency risk management support and the coordination of various projects or support programs that help build community resilience against natural disasters. This work includes executive and administrative support to the State Emergency Management Committee, three Regional Emergency Management Committees and general support to Municipal Emergency Management Committees through the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinators. SES is also involved in considerable national representational work on a number of committees/groups where SES influences national emergency management developments and outputs.

In order to maintain an effective emergency service capability, SES maintains a motivated, trained and well equipped volunteer workforce which comprises 35 SES volunteer units, 530 active volunteers and a fleet of over 72 SES emergency response vehicles. SES also has 23 permanent staff operating from five main work areas (State Headquarters, Emergency Management Unit, and three Regional Headquarters).

As part of the State Budget 2014-15 a decision was made for SES to be more closely aligned with the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS). The Director SES now reports through the Chief Officer TFS instead of the Commissioner of Police and the State Fire Commission (SFC) is now responsible for the majority of SES's annual budget allocation.

As part of this change, the Tasmanian Government and SFC are reviewing SES funding arrangements in order to provide a more sustainable funding model for the future. There is a firm commitment by government, TFS/SFC and the SES that none of these changes will result in any reduction in SES funding or operational resources. Internal lines of reporting within SES will remain the same.

The changes will not affect the proud SES identity (recognised nationally), or the many emergency or support functions SES members deliver each year. TFS and SES are like-minded volunteer-based emergency service organisations and this realignment is expected to provide opportunities for greater collaboration and efficiency in our business activities.

SES priorities are strongly influenced by the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, the DPEM Strategic Directions 2012-17, requirements under relevant emergency management plans and emergency management priorities assigned to SES under the State Emergency Management Committee Strategic Directions Framework 2013-18. Consistent with our mission “To deliver quality emergency management services that focus on community safety, resilience and well-being”, a concerted effort is required to continue to build a culture of excellence that values integrity, equity and accountability and our supporting behaviours.

While these values have served the SES well, the changes experienced recently have prompted a review of SES organisational values, which will be undertaken during the year.

Tasmania’s emergency management arrangements, including the provisions of the *Emergency Management Act 2006* have been the subject of an independent review by the Department of Justice following the 2013 Tasmanian Bushfire Inquiry. 52 recommendations have been agreed by Cabinet, but the report has not yet been released. Many of these recommendations are expected to lead to changes in emergency management arrangements and certain SES provisions under the Act.

This submission is confined to those Terms of Reference that have direct relevance to the SES.

## **The Transfer of the State Emergency Service (SES) Reporting Responsibility to the SFC/TFS**

### **Background**

As part of the 2014 state budget announcements, the Minister announced that there would be a change for TFS and SES in that the SES Director would report to the Chief Officer TFS (who in turn reports to the Secretary DPEM).

Annual resourcing for the SES is now incorporated into the State Fire Commission budget.

Importantly, with the change in reporting arrangements there is no reduction in the SES or TFS operational resourcing and no significant change to the contributions from local government in the immediate term.

The SES and TFS have always worked closely together and have many synergies; both have a large pool of dedicated volunteers, respond to emergency incidents, operate within the same regional boundaries and have many colocated premises. SES operates from 32 premises which are owned by councils, TFS, Ambulance Tasmania or Tasmania Police. Thirteen of these premises are co-located with TFS. Last year SES colocated with the new Devonport Police Station and there may be more opportunities for the sharing of facilities in the future.

Many initiatives for closer collaboration and resource sharing have already been identified within the areas of emergency management policy and planning, operations and training,

facilities and assets, learning and development and community education and awareness. In due course the SES volunteers are expected to have the opportunity to benefit from the additional support of the TFS volunteer management system.

The new reporting and budget arrangements for SES will strengthen this relationship and see many opportunities for greater collaboration and sharing of resources, whilst preserving their important identities and cultures.

It should be noted that, under the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, the Director SES still reports directly to the State Emergency Management Controller (Commissioner of Police/Secretary of the Department of Police and Emergency Management) on issues relating to emergency management and is the Executive Officer of the State Emergency Management Committee, of which the State Controller is the Chair.

### **Financial Implications**

The SES budget allocation from State Government for 2014-15 is \$2.85 million. This amount has not been impacted by the transfer in funding arrangements to TFS.

