1996 (No. 5)

1996

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COST OF FIRE PROTECTION IN SCHOOLS

Laid upon the Table of both Houses of Parliament

The Committee was appointed under the provision of section 2 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970 (No. 54)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL	HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
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SECTION 2—DEFINITIONS, ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS

ABCB	Australian Building Codes Board
BCA	Building Codes of Australia.
DEA	Department of Education and the Arts.
DELM	Department of Environment and Land Management.
DLI	Department of Labour and Industry.
DOC	Department of Construction.
FPIAA	Fire Protection Industry Association of Australia.
GFR	General Fire Regulations.
PSCPW	Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Works.
PSG	Professional Services Group.
SGB	Services to Government Branch.
SGG	Services to Government Group.
TFS	Tasmania Fire Services.

SECTION 3—TERMS OF REFERENCE

The recommendation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Works (see Section 4, paragraph 4.2) recommended:—

"The Committee (PSCPW) also questions the need for more stringent fire regulations than are required by the Building Code of Australia. It recommends that the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts investigates the priority given to, and expenditure on, the installation and maintenance of fire detection equipment in public capital projects.

In view of the effect on the schools building and maintenance budgets of the requirements of the fire safety regulations, the Committee recommends to the Government that an inquiry be established to examine the cost effectiveness of the regulations, at all times bearing in mind the needs of public safety, as this matter is not only going to impact on schools, but has implications in construction industry generally."

THE TERMS OF REFERENCE ADOPTED FOR THE ENQUIRY WERE:

"TO INVESTIGATE THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO, AND EXPENDITURE ON, THE INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF FIRE DETECTION EQUIPMENT IN TASMANIAN SCHOOLS."

SECTION 4—BACKGROUND

4.1 The General Fire Regulations (1975) are administered by the State Fire Commission and regulate the installation and maintenance of fire alarm and detection systems.

4.2 The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PSCPW) in their Report No. 8 tabled in Parliament May 1995, (Burnie High School Redevelopment Plan and Phase I Refurbishment) made comment in its Conclusions and Recommendations that:—

"The Committee is concerned that regulations for the installation of fire detection equipment generally require the expenditure of such a significant proportion of funds for a capital project. As the incidence of fire in public buildings is relatively low such capital expenditure, together with the recurrent cost of maintenance for such equipment would appear greatly to exceed the actual cost met by the State, as a self insurer, from fire damage.

The Committee (PSCPW) also questions the need for more stringent fire regulations than are required by the Building Code of Australia. It recommends that the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts investigates the priority given to, and expenditure on, the installation and maintenance of fire detection equipment in public capital projects.

In view of the effect on the schools building and maintenance budgets of the requirements of the fire safety regulations, the Committee recommends to the Government that an inquiry be established to examine the cost effectiveness of the regulations, at all times bearing in mind the needs of public safety, as this matter is not only going to impact on schools, but has implications in construction industry generally."

4.3 The Public Accounts Committee accepted the recommendation of the PSCPW, and on 9 June, 1995 wrote to the Secretary, Department of Education and the Arts requesting a submission regarding the cost of fire protection in Tasmanian schools. In part, the DEA reply, dated 31 July, 1995 stated that:

"The issues that the Department of Education and the Arts wishes to draw to the Committee's attention are as follows:—

- the standard for the provision of fire alarms in schools in Tasmania exceeds that applying in other States;
- there is a significant cost penalty associated with this provision. The Department believes that the cost of providing and maintaining fire alarm systems where they are not required in other States, well exceeds the cost of fires likely to occur in a given period;
- it would cost less than half to insure all schools for all risks, than to meet the annual cost of the systems;
- the Tasmania Fire Service, while administering the fire regulations, also has the major role in developing the regulations. At the same time the service appears to have a limited appreciation of the costs to Government associated with implementing these regulations; and
- the process of setting priorities for installing fire alarm systems appears to be more related to ad hoc fire inspections than to proper risk analyses."

4.4 The detailed submission from DEA included the following major concerns:

"The Department of Education and the Arts contends that the continuing ad hoc provision of alarm systems, in accordance with the regulations, does nothing to improve safety for the occupants of most schools and provides a significant cost to Government which far exceeds any possible benefit. This is supported by the insurance industry which provides only a 10 per cent reduction in premiums, around $350 per site per annum average... .

The Crown is now bound to comply with statutory requirements. This means that, whenever approval for building work is sought, the requirements of the Tasmania Fire Service have to be met before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Where the school or library does not have a fire alarm system and is larger than 500m2, it is a requirement that a system be installed. An example is Evandale Primary School... .

Only about 25 per cent of DEA school and library sites have complete systems. A full analysis has not been completed for all sites, but for schools alone, should the regulations not be changed, DEA ultimately will have in excess of $10m worth of fire alarm equipment installed, costing $1.84m per annum to service. It will have to install 125 additional fire alarm systems in its schools at a capital cost of $4.3m. (Currently the Department is seeking funds of $.85m for 26 of these for which the Tasmania Fire Service has already issued a notice.) Annual costs associated with the systems would rise from in excess of $.95m per annum now, to around $1.84m per annum once all school sites comply with the regulations... .

Many of the existing sites have fire alarm systems which do not fully comply with the regulations, or have exceeded their "use by date". These are required to be brought up to standard. Examples where extensive upgrading of such alarm systems is required are:—

	$
• West Park Special	12,000
• Brent Street Primary	15,000
• Clarendon Vale Primary	31,000
• Rokeby High	66,000
• Tasmanian Museum & Are Gallery	66,000
• 116 Bathurst Street	69,000
• Rosny College	136,000
• Hobart College	419,000
Consultancy	69,000

Required Total 1995/96 (Plant Upgrading Program) $883,000"

4.5 On 9 June, 1995 the Committee also wrote to the Tasmania Fire Service seeking their views. Their letter of reply dated 26 June, 1995 stated in part:

> "The General Fire Regulations were enacted in 1975 prior to the creation of the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS).
>
> The TFS supports the provision of fire detection systems in buildings to provide early warning of fire to the occupants and to the responsible brigade. The fact that we have a decentralised population and much less available resources to deal with the fire and occupant safety, demands that an early warning of fire be given if our fire loss statistics, life and property, are not to increase from current levels.
>
> The Regulations are more stringent in aged persons premises and schools. Whilst a number of fires have occurred in premises housing aged persons, unlike other States no lives have been lost and this is solely attributed to the early warning of fire provided by the detection systems. Some of the larger states are now legislating for detection systems in fact some are going further by requiring sprinkler systems. Due to fires which caused loss of life some states now require fire alarm systems in "Backpacker" accommodation. There is no similar requirement in Tasmania.
>
> On the information available to me the provision of detection systems in schools followed a series of fires which resulted in major losses. As school buildings are subject to a high vandalism and arson and are normally isolated on large areas of land, any fire occurring has the potential to reach major proportions before neighbours are aware of the fire. That is if a fire detection system is not provided.
>
> As an indication of the value of fire detection systems schools fitted with systems complying to the General Fire Regulations (GFR) have over the last seven years averaged a fire loss rate of $3,100 per fire. School fires as per Mr. _____ list submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works that did not have fire alarms complying with the GFR averaged a loss of $246,500 per fire.
>
> In summary the TFS supports the installation and maintenance of fire detection systems as provided by the GFR's and we will argue strongly against a change occurring. If fire alarm systems are not installed we have no doubt that major fire losses will occur and our firefighters, who are mainly volunteer, will be put at greater risk. However it is appreciated this decision rests with the Government of the day and Parliament generally."