The SES budget was previously funded from the Tasmania Police budget – however the State Government will no longer provide that money to Tasmania Police.

Ongoing funding for SES of \$2.538 million in 2015-16 (with some top-up funding from DPEM) will increase to \$2.706 million in 2018-19 and this has been incorporated into the SFC Corporate Plan.

There has been broad acknowledgement for many years that the current funding model for SES is not sustainable into the future. There are also a number of ongoing, new and emerging resource and funding requirements for SES that are currently unfunded. These primarily relate to the ability to maintain standards with SES volunteer Unit facilities and response vehicles and human resources capacity to support asset management and also to support the councils in emergency management (particularly emergency management planning, education and community engagement). These issues may place added pressure on the SFC when considering all TFS and SES funding priorities and forward estimates. Details on these issues are covered in the next two sections.

## **The Funding of the SES**

### **Background**

As noted above, the 2014-15 State Budget announced that annual State Government resourcing for the SES will be incorporated into the State Fire Commission budget.

Previously, the majority of State Government resourcing for SES was provided by the Department of Police and Emergency Management, with multiple other funding sources from other levels of government.

The announcement stressed that the change in reporting arrangements would not lead to any reduction in the SES or TFS operational resourcing, nor any change to the support from local government in the immediate term.

Additionally, it was announced that the change was not an 'amalgamation' of the SES and TFS organisations and would not impact on the roles of either operational arm. Further, it was stressed that it would not lead to any change to SES identity, branding, roles or functions, staffing, the number of volunteers, or internal reporting arrangements.

In 2014-15, SES operated with a State Fire Commission (SFC) allocation of \$2.494 million and a top-up from DPEM of around \$360,000 to bring the SES budget to \$2.85 million, the same level of funding as SES's 2013-14 allocation. After salaries, this leaves \$790,000 of non-salary funds. SES also receives an annual allocation of \$330,000 from MAIB to support road crash rescue activities by SES Units across the State.

The SFC allocation to SES has been facilitated by virtue of section 107 of the Fire Services Act which states the '*Chief Officer can expend out of the funds of the Commission any sum of money for any purpose approved by the Minister, notwithstanding this expenditure may not be authorised under any provision of this Act.*'. The Minister approved this expenditure on 5 January 2015.

Commonwealth funding is provided to SES under the National Partnership Agreement for Natural Disaster Resilience (NPA) in accordance with the agreed Tasmania Implementation Plan. Under this plan, and for the limited life of the NPA, SES receives \$135,000 for the Emergency Management Framework Support Program (EMFSP) - to administer and manage \$1.17 million of Commonwealth funding per year (until the end of 2014-15) for three competitive grants programs (Emergency Volunteer Fund, Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Program and State Emergency Management Program).

Apart from the \$135,000 allocated to SES for the EMFSP, SES has no direct control of the remaining NPA funds, which are allocated to successful Tasmanian grant recipients following a detailed and structures assessment of eligible project applications by a multi-agency assessment panel. The Commonwealth has indicated that it will support a new NPA from 2015-16 inclusive.

SES also has no direct control of any local government funding towards SES or emergency management, but under the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, the councils are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of municipal SES volunteer unit facilities. Councils must also support the operations of these units, including taking ownership of the SES unit vehicles and funding vehicle maintenance, fuel, insurance, unit/vehicle running costs, etc. SES manages these arrangements by negotiating and establishing MOUs with each council to clarify support arrangements and any standards. Often these standards are difficult to meet when SES does not own or manage the facilities or fleet, or when the councils have competing funding priorities.

A strategic asset review conducted by SES in 2011-12 and updated in September 2014 revealed that, on average, each council contributes around \$20,000 towards their SES

Unit each year (this does not include depreciation or associated council staff and on-costs). The actual level of funding by each local Government authority varies significantly.

These contributions are primarily operational expenses, such as vehicle and unit facility operating and administrative expenses. While seven councils allocate funds directly to SES to manage on their behalf, most manage this expenditure internally; hence SES has little or no control of this expenditure.

SES does not have a SES Unit facilities budget and is totally reliant on external authorities to maintain its facilities. When improvements to facilities are required, SES must seek additional funding or support from the councils, competitive grant programs or one-off budget initiatives. Two recent examples are the Zeehan SES Unit and the Mersey SES Unit now at Devonport. For the former, SES received a one-off election commitment through the previous government, a Commonwealth grant and some in-kind support to extend the existing Zeehan Fire Station. The latter received considerable support from DPEM and a one-off \$45,000 commitment by the Devonport Council to extend the new Devonport Police Station.

The annual SES Unit vehicle budget for a fleet of 72 emergency response vehicles is limited to \$120,000-\$150,000. For 2014-15, the budget was entirely consumed by a single grant to Circular Head Council to replace the Circular Head SES Unit's primary rescue truck. This took over two years to negotiate.

Whilst the SFC was able to meet the funding requirement in 2014-15 from Reserves this is not a sustainable model. Cash balances for the Commission are predicated to decrease to a nil balance.

Therefore, a review of funding arrangements for SES will be considered during 2015-16 with a view to developing the most sustainable funding model for this service into the future. The review will also consider the SES budget initiative proposal made by SES over the last five years with options for a more sustainable funding model for SES, particularly in the areas of SES fleet management and the maintenance of appropriate facilities for the SES volunteer workforce.

## **Issues**

- *Threat of declining Volunteer Numbers*

Over time volunteer expectations on the level of support they receive and the quality of their resources/facilities has increased proportionately with the increased community expectations placed on the emergency services they provide. These expectations, coupled with some significant intra- and interstate disasters has resulted in a steady increase in the commitment by the volunteers. State-wide contact hours by volunteers have increased an average of 1,000 hours per year for the last six years. If SES cannot sustain appropriate standards of facilities and resources (including vehicles) to support this commitment, volunteer recruitment and retention rates will decline. Since 2013-14, there has been a 2.7% decline in volunteer numbers throughout the State.

- *Unsustainable Dependence on Councils.*

With the current fiscal environment and competing funding priorities, some councils have not initially been willing or able to support municipal SES volunteer unit facilities according to SES standards. SES staff are spending increasing amount of time and effort negotiating funding contributions from councils, or applying for competitive grants, with declining levels of success due to increasing council budget pressures and greater competition for funds. There is also a growing view that SES branded vehicles and unit facilities should be a State responsibility because it is the SES, not local government, which sets the standards and controls all SES operations. Despite the provisions of the *Emergency Management Act 2006* and the good will of the majority of councils towards SES, future funding sources and appropriate levels of support from councils cannot be guaranteed, which poses a significant risk to the SES. This is particularly the case when SES needs to upgrade its standards to meet regulatory and safety requirements and to maintain a motivated, skilled and well equipped volunteer workforce (eg, vehicle load issues requiring vehicle standards to be upgraded to more expensive options; appropriate Unit training facilities to meet growing training standards; and the requirement for rescue tool upgrades to meet new vehicle technologies; etc).

- *Greater collaboration with other Emergency Services.*

There is an increasing trend towards combining SES unit facilities with other emergency service organisations, particularly the TFS. This is primarily because of the improved facilities standards available with other emergency services and the closer relations between the services. As a result, and with the assistance of various government and non-government grants, SES, in consultation with the councils and other emergency services, have capitalised on opportunities to develop combined facilities. As a result, only half of the existing SES unit facilities are currently owned by councils. With plans for more combined unit facilities with TFS, Police or Ambulance Tasmania the level of council involvement is expected to continue to decline.

- *Review of the Emergency Management Act 2006.*

A review of the *Emergency Management Act 2006* was approved in 2012. SES was assigned responsibility for coordinating the review and a Discussion Paper was released for consultation in December 2012, which attracted 15 submissions from government agency stakeholders. In light of the 2013 Tasmanian Bushfire Inquiry, an extension to the consultation period was approved until November 2013.

Recommendations 100 and 101 of the Bushfire Inquiry, which were accepted by the Government, proposed that the Department of Justice conduct an independent review of Tasmania's emergency management arrangements and that the Emergency Management Act be amended accordingly. Therefore, the review of



the Act was put on hold pending the release of the Department of Justice review report. While Cabinet has deliberated over the report and agreed to 52 recommendations, the report is yet to be officially released.