SECTION 5—CHANGE IN FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Associated with the overall costs of installing and maintaining fire installation and control systems, is a basic change in financial arrangements and responsibilities.

5.2 Until recently, approximately 1992–93, the Department of Construction (DOC) was solely responsible for the installation of fire protection systems. Maintenance, once installed was the responsibility of the owning Agency. Because Agencies did not have appropriately skilled people on staff, this responsibility was operationally assumed by DOC.

5.3 Since 1992–93 , Agencies were progressively freed from the requirement to engage the DOC to design and install fire detection systems. They exercised this freedom, and particularly since the 30 June, 1995 when Professional Services Group ceased operation, and excepting major works which are managed by DELM/SGB, they are solely responsible for this work.

5.4 The representative from Sinclair Knight LPH in his evidence, stated in part:—

> "... Up until about eight years ago the funds for the maintenance of all engineering systems across government actually came from individual agencies and it did represent quite a paper warfare at the accounting level. So to actually streamline that, it was pretty obvious the way to do it was to obtain the money directly from Treasury through to the Department of Construction—and that was done.
>
> With the changes in the Department of Construction, funds were then given to the 'Services to Government Group' (SGG) within the Department of Construction. As you know SGG has gone to Environment and Land Management, so they took that funding with them to that agency and they still get the funds from Treasury as before.
>
> When Professional Services Group (PSG) existed we were then engaged to manage that program on their behalf, and in fact it was a carte blanche thing. I basically set the policies, determined what had to be done, where it was done and when. There was no interference from essentially anyone else, I was the Government's responsible person for all of that work.

Come 30 June the events meant that that had to change. I ended up in the private sector, but part of that was that the company I went to work for had already submitted a plan to Government to actually manage that maintenance for the Government and was commissioned to do so, and I was taken on by that company which is Sinclair Knight LPH. So basically I am still doing that function but from a commercial perspective, although in real terms I do not think anything much has changed. I still have that responsibility to make sure it is done."

(Note:—The Professional Services Group was part of the Department of Transport and Works.

and further:—

"Committee—... As I understand from what you have said it is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Land Management to install and maintain fire detection systems.

Witness—No, only the maintenance. The installation these days is basically done by each of the agencies concerned. It always used to be done by the old Department of Construction but that requirement no longer exists."

5.3 At the end of this financial year it is understood that individual agencies will be responsible to manage their own funds for installation and maintenance of fire protection systems.

5.4 The basic effect of this change has been to place with each agency a far greater responsibility for managing their own funds in totality, and with this, the need to closely examine all agency priorities, and determine expenditure of funds to achieve the best 'value for money'.

SECTION 6—BUILDING CODES STANDARDS

6.1 The Building Code of Australia (BCA) Standard 1670 of 1995 and its associated documents is the standard legislation applicable to all States and Territories. Each State/Territory can vary the BCA to meet its own requirements. Tasmania's requirements are contained in the individual State appendix which is attached to the BCA. Therefore the code of practice applicable to Tasmania includes the general standards of the BCA together with the variations in the Tasmanian appendix.

6.2 During this enquiry, evidence was heard regarding the number of variations in operation in Tasmania. One witness stated that, for its size, Tasmania had an excessive number of variations to the BCA.

6.3 The Public Accounts Committee has received detailed and wide ranging evidence on this issue from a number of involved organisations, including:—

(a) Tasmania Fire Service (TFS);

(b) Local Government Office, Department of Environment and Land Management (DELM);

(c) Department of Education and the Arts (DEA); and

(d) Private enterprise businesses.

6.4 As previously stated in paragraph 4.5, evidence from Tasmania Fire Service stated in part:—

"The General Fire Regulations, which are administered by the State Fire Commission, regulate the installation and maintenance of fire alarm and detection systems... .

The General Fire Regulations were enacted in 1975 prior to the creation of the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS).

The TFS supports the provision of fire detection systems in buildings to provide early warning of fire to the occupants and to the responsible brigade. The fact that we have a decentralised population and much less available resources to deal with the fire and occupant safety, demands that an early warning of fire be given if our fire loss statistics, life and property, are not to increase from current levels.

The Regulations are more stringent in aged persons premises and schools. Whilst a number of fires have occurred in premises housing aged persons, unlike other States no lives have been lost and this is solely attributed to the early warning of fire provided by the detection systems. Some of the larger states are now legislating for detection systems in fact some are going further by requiring sprinkler systems. Due to fires which caused loss of life some states now require fire alarm systems in "Backpacker" accommodation. There is no similar requirement in Tasmania.

On the information available to me the provision of detection systems in schools followed a series of fires which resulted in major losses. As school buildings are subject to a high vandalism and arson and are normally isolated on large areas of land, any fire occurring has the potential to reach major proportions before neighbours are aware of the fire. That is if a fire detection system is not provided.

As an indication of the value of fire detection systems schools fitted with systems complying to the General Fire Regulations (GFR) have over the last seven years averaged a fire loss rate of $3,100 per fire. School fires as per Mr _____ list submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works that did not have fire alarms complying with the GFR averaged a loss of $246,500 per fire.

In summary the TFS supports the installation and maintenance of fire detection systems as provided by the GFR's and we will argue strongly against a change occurring. If fire alarm systems are not installed we have no doubt that major fire losses will occur and our firefighters, who are mainly volunteer, will be put at greater risk. However it is appreciated this decision rests with the Government of the day and Parliament generally."

6.5 The Committee recognises that Tasmania Fire Service has no alternative but to carry out inspections in accordance with General Fire Regulations 1975, and adhere to its own approved operational, inspection, and reporting procedures. The Committee also recognises their responsibility and effectiveness in the protection of life and property should an incident occur.