Consultation during the initial stages of the 2012 Review had suggested that there would be benefits in SES centrally managing and funding its volunteer unit facilities, its fleet and all its operational expenses in a similar manner as TFS, Police and Ambulance Tasmania. Respondents suggested that SES would be better able to maintain appropriate standards, if these statutory responsibilities shifted from councils to SES.

- *Strategic Asset Management (Vehicles and Facilities).*

SES can currently only allocate approximately \$150,000 per year towards SES vehicle procurement and fitting out and is totally dependent upon the councils making contributions, taking ownership and funding running costs, maintenance and insurance. Over time and, despite significant time spent negotiating with councils, the SES has fallen behind with the replacement of its rescue trucks. This is having an effect on operational effectiveness, organisational capacity and volunteer morale. Extensive negotiation activities with councils also draw regional operational staff away from other SES priority areas.

Based on current standards, the SES needs to replace 4-6 secondary vehicles and 2-3 primary rescue trucks per year, in addition to supporting its command buses, trailers and all-terrain quadbikes. At present SES can only generally procure one to two vehicles a year, depending on the level of council support. SES has no capacity to meet increasing demands of certain councils to fund large maintenance or repair work. SES also needs to address a number of vehicle load issues, which requires the vehicle standards to be upgraded to more suitable vehicles, with increased purchase costs.

In order to be in a position to strategically manage the vehicle fleet, SES should begin to transition towards full ownership and management of these vehicles and their running costs and maintenance, it is estimated the SES would need an additional \$750,000–\$850,000 in recurrent funding for vehicle standards to be maintained. A number of options for procurement and maintenance support are currently being considered such as TFS or Property and Procurement Services to support procurement, fitting out and maintenance.

As with the management of the vehicle fleet, there is a need to manage the facility assets in a strategic manner. Under the Emergency Management Act, councils are required to establish and maintain municipal SES volunteer units. Over time many have struggled to comply with SES standards and volunteer expectations, which has jeopardised volunteer recruitment and retention. As a consequence,

SES has taken opportunities to co-locate with TFS, police or ambulance stations, which better meet SES standards.

SES does not have a facilities budget and must compete for the required funds through sponsorships, election commitments or various government and non-government grants to pay for these improvements. Some councils also rely on these grants to support SES unit facilities.

The SES also continues to rely on the councils or the Department to fund ongoing unit facilities maintenance and running costs. Unit facility enhancements and maintenance should be funded in accordance with an SES Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP). However, this is very difficult to develop when the assets are owned by other agencies.

SES Unit facility standards would be easier to meet and more sustainable if SES had the capacity to centrally support unit facility development and improvement in accordance with its own standards and its own SAMP priorities, without the need to rely so heavily on councils. However, to do this the current increased annual requirement would be in the vicinity of \$720,000 and this would not include emerging leasing or purchasing costs resulting in the transfer of asset ownership and management responsibility to SES. It is acknowledged that this would take a number of years to implement and further analysis would be required to determine the full costs (currently underway by Wise Lord and Ferguson on the Department's behalf). The proposed funds would initially support the councils in meeting SES standards or to be available to take opportunities such as new combined emergency services facilities, unit refurbishments or maintenance.

If SES were to be sufficiently funded to centrally manage procurement and maintenance of all its facilities and fleet in lieu of the councils, consideration will need to be given to extra human resources to manage these assets. Under the current council support model, SES operational staff provide considerable input into council procurement and maintenance activities with mixed levels of success, depending on council capacity and competing funding priorities. Relying on regional operations staff to continue procurement and maintenance support activities under a centrally funded SES model would not be sustainable without additional asset management staff support either from within SES, or from DPEM Property and Procurement Services.

## **The Future Funding Arrangements for the TFS and SES**

As noted above, the current funding model for SES consists of a mixture of State Government, Local Government and Commonwealth funding arrangements. As part of the 2014-15 State Budget announcements it was agreed to review the funding

arrangements for SES to deliver the most sustainable funding model for this service into the future.

Furthermore, various sustainability and procurement governance issues concerning SES asset management and the maintenance of appropriate standards for its fleet and unit facilities have been identified.