6.6 The Committee also notes clause 26 of the General Fire Regulations 1975, which states:—

"26—(1) Where, in the opinion of the Commission, it is necessary or reasonable to do so, and exemption is not otherwise obtainable under these regulations, the Commission may wholly or partly exempt a person from compliance with any provision or provisions of these regulations.

(2) An exemption under subregulation (1) shall be in writing and may be subject to such conditions as the Commission may impose."

6.7 The Committee believes that perhaps a far wider use could have been made of this exemption clause. Tasmania Fire Service is responsible for granting such an exemption. Where exemptions are granted considerable cost savings could result. The DEA should seek exemptions under clause 26 of the GFR where it can be established that such an exemption will not create a risk to life or limb.

6.8 Tasmania Fire Service stated (in part), in other evidence:—

"Witness—Thanks, Mr Chairman. The general fire regulations were enacted in 1979. At that point of time I believe there was an arrangement and discussion with Education Department and they came to certain arrangements and they reflect what is there. Since that point of time there has been no discussion with the Education Department outlining any concern with the regulations apart from two days before the Parliamentary Works Committee, is it?

Committee—That is right.

Witness—Two days before that. We did, about eighteen months ago, take it up from 300 square metres to 500, but there has been nothing from the Education Department and just as a bit of an example: one of the problems we have with government buildings is there seems to be a lack of appreciation that it is money they are spending for the sake of controls as compared to the private enterprise. For instance, if private enterprise were putting in a fire alarm system, say, in this building, they would put out a tender to the fire alarm industry and select the tender and they would require it to comply to Australian standards and we have got a guide there that people—we can advise and other people can use it so they can understand the standards.

If it is Government they will put it through the Department of Works, or Works Tasmania; it will then go to a consultant who are very expensive. They will then put it out to the Fire Protection Industry and sub-let it, so you have two other movements, or two other agents in the process. The quotations we have from the Fire Protection Industry Association is that the cost that they estimate is $2·90 per square metre yet the consultants working for the Education Department are quoting $13 and that does not surprise me, if you have two other costing factors in there.

We then go to the maintenance. The Department of Works, Works Tasmania, were handling the contracts and they have at least a 20 per cent requirement above the Australian Standards for maintenance contracts. For one instance they require all heads to have 100 per cent testing each year, whereas the standard is at 20 per cent and over a five year period you test it all. I have no idea why they put that on there and in addition to that we, with private enterprise—private enterprise will do their own weekly testing.

We have offered to train people within the government system to show them how to do their weekly testing so you are cutting the cost substantially and in all instances our offer has been refused. They said, 'No, it will be done by the maintenance engineers'. All that is adding to the cost and in my view, totally unnecessary. It does not happen in the private industry, why should it happen in the government building?...

You have an area of high risk; you have an area of non-ambulant and to me the advice was ignored and that is the problem we had dealing with the government system over the years in respect to buildings. It is true that our schools in Tasmania in that regard are more stringent in respect of the sizing. However there are schools, the moment you go above two floors on the mainland?...

Witness—Do have to have fire alarm systems and the new schools because of the Building Code, which we will give in more detail a little bit later, is that now the smoke control legislation in the new Building Code will require a greater incident; if we took the general fire regulations away there would be still some requirement substantial.

Other States have sprinkling legislation which does not exist in Tasmania. Backpacker holiday accommodation in other States, particularly in New South Wales, has legislation that we do not have.

Hospitals are going for a retrofit all over Australia; it is not happening in Tasmania in government areas. So that is just as a general comment in me saying that I have said, yes, it is in excess in one particular area. One of the reasons that we have said that schools should be given a higher level of protection than is provided for in the building regulations, is school buildings are always isolated on a large area of land and if it does not have a fire alarm system in it, the first thing we will know is the fire is coming out of the roof because of the way it is isolated.

A typical example was the Chigwell fire recently. It was visible before the fire brigade got the call. The Education Department has put a security alarm in there. It was supposed to have a fire alarm system. The security company got the call 20 minutes before we did and because of other workloads they did not get to it. We got to the fire before the security company. The fire alarm we have estimated would cost somewhere between $20 000 and $30 000. Fortunately the damage was only $·5 million.

I have no doubt that if we do not have fire alarms in schools in Tasmania—we have a decentralised population and that is not going to alter—that when we get fires they will end up major fires and we will have a major loss. If the community is prepared to accept that, quite obviously they will change the regulation but I would recommend against it, apart from if the Education Department are prepared to sit down and say 'look can you increase the size'—fine, but Mr Chairman, that has never been done.

Can I ask ___ to make a comment?

Committee—Certainly.

Witness—If I could just comment about section E1.7 of the Building Code. 1990 the Building Code came into existence and section E1.7—and just recently the eighth amendment to the Building Code came in and each time an amendment has come in their has been substantial change. There is not one State that has picked up E1.7, the fire detection alarm systems, that is consistent with what is printed in the Building Code. There is a variation in each State in Australia.

In some areas our regulations are more onerous but the smoke hazard management requirements that came in for new buildings in the last amendment of the Code are substantially over and above the requirements of the general fire regulations and our part E1.7 component. It is very easy to put the statistics up to indicate that we are more onerous but I believe with common sense and negotiation we have been much less onerous; in fact if the government departments that have negotiated with us have taken our advice on board they are able to build their buildings substantially more cost effectively than what they are doing at the moment. ...

Committee—Thank you very much. Are you ready now if we ask you some questions or do you want to add anything further?

Witness—I would just say in summary Mr Chairman that for some reason the advice that is put forward and the thinking behind private enterprise on fire safety in general does not seem to get through to the system in respect to being able to acknowledge it.

Committee—Are you saying then that private enterprise is more conscious of the regulations and designs its buildings and fits into them and the consultation that takes place between the Fire Service and private enterprise is far superior to the Government. Is that what you are saying?

Witness—What I am saying is that private enterprise has a very simple system. There is only one involved and they can go straight to a consultant and it is a fairly simple process. They are also mindful that their insurance company are saying that you will have x in that building if you want a reasonable insurance.

With the Government system there seems to be—well I have indicated those two steps which do not exist with private enterprise. There is that and there seems to be a reluctance to accept that, say, for instance the two hospitals in Burnie, that if a sprinkler system is in there, there are some substantial savings in other areas and the overall cost would probably be less. It does not seem to be able to be acknowledged.

Committee—This lack of consultation that you have raised, this question—and you have indicated the Department of Education and the Arts for example have never discussed these matters with you—suddenly it comes before a Public Works Committee and it becomes public knowledge but you have not been consulted. That is what you have said, is it not?

Witness—That is correct. They may have done that through Works Tasmania or Public Works or whatever it was because they were their agents. They did not deal with it themselves but there is nothing on our files anywhere to indicate, 'Look we've got a problem with that particular area, how can we resolve it?'

Committee—What about putting the other way. Has the Fire Service been aware of these problems and have you made any endeavour to consult with them at all?

Witness—I think most of ours was done with their agent in respect to Works Tasmania but on our initiative we did amend the general fire regulations in respect to the size required. We made it larger at our own initiative. Can I expand on that?

Committee—Yes, certainly.

Witness—The question you ask is: yes, we have provided considerable fire safety reports and surveys on Education Department buildings over the years and we have negotiated with the Education Department on priorities but never at any stage has the Education Department suggested those requirements were too onerous and attempted to discuss some alleviation of those requirements."

6.9 Enclosed at the end of this Section is a "Summary of Existing BCA Requirements for Fire and Smoke Alarms—Clause E1.7.

6.10 In its evidence to the Committee, representatives from the Local Government Office, Department of Environment and Land Management stated in part:—

"The purpose of this hearing, as I understand it, is to determine whether or not the requirements that we have for all classes of buildings in Tasmania for, in particular smoke alarms, but also I would mention sprinklers where we have requirements which are over and above the national requirements set in the BCA are appropriate or not. Certainly it is every State's right to vary the BCA, that is the way that it is set up, and each State has their own appendix at the back. So as the BCA operates in a State it includes the normal part but has some flags which indicate where there is a variation for those States.

We have a number of variations but we also have a number of additions, quite a large number of additions, which reflect our building legislation consolidation and we have all those requirements which were formally in other legislation—DLI legislation, health legislation or somewhere else. Those building technical requirements are now in the BCA.

One of the areas that is a variation is of course the requirement for smoke alarms in certain classes of buildings that is not required under the BCA.

Those requirements went through the normal process which is for the Building and Plumbing Regulations Board to verify and recommend the regulations to the Minister for Local Government and at the time when we were converting from the old building regulations to the new regulations and developing the Building Code of Australia, the provisions of the General Fire Regulations which are made under the Fire Service Act and relate to the ongoing fire safety of buildings were analysed and re-vetted, I guess you would say, by the Board to see whether it was appropriate for them to go across to the Building Code of Australia.

The Board asked the Fire Service to provide some justification for those extra provisions because ministers and the Australian Building Codes Board certainly have undertaken to reduce the number of variations to the absolute minimum. That justification was provided in a manner which was not particularly scientific but was based upon the status quo I guess. Fire Service justified the regulations to remain as they were, based on the argument that that was how they were and that there was no evidence to show that they should be changed in Tasmania. So the previous requirements under the General Fire Regulations which used to operate in parallel with the building regulations but now because of consolidation we are saying that for all new buildings we certainly do not want two sets of regulations, we bring it into one, were transferred across.

The Fire Service has been asked to justify those variations at least once since and again the justification was based on maintenance of the status quo. We understand that certainly it has been explained that in school buildings in particular there is some statistical and financial evidence to argue that this requirement, which is a Tasmanian requirement only, is far in excess of what is required in other States and may not be justified.

Our proposal was that this be tested in effect with a consultant to be engaged. There is in fact a national organisation now called The Fire Code Reform Centre which provides technical advice to the Australian Building Code Board and others which would be well placed to carry out this sort of analysis.

The other area that I mentioned before was sprinklers in car parks. We had to vary the BCA because of the Fire Service wishes to reduce the number of cars in underground car parks. It was reduced from 40 down to 19. They are the primary areas of difference.

Everywhere else I would say, particularly in relation to fire protection, the requirements we have in Tasmania are the requirements that apply in other States, or most other States unless they have varied them. I do not know whether you would like to ask me any questions at this stage.

Committee—Mr ____, you are ready to answer questions. You have said that in schools our regulations are far higher than that of other States.

Witness—They are not far higher; they have one additional requirement.

Committee—Perhaps you could tell us what the difference is.

Witness—The difference is that there is a requirement for smoke alarms in schools which are class 9B buildings which exceed a floor area of 500 square metres.

Committee—And those alarms run back to another place?

Witness—Yes. The current requirement is that those alarms are connected to the Fire Service. There are also, importantly, similar variations for other classes of buildings, which are not schools and not necessarily government capital assets. They may apply in the area of office buildings, which could be government assets, as a requirement for smoke alarms in class 5 buildings, which are offices with an area greater than 1 000 square metres; shops where there is an aggregate area greater than 1 000 square metres and storage buildings where furniture is stored greater than 1000 square metres. Another one is factories which have a special fire hazard—and that is defined in the regulations—where more than 25 people are employed. So there is in general a greater requirement to connect these buildings to fire stations with fire alarms in Tasmania than there is in other States.

Our analysis is that the requirement is to alert the Fire Service earlier. I do not believe it is based on the health and safety of occupants so much because I believe the standard set by the BCA covers that adequately—or the State has agreed that it does. It is more about alerting the Fire Service. The Fire Service themselves have, in their argument to retain them, argued that they were not as well placed to attend these fires and deal with them as perhaps in urban Melbourne and Sydney but the BCA applies to all country towns and small towns and everywhere else in Australia.

Committee—So it really is in those areas where Tasmania's regulations exceed the BCA that I guess we are really interested.

Witness—Yes.

Committee—And from what you have said, the additional requirements or the regulations which do exceed the BCA are, in your opinion, associated with a system which enables the Fire Service to know earlier and perhaps save property and damage for that reason and it applies not only to schools but in some cases to shops.

Witness—Yes. I can only say that the community standard is the BCA for Australia. We have a table here which indicates the various requirements for smoke alarms in the BCA and as modified. In general, some States have some variations one way or another but they do not correspond in any particular way.

It would seem to me that probably life safety is adequately dealt with. We believe it should be analysed in a proper way rather than just deciding that we are different and we should change and the process for that would be to do a proper study of the provisions that are in the BCA, including our own variation, to see whether or not the risk to life safety would be increased if we removed our variation. We proposed a study along those lines, possibly with the Fire Code Reform Centre and based on the framework for evaluating the effectiveness of building standards and regulations that the Australian Building Code Board is helping."

and further—

"Committee—Are you—or should we ask the Fire Service if they are able to provide the Committee with an indication from experts, if you like, or from people competent in the field of how this additional requirement in areas serviced by a volunteer fire brigade increases the likelihood of protection of property. I could accept that a fire alarm attached directly to the Hobart Fire Brigade would decrease the risk for this building but I do not see how that helps someone in Cygnet.