Wise Lord and Ferguson were engaged to conduct an independent strategic review of SES in June 2013, which confirmed that there were a number of related organisational risks. These risks included:

- Current governance and financial arrangements with local government limit the ability of SES to strategically manage their financial assets
- SES unable to budget effectively as unable to forecast revenue streams or contributions from local government. Local Government contribution varies from year to year and between councils under current arrangements.
- Number of risks associated with WH&S, particularly regarding ownership of risks/hazards when SES facilities and vehicles are owned and maintained by the councils.
- Ability of SES to respond to large scale prolonged incident is limited under current arrangements due to limited staffing and resources.
- With National Agenda placing greater emphasis on risk assessments, community resilience and disaster planning there is a risk that planning requirements, both statutory and delegated, may not be able to be met.

The Report confirmed that the current governance arrangements with council ownership and control of key SES assets, such as facilities and vehicles, were not sustainable. Some councils support SES units very well, financially or in-kind, but others struggle due to competing priorities, often despite a fair amount of good will.

It is apparent that the operating environment of the SES currently requires funding of around \$5.4 million per annum. At present there is little certainty around any of the existing funding sources.

The *Emergency Management Act 2006* requires that local councils establish and maintain their municipal SES volunteer units and provide for the operations of these facilities whilst the Director SES is ultimately responsible for the units, their volunteers and the unit outcomes. This creates a potential conflict with the Director potentially having limited capacity to influence the appropriateness of resourcing yet being accountable for outcomes. Ultimately the risks associated with this model are reflected in the first 3 risks identified by Wise Lord and Ferguson, as outlined above.

Section 48 of the Emergency Management Act reflects a longstanding partnership arrangement between SES and the councils (since 1976) where the councils are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of municipal volunteer SES units. Under section 49, Councils are specifically responsible for the effective operation of their municipal volunteer SES units, including the provision of facilities and resources necessary to perform unit functions and training. In practical terms, this has required applicable councils to provide adequate storage, garaging and internal work places; purchase of SES vehicles (with SES grants); maintenance of unit facilities, grounds, vehicles and other unit equipment; and operational expenses such as fuel, phones, utilities and certain consumables. MOUs between SES and most councils have been developed to clarify these arrangements. The levels of support councils provide to these units vary, but in monetary terms, the State-wide average per council per year is about \$20,000 (this does not include depreciation, council asset management staff salaries, on-costs, etc).

While this partnership approach has always been valued, it has progressively become more complex because:

- a. half the unit facilities are no longer owned by councils – there has been a growing trend of taking up unit enhancement opportunities and co-locating within TFS, AT and/or Police owned facilities;
- b. some council members and officials have questioned whether the establishment and maintenance of SES units, together with the operation of SES unit facilities/assets, should be managed and funded centrally by SES, per the TFS and AT model; and
- c. SES continues to progressively struggle to maintain consistent standards in all unit facilities due to council ownership and control of the assets and associated cost pressures.

Cabinet has recently agreed to adopt 52 recommendations arising from the recent review of emergency management arrangements in Tasmania by the Department of Justice. Three of the recommendations relate to the need for SES to provide additional support to the municipal authorities for local emergency management planning, education and training. The report acknowledges that SES resources will need to be increased to achieve this and initial estimates indicate that \$360,000 additional recurrent funding will be required and a one-off \$100,000 extra in the first year for set up and office accommodation requirements across the regions. Most of the required recurrent funding will be for three new regional staff resources.

To accommodate the funding issues faced by the SES, the ambiguity in the governance and the control over assets, a fresh funding model is required. Given the model currently in place for TFS, the similarity in operations and the advantages of a consistent model, consideration should be given to:

- Remove the requirements from local government to resource local units/vehicles and place this requirement on the Director SES according to a fully funded Strategic Asset Management Plan. Local Government funding contributions could

continue where appropriate to support emergency response capability and hazard/risk awareness.