Witness—Well it may because if it is a complying alarm system that has to be connected to a manned fire station, then they would be able to call out the appropriate action to alert the volunteer service. It is not just an alarm that goes off at the school, the requirement is that it is connected to.

Committee—We are talking about an alarm system that communicates directly to the Fire Brigade, Hobart Fire Service or whatever, as opposed to a phone call being made to the same organisation. It is the difference between the response to the phone call and the response to the alarm. Now in the case of the volunteer service I would like to see some evidence about what the response time of the volunteer services are to be convinced that the risk to property versus the cost savings—how they match up—that is what is at the centre of this whole discussion, I believe. What you are suggesting to us is that the preferred view of your area at the moment is that we allow a consultancy to take place which basically leaves the current circumstances in place whilst that happens.

Witness—The current circumstances I do not believe could change without a change in the regulation; it is the regulation. We can speed that up and bring that about by carrying out this consultancy, I believe. Whilst we leave it to the Fire Service to approve their case it will always be the emotional case and they, with the Building and Plumbing Regulations Board, have always won the day on that argument.

Committee—Just one or two things. I think Mr _____ evidence about the safety to people is very very significant which brings the whole thing back really to an economic consideration, does it not.

Just to get one or two things clear in my mind, this regulation does not just cover government buildings, it covers the whole spectrum regardless of who owns them.

Witness—Yes.

Committee—Right. The other things is—you have mentioned in your last reply to Mr _____ that the situation would be changed by altering the regulation, either repeal it or you would re-word it. That would not necessarily be a long process, would it? I take it that the Minister has the power under the Act to make a decision and to redraft a new regulation.

Witness—The General Fire Regulations could be amended through the appropriate process for fire service regulations which is different to the building regulations. Building regulations cannot be made without the recommendation of the Building and Plumbing Regulations Board to the Government. The current provisions that are in the BCA reflect the provisions that are currently in the General Fire Regulations because we did not want to have two different standards obviously from the day the thing was built to the day when it was being used. So there is a different process to go through to amend the BCA. That process does take some time now. If it was determined to be critically urgent then that could be done.

The other aspect is that for new buildings the Act provides that the Crown must comply with the current standards accepted so far as the appropriate Minister requires. So for new buildings the appropriate Minister could amend the standard. That is analogous to a privately owned building whereby they go the Building Appeal Board with a reference and say, 'In our particular case this is not appropriate and we would like to have this changed and these are the reasons', and so on. The person may have the regulations varied in that particular case.

That could be done for new buildings but then the application of the General Fire Regulations which apply to existing buildings would need to be dealt with through another process.

Committee—I wonder if you could explain to me the difference between a variation and an addition. Is there any difference?

Witness—Yes, we believe there is. Our section of the BCA appendix is about that thick.

Committee—It is about, what, one centimetre?

Witness—Yes. We get jibes at times that we have the mass. Tasmania actually has a superior system, we believe, in that we have consolidated requirements for the technical requirements of the bill. There are twenty-one sections of extra requirements there that cover everything from hairdressers to food premises to licensed premises to buildings for the production of isocyanates—all sorts of things.

Those technical requirements used to be found in the old regulations of other departments and so for a designer or a builder or a council, it was very difficult to know exactly what the standard was that you had to build to because you had the building regulations and you had these other things. Sometimes there was a conflict between one and the other and other times there was a perceived power for two authorities to rule on the same regulation. Then you have differences of interpretation and things like that.

So way back in 1983, the Development Review Working Group was established to look at the reasons for delays in the building and planning area and one of the recommendations of that was to consolidate all technical requirements into the BCA. That is also a national objective of the Australian Building Codes Board but as it is State area they can only advise and sort of encourage. So we have done that. So in addition, as we see it, is where it is in part H and it covers all those special use buildings, and those special use buildings in general are licensed or registered by what we call a functional control authority and that might be the Commissioner for Licensing or it might be the Department of Health or a hospital, something like that.

The variation is basically where a particular clause in the main part of the BCA has been changed for that State. The ABCB will certainly be more favourable to a variation based on climatic geographic or geological reasons. Those words have been used all through the development of this BCA but it is my experience that if you write the provision properly it does not even need a variation then. The example is termites. We do not have a problem with termites in Tasmania but we do not have to write it out of our code because it is written in such a way that says where termites are a problem, this is what you do.

Committee—So as far as the fire is concerned in the Government building it is a variation. Why is there such a variation between Tasmania and the mainland? What is different as far as Tasmania is concerned to make it a variation?

Witness—That is the question that we need to find the answer to.

Committee—And you really cannot answer?

Witness—No.

Committee—The Fire Service has to answer that.

Witness—I do not think they can really answer it either. They have arguments about their ability to respond and the manpower that they have and the funding they have, and all that.

Committee—Perhaps we had better ask them.

Witness—Yes. But I think that is really another question that needs to be asked of these consultants to determine whether or not there is a difference, and in the same process they might in fact determine that the requirements in the main BCA need to be lifted or amended. Fire Service argue that their standard is the appropriate standard, I guess, and we need an independent review to see what is the appropriate standard."

6.11 The Department of Education and the Arts (DEA), as the major Government Agency involved in this Report, is concerned regarding the overall cost to comply with Tasmania Fire Service Regulations (see Section 4, paragraph 4.4 for their four major concerns). In evidence, DEA representatives stated in part:

"Committee—You are quite happy with the Code, that everyone is applying themselves to the Code at the national standard and there is not an over-servicing of the requirements or not?

Witness—I believe we are well over-serviced in Tasmania on the basis with other States' codes in respect of fire protection systems in class 9B buildings, which are public buildings. In Tasmania clearly the requirements are much more stringent. The difficulty that I face is that one there is not sufficient funding to meet that code—we have never received sufficient. I would wait a long time to get funding to be able to address that code fully. Certainly I could attempt to negotiate with the Fire Brigade and say 'Well what about putting these on the back burner', but eventually they would catch up with us because at some stage one of those schools would burn down and we have not addressed it and the Fire Brigade would say "Well here you are, we did talk to you about it in 1982 and nothing has been done yet'.

So we would consequently have a problem on our hands that we could not fully address. It seems to me that a very logical solution to the whole problem is to apply the same standards as apply in other States. I know the Director of Local Government would like to see that happen as well because I think their office also believes that the requirements in Tasmania are unjustifiably too stringent.

Committee—Just to carry right on from there, your evidence to us clearly is that the regulations to the 9B category should be, in Tasmania, brought into line with that which is operating in other States.

Witness—Yes.

Committee—And you are happy as a department to adhere to those standards in the schools of Tasmania?

Witness—Certainly. Absolutely.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING BCA REQUIREMENTS FOR FIRE AND SMOKE ALARMS—CLAUSE E1.7

Class of Building	*Tas BCA*	*BCA*	*WA BCA*	*SA BCA*	*ACT BCA*	*NT BCA*	*NSW BCA*	*Vic BCA*	*Qld BCA*
Class 1a	required	....	....	required	required	....	required	required	....
Class 1b	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 1—existing building in which work is carried out	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required	....
Class 2—where required by Clause 3.10, 4.3 or Spec C1.1	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 2—storeys >3 and sole-occupancy units >20	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 2—storeys >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 3—residents >20 and residential part of a school or accommodation—aged, children or people with disabilities	required	required	required	required	required	required	....	required	....
Class 3—existing building in which work is carried out	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required	....
Class 3—sole occupancy units—storey>2	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 3—residents >10 and residential part of a school or accommodation—aged, children or people with disabilities	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 3—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 3—budget transit accommodation	....	....	....	....	....	required	....	....	....
Class 3—effective height of not more than 25m	....	....	....	....	....	....	required	....	....
Class 4—existing building in which work is carried out	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required	....
Class 4—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 5—aggregate area >1 000m²	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 5—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 6—aggregate area >1 000m²	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 6—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 7—furniture stored-area >1 000m²	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 7—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 8—special fire hazard building—employees >25	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 8—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required
Class 9a	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 9b—school, kindergarten, creche—storey >1 or storey with floor area >500m²	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 9b—projection suite used as a place of public ent.	....	....	....	....	....	....	required	....	....
Class 9b—theatre	required	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Class 9b—storey >6	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	required

SUMMARY OF EXISTING BCA REQUIREMENTS (SMOKE ALARMS) FOR SMOKE HAZARD MANAGEMENT—CLAUSE E2.3

Class of Building	*Tas BCA*	*BCA*	*WA BCA*	*SA BCA*	*ACT BCA*	*NT BCA*	*NSW BCA*	*Vic BCA*	*Qld BCA*
Class 2—sole-occupancy unit	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 2—public corridors	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 3—sole-occupancy units	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 3—public corridors	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 3—other habitable rooms	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 4—sole-occupancy units	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 4—public corridors	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required	required
Class 5—storey >3 and height <25m	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 5—basements with storey >2 and floor area >2 000m²	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 6—1 storey, floor area >5 000m² no enclosed common walkway	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 6—storey >2 and height <25m	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 7—storey >2, floor area >2 000m² and height <25m	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 7—basements with storey >2 and floor area >2 000m²	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 7—storey <3, floor area >2 000m²	....	....	....	alternative	....	....	....	....	....
Class 8—storey >2, floor area >2 000m² and height <25m	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 8—basements with storey >2 and floor area >2 000m²	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 8—storey <3, floor area >2 000m²	....	....	....	alternative	....	....	....	....	....
Class 9a—single storey floor area 2 000m² <5 000m²	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Class 9b—school having storey >3	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Other Class 9—single storey floor area 2 000m² <5 000m²	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative	alternative
Other Class 9—storey >2, floor area >2 000m² and height <25m	....	....	....	....	....	....	alternative	....	....
Class 9b—basements, storey >2 use—place of public entertainment	....	....	....	....	....	....	alternative	....	....

The following are exempt from the provisions of Other Class 9 buildings:—Sporting complexes including sports halls, gymnasiums, swimming pools, ice and roller rinks and the like. Church and other religious centres.

SECTION 7—THE REPORTED COSTS INVOLVED

7.1 During this enquiry there has been a high discrepancy in reported costs for the installation and maintenance of fire protection systems in schools. Essentially, reported costs have varied from $2·50/$2·90 per square metre to $13.00 per square metre. To understand the costing of installation and maintenance, which obviously affects the cost of a project, the Committee sought evidence from a wide range of sources including Government Agencies, Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities and private enterprise.

7.2 Evidence provided by a representative from Sinclair Knight LPH stated in part (22 August, 1995):

"Witness—One of the things is it is very difficult to put a per metre rate on because the nature of the building itself can determine very much the cost. I will explain that by this—in an essentially single story building which schools mostly are if you are going to protect the building you protect obviously the occupied spaces. But if you have a flat roof and it is on a slab on the ground that is all you have to do so you have the area of the school for the cost. If it is off the ground and it has a roof space, both those two areas have to be protected, not to the same level but in real terms there is not a lot of difference. So in fact you can almost triple the cost of your installation side of it depending on the nature of the construction. From that perspective it is very difficult to give a per unit cost in a general term.

What I have done though, because I knew I would be asked the question, if I can refer to some other documentation—and these are the latest I can get a hold of for one reason or another; they are 1994—and there are three sources. One is Cordell's Building Cost Guide 1994 and they are a thermal fire detection system. They are giving the rate at $13 a square metre. If I just read this and then I can actually leave these because they are copies of documentation that I can get my hands on anyway. It is for a thermal detection system comprising ceiling mounted thermal detectors complete with control panel and all associated wiring fixed in position and their figure is $13 per square metre. They do list a smoke detection system which is a different type of detector. It is much more sensitive and also the price goes up. We are not really talking about it but I do mention it in passing because it is another way of going but you are looking at $22 a square metre. As a point of comparison they list sprinklers as about $30 a square metre which is another way, that is totally active.

If you look at Rawlinsons it is a lot more difficult because they in fact split it up. It is a bit more difficult in a sense. They are listing a figure of ·8 per cent of $8, $7·50. These are schools—teaching and various types of, $6·50. What you do have to do somewhere in here and I probably will not be able to find it. They do in fact make the point that you have to know the type of building. So in fact that is probably per square metre of the space you protect, not the area of the building itself. So if you have to triple that $6·50 you are looking at $19·50 per square metre. It probably would not get that high anyway. It is the caution that you have to put on these figures.

Committee—But $6·00 would be your starting point.

Witness—It would be your starting point and that would be a very simple construction slab on the ground, flat roof, very easy to wire right up front, you ran it before your roof went on. That would be the lowest. In fact I think that is the lowest figure that I have actually found.

This is from the Building Economist—their figure is cost per square metre. Rates per square metre are based on the area actually having the service and not on the total floor area so there is the comment. Thermal detector system, $10 per square metre. $8·00 for Adelaide. But we are looking at Melbourne which is the usual figure for Tasmania at $10·00. If I can look at Rawlinsons, what they do is they apply figures between Melbourne and Hobart and we have to allow an extra 10 or 11 per cent on that. So you are looking at $11·00 per square metre. They are the figures.