- Extend the Fire Contribution Levy to meet the need of both the SFC and the SES. Some council feedback has indicated that any council-collected funds from rate payers should only be spent within the council of origin, however the view of SES is that these funds need to be centrally managed to support regional and state wide capabilities, per the TFS approach.
- Enable the provision of additional funding from State Government to deal with protracted or unfunded incidents.
- Fully funding the extra SES staffing support to address organisational risks identified by Wise Lord and Ferguson, to centrally manage all SES assets and to fulfil the recommendations arising from the Department of Justice review of emergency management arrangements for SES to provide more emergency management support to the councils

This would result in more collaboration at State and regional levels. It will also result in a greater level of combined expertise and experience in key functional emergency management areas and an efficient all hazards approach and reduced duplication in emergency management planning and education across the state.

Other advantages that would be apparent include:

- Increased interoperability and common standards in equipment, resources, procedures and processes that would lead to more effective operations and allocation of resources.
- Better matching of resource allocation to identified hazards and risk management needs.
- Cost effective, more efficient and consistent emergency management practices/arrangements across State and local levels of government.
- Central funding model which matches resources to risk across Tasmania and is not limited by community or local government capacity to contribute.
- Cost effective and logical arrangements for servicing and maintaining vehicles, equipment and developing and supporting volunteers.
- Improved and standardised resources and equipment for SES Units.
- Greater resource sharing across land management and local government boundaries.

- Greater opportunities for collaborative purchasing arrangements which deliver cost benefits and greater equipment and resource standardisation.
- Joint collaborative learning and development model.
- Organisational specialisation and concentration on volunteer management, administration, development and support.
- Configuration of the most optimal operational command and management structure.
- Capacity for greater investment in roles and functions that match skill and interest and the opportunity for a broadening of the skills base.
- Retention of operational expertise and skills due to greater opportunities for employment.
- Greater surge capacity.
- Clearer and more unified chains of command between TFS and SES.
- Seamless transition from emergency response to relief and recovery.
- Improved response and recovery actions that are not constrained by local government or other boundaries.
- Effective and accountable command and control arrangements.

This model will take some time to implement and whilst consultation surrounding a longer term funding model is undertaken, the interim measures to be considered include:

- Maintain Fire Service levy at an appropriate level, but no less than current level.
- Explore further opportunities for savings from within TFS and SES with an emphasis on a reduction of duplication or identifying efficiencies, where appropriate.
- Development of a fully funded SES Strategic Asset Management Plan.
- Continued additional 'top-up' funding through the DPEM as per existing arrangements.
- Additional government funding to meet a proportion of the costs until such time as these can be fully absorbed through the levy.

- In the absence of additional funding streams, capital expenditure will be reduced and will impact upon the SFC and SES asset base.

## **The Structures of the Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM)**

Under the *State Service Act 2000*, the Secretary of the Department, as the Head of Agency, has the powers and functions set out in section 34 of the State Service Act. The Head of Agency is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the Government Department. In the case of DPEM, the Secretary has ultimate responsibility for Police, TFS, SES and Forensic Science Services Tasmania (FSST). The Secretary is able to delegate a range of his powers and functions to other officers (for example the Chief Officer TFS or Director SES) but he can also rescind these delegations at any time. The Secretary is not able to delegate his power of delegation, the power to terminate a State Service employee or the power to appoint senior executive officers.

The Police Commissioner, under the direction of the Minister, is responsible for the efficient and effective management and supervision of the Police Service. The position of Commissioner of Police is legislated under *the Police Service Act 2003*. The Commissioner is appointed by the Governor.

The Chief Officer TFS is the chief executive officer of the Tasmania Fire Service as set out in the *Fire Service Act 1979*. He is responsible, amongst other things, for the control and management of fire-fighting resources of the Fire Service and the training of officers and fire-fighters. On operational matters concerning TFS the Chief Officer reports directly to the Minister for Police and Emergency Management.

Under the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, the Director SES is responsible for the management of the SES, other functions imposed by the Act (or any other Act), or any prescribed functions. As such, the Director still reports directly to the State Emergency Management Controller on issues relating to emergency management and is the Executive Officer of the State Emergency Management Committee, of which the State Controller is the Chair. At the moment, the State Controller is the Secretary of the Department of Police and Emergency Management.

Therefore, it can become unclear when the Director SES should report directly to the State Controller or when he should report through the Chief Officer TFS. Likewise, it can become unclear when the Chief Officer should report directly to the Minister as specified in the Fire Service Act or when he should report through the Secretary of DPEM on matters concerning the administration of the State Service Act.