The only experience of recent times we have taken a note of and I do not know the exact figures because I have not been privy to them, is the upgrading at Rosny College and that cost, I understand, in the order of $12·00 a square metre. That is one of the systems that is now totally obsolete. We have something like 60 systems in the State that the industry do not now support for spare parts and we are faced—I do not know whether that is something that has been factored into all of this—but they are essentially non-maintainable. As they fail we can only basically take parts from one system and use them on others.

Committee—Can I ask what year that was done, the upgrade at Rosny?

Witness—It has only recently been completed in the last three or four months."

7.3 The Committee found a major difference in the understanding of the BCA regarding the number of detectors required for a given area. The interpretation by the TFS was correct in that one thermal detector is required for each 51.84 square metres of area. An industry representative advised that one was required for each 7 square metres. The Committee notes that on evidence there would appear to be some incorrect advice given by the FPIAA to the TFS. As an example, evidence from the FPIAA Representative stated in part:—

"So you understand, the thing that starts to compromise it from day one is that you go—the first detector is supposed to be no greater than one and a half metres off the wall and then you go two and a half, two and a half, two and a half, one and a half if you end up at the end."

It is of concern that the BCA is not clearly understood by all who should be totally aware of its provisions and requirements.

7.4 One private electrical contracting company gave evidence on costs as follows:—

"Re Fire System Estimates:—

Per square metre calculated on a building approximately 2 000 square metres with multiple rooms:

1. Installations—

(a)	Sprinkler systems	$25·00 from town water $30·00 if pumps and tanks are required.
(b)	Thermal fire detection systems	$11·50 without roof spaces requiring protection: $13·80 with roof spaces requiring protection.

The above includes for a few smoke detectors near fire doors and installation in existing buildings.

(c) Brigade/Telecom, monitoring and connection fees add $1.10 to items *(a)* and *(b)* above.

2. Annual Maintenance for Fire Detection Systems

$0·60–0·75 depending on the location of the premises.

3. Brigade Monitoring and Telecom Fire Line Rental

Ranges from $900–$1,500.00 depending on the distance from the site to the Fire Brigade (Price per premise).

Generally maintenance is included in the first 12 months' warranty period of an installation.

4. Consultant's Design Fees 7%.
5. Consultant's Supervision Fees 5%."

7.5 The initial cost calculations by the TFS giving a cost per square metre of around $2·50 were based on a simplistic design with the most economic placement of detectors. Recent evidence from TFS dated 23 October, 1995 qualified earlier evidence and stated in part:—

"The price of detectors and fire alarm panels varies considerably from that indicated to me by the Fire Protection Industry Association of Australia, their figure I quoted was $80 per detector fitted and $5,000 per Fire Indicator Panel.

The trade price for Thermal heads is $20, Smoke Detectors $63 and Fire Indicator Panels $750 to $1,260 (not too many schools would require more than 12 Zones).

You will note that when I supplied the figures that you query, (after taking advice from the Fire Protection Industry Association of Australia) ... . I also pointed out that the FPIAA warned that it is not a good indicator to cost systems per square metre... .

As to your query, Australian Standard 1670, 1986 theoretically requires one thermal detecting head for every unobstructed 49 square meters or one smoke detecting head for each unobstructed 100 square meters.

The 1995 version of Australian Standard 1670 requires one thermal detecting head for each unobstructed 51·84 square meters or one smoke detecting head for each unobstructed 104·04 square meters.

I must say it is not realistic to calculate coverage in this way unless the building was designed on the limits of the fire detection and alarm system head placement and it would be reasonable to assume many more detectors would be required.

Upon further investigation the price per square meter given to me by the FPIAA is not realistic, from the small amount of evidence I have been able to collect is seems that Government is being charged around $10 to $15 per square metre for each project.

It would appear that the Fire Protection Industry has ascertained the approximate rate per square metre that Government consultants are expecting to pay and quotations are falling within these perimeters.

Quotations in the private sector vary considerably dependent upon, the customer, the project, and the amount of work generally available to the Industry at the time.

I am advised (by a reliable installing contractor) that a rough guide to estimating the cost of Residential Life Safety Sprinkler Systems is as follows:—

$25 per square metre on reticulated water;

$30 per square metre when there is no reticulated water; and

$14 per square metre for providing smoke detection systems in the roof spaces in conjunction with this type of sprinkler system irrespective of water availability.

I was aware of this and indicated such to the Company's tendering for the Fire Service HQ building.

Some definite prices that may interest the committee and are indicative of the quite significant variations are detailed for your information:—

Tasmania Fire Service HQ on corner of Melville and Argyle Streets
Floor area 1293·5 square metres
Residential Sprinkler $26,700 ($20·64 per m²)
Smoke Detection System $5,201 ($4·02 per m²)

St Vincent's Private Hospital, Launceston
Floor area 1130 square meters
Residential Sprinkler $41,300 ($36·55 per m²)
EWIS $35,000 ($30·94 per m²).

Nearly every public sector project varies considerably in price sometime by many thousands of dollars, whilst it appears that the quotations for Government projects are much closer together and all within the range of what the Education Department is expecting to pay."

This latter information still does not alone totally account for the disparity with other cost estimates. The TFS figure would still be only $7.50 per square metre if three times the number of detectors were used than in their earlier estimate.

7.6 The factors not adequately allowed for in the TFS estimates include the following:—

- Administration
- Engineering
- Architecture
- Tendering
- Letting of contracts
- Consultancies

7.7 The Committee believes that there is room for savings by streamlining many of those processes, so that costs per square metre would be closer to mainland rates.

7.8 It would appear that there is not a truly open-tendering system for the calling of tenders to install and/or maintain effective fire protection systems. Whilst the Committee recognises that all tenderers may not have the technical administrative and operational expertise necessary to install and maintain fire protection systems to the standard required by current regulations, it is believed that a more "open" system may be cost effective. This is assuming of course that "guarantees of performance" are in place, with adequate penalties for non performance.

7.9 On evidence, Tasmania Fire Service put forward a realistic cost saving measure regarding the testing of detectors in their evidence of 23 August, 1995 which in part stated:—

"Committee—The last point I wanted to ask, Mr Chairman, if I might, is again I understand the evidence that you have given is such that you have indicated there is no communication or consultation with any of the agencies with respect to a strategy for the installation of fire detection systems in buildings. As I understand it at the next level there is no communication either between the agency that is putting the fire detection system in and the Department of Environmental and Land Management which is responsible for the maintenance of the fire protection system, so, what should Government do to rectify that problem? You people have obviously given it some thought. How does Government address the problem to make sure that Fire Services is properly involved along with the agency responsible and the maintenance agency to ensure that this consultation that you say does not occur takes place in the future?