There is also potential tension in determining how involved the Secretary should become in the operations of the TFS, or how far the Chief Officer or Secretary should become involved in the SES or emergency management operations of the SES.

Relations are such that these issues are often worked out quickly and efficiently as they occur, but any ongoing review of structures and responsibilities should take these issues into account to reduce any future ambiguity.

# **The DPEM Corporate Services Review, including the scope and conduct of the review and its implications**

## **Background**

To ensure the emergency service needs of people living in or visiting Tasmania are met by skilled and well-equipped police officers, firefighters and state emergency service personnel, those first-responders need to be supported by effective support services.

As part of the Government's 2014-15 Budget savings strategies, DPEM undertook a review to ensure a cohesive and sustainable model for the delivery of corporate services across the operational arms of the Agency. This was to ensure funding is primarily focussed on frontline services and not unnecessarily diverted towards administrative functions.

Auditors Wise, Lord and Ferguson were commissioned to undertake a review of the existing service delivery model for corporate support activities across all portfolio areas. This included reviewing organisational structures, systems and processes to eliminate areas of duplication wherever possible.

The initial review was conducted in consultation with the DPEM senior executive and relevant Corporate Services personnel and, importantly, was directed at establishing a strategic direction and governance framework for the delivery of corporate services taking into account the evolving nature of these services and the broader whole of government support roles.

The key focus areas of the review were the functions of:-

- Financial management and payroll services
- Asset management services (including garaging services, engineering services, fleet services and fleet management)
- Information management services (including records management)
- Information technology services, and
- Communication services.

Upon the completion of the Review, the Steering Committee elected to adopt a single Corporate Services model which will support all areas of the Department including Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Forensic Science Service Tasmania.

Whilst support services will be integrated, it is important to acknowledge that the responsibility for the delivery of specific emergency response will remain with the individual emergency service organisations. This means that the statutory roles and responsibilities of Tasmania Police, the Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service will remain operationally distinct and the role of the Commissioner of Police, the Chief Officer TFS and the Director SES leading those services will not be compromised.



SES is very reliant on corporate services support and has little direct control over the corporate service function. Prior to the decision to change the reporting arrangements of SES, corporate service support was provided to SES by the Department of Police and Emergency Management (Tasmania Police). This still remains largely the case with finance and human services support being provided by Police. As corporate services integration continues, support services will be provided to SES by the integrated units.

## **Community Safety Programs and the Protection of the Community**

Over the last few years, the expectations on SES emergency management support within the State and Regional Headquarters have grown considerably. More is expected regarding emergency management planning, community engagement, education and awareness and the smaller councils often lack support with emergency management planning, risk assessment work and various emergency management priorities being driven by State or National level agenda including the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. SES Regional Managers and the two Senior Education and Planning Officers within the Emergency Management Unit of SES have carried some of this additional work load, but at the expense of other important SES priorities.

For flood and storm, limited SES resources are currently incapable of keeping up the same pace and quality of work as the TFS for its bushfire community preparedness and associated community engagement, education and awareness work. Other SES organisations in Victoria and New South Wales have recently established additional resources to support similar community preparedness, engagement and education strategies, eg, local community flood hazard mapping and related community preparedness initiatives.

In the light of the success of TFS's work with regard to bushfire preparedness and community engagement, the State Emergency Management Advisory Group (SEMAG) resolved that the community protection planning work conducted by TFS should also be done as a matter of priority for other hazards such as flood and storm. However, for SES to achieve more in the areas of community engagement, planning and project work associated with floods and storms it would be highly desirable to fund one additional FTE Community Resilience Officer in each region to provide community engagement, community education/awareness and emergency management planning support and to better support priority projects at the regional and local level.

Ideally similar functions should also be supported at State level by an additional 1.0 FTE for a Community Resilience Coordinator within State headquarters whose focus would be on specific state-wide SES planning, community engagement and emergency management projects, particularly relating to SES specific hazard areas, such as flood, severe weather and tsunamis. Currently these functions are supported where priorities allow by the Emergency Management Unit, which has more of a whole-of-government, multi-hazard focus.