Witness—Once this is over I really believe the Education Department needs to establish priorities as to what they consider to be key schools. I think they were lucky with Chigwell because the population is going down and maybe they are going to shut off the part that was burnt by the fire, but there must be schools which, if they last, would cause huge disruption to the social environment. In our view they should be high on the priority list of being given some protection and then they do it without these add-on costs in the same manner that private enterprise is doing it, so to reduce the middle man component. I have no doubt in the world that someone in the school that we can suitably give some advice to could test a fire alarm system. Why pay someone to come in and do it? So there are some areas there that again, if it is deemed appropriate that the schools will not be covered then we will obviously have to accept that.

Committee—How long would it take to train someone to be appropriately qualified to test the fire detection system?

Witness—On a weekly basis it would only be a matter of an hour's training on how to detect and test and note any defects.

Witness—They would still have a maintenance contractor but you can do your own weekly test, an owner can do their own weekly test."

(Note:—No cost savings projections were given to the Committee at that time).

SECTION 8—PERSONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS COMPARED WITH COSTS OF PROTECTION OR REPLACEMENT OF PROPERTY

8.1 The Committee has received much evidence to indicate that, because of the high level of supervision in a classroom situation, there is no risk to human safety resulting from an incidence of fire. If there is not a risk to life and limb involved, the Agency concerned, in this case the Department of Education and the Arts, should have total discretion to decide which method(s) of fire protection should be installed to achieve the best value for money and be the most cost effective. However, this can only be done after a proper risk analysis for each school has been completed (this is covered in more detail in Section 11).

8.2 Evidence to the Committee confirmed that the safety of life and limb was uppermost in the minds of all who gave evidence. Example comments from evidence are as follow:—

..."Committee—The other point I want to raise, Mr Chairman, was to get a comment from the Fire Service about the danger to life in schools without fire detection systems. The advice I think it is fair to say that we have received so far is that they are under constant supervision, the children, and no one suggested that the absence of fire detection system exposes the children to a greater risk of life by not having them than having them. What is the experience of the Fire Service in respect to that issue?

Witness—Schools do not have a high case history of life loss apart from the American scene—they had a lot. It has not been the case in Australia and it is a fair level of supervision. I would not say it is a high level from what I have seen from when I went to school, I think it is a bit more relaxed, but it is certainly there and they are not fully occupied. They are starting to become, in some sections of the school, occupied at night time by community activities and I think you had an example of that over at the Taroona School, was it not?

Witness—Taroona High School, yes. If I can relate, we had a small fire at Taroona High School, about $400 damage in a three storey block. The fire was started in toilet rooms which—I am presuming it was students, I do not have the report—eventually started a partition fire in the toilet. It was noticed by teachers and extinguished and one of the concerns raised by the school was that the Fire Brigade did not respond.

When I had my officers check it out it turned out that the three storey section that the fire was in was not protected; it did not have a fire detection alarm system. But during the inspection the officer noted that the doors were locked and one of the cleaners in fact had to let one of the school children out—this was at the close of day—and it queried why the doors were locked so that in fact people that are in there at the close of day are in fact locked in the building. The answer was to alleviate the vandalism problem. We understand the need for security but if there is a possibility of students and people being locked in the building and there is no fire detection alarm system, that does cause us some concern. That particular section under the Building Code does require fire detection too. It is being built, but—and we would have recommended when we did the planning approval for that particular project but it has not gone in.

8.3 The Local Government Office representative stated:—

- I can only say that the community standard is the BCA for Australia. We have a table here which indicates the various requirements for smoke alarms in the BCA and as modified. In general, some States have some variations one way or another but they do not correspond in any particular way.

I would seem to me that probably life safety is adequately dealt with. We believe it should be analysed in a proper way rather than just deciding that we are different and we should change and the process for that would be to do a proper study of the provisions that are in the BCA, including our own variation, to see whether or not the risk to life safety would be increased if we removed our variation. We proposed a study along those lines, possibly with the Fire Code Reform Centre and based on the framework for evaluating the effectiveness of building standards and regulations that the Australian Building Code Board is helping."

8.4 Department of Education and the Arts gave evidence as follows:—

"Committee—Perhaps just a review of the issue in terms of—I think the big issue is certain schools or certain buildings do not justify installations on an economic basis. That seems to be pretty clear and we have evidence from a number that in some of these situations there is not any life and limb risk at all. You might just comment on that a bit further. We need to be satisfied very clearly and unequivocally about that and perhaps to what degree the department goes to in respect to fire drills and the like and perhaps outline in a little more detail that aspect of it.

Witness—There are statutory requirements for fire drills as well and these are adhered to. In fact we had a fire drill in the building area just the other day. The State Library, where I work, is constantly having fire drills. All of our buildings are required to carry out fire drills on a regular basis.

Committee—You certainly see them in the cities—you talk about the library, I was thinking more of schools.

Witness—Yes, that is a requirement. The fire brigade inspect our buildings on a regular basis in any case and they will regularly highlight issues that need addressing. These are there and often if something then occurs such as someone will lock an access way, whatever it might be, they report directly to the school on those issues and the school responds. We get a drop copy of those.

And fire drills—this is something that both the fire brigade and ourselves ensure are carried out on a regular basis.

Committee—Is there a documentation of the drills and the dates when they are carried out and so on by the principals of the schools or whatever?

Witness—The person in charge of the site is responsible for the safety and welfare of the people on the site and it would normally be the principal who would sign those drills and comment in terms of what has been found if there are any deficiencies.

Committee—So I could go to a school at any time at any school and say 'Could you give me a look at the last few occasions when you had your fire drill' and see that documented and attested to.

Witness—I would hope that would be the case. I would expect it to be the case.

Committee—It is a pretty important matter particularly if the Committee decides to take a certain direction and it is the area where I guess we would be scrutinised on as well.

Witness—It is a requirement of schools and school principals to undertake that task. We have been cautious in our response because we have not personally checked every school to ensure this. Clearly having had this meeting we will make sure that the paperwork in every school is in place.

Committee—Yes, there is a lot of responsibility and a lot of regulations. People do not always meet them to the fullest and proper extent. That is why this is one that has to be established to be a rigorous one with a lot of control and monitoring over if, say for instance, it was seemed appropriate that some buildings do not have protection on the basis that the surveillance and the supervision of the teacher and children know before the detectors would tell them and respond appropriately as well.

Witness—Of course the detectors would tell them which way to go. It is very important they still conduct a drill whether the fire alarms are there or whether they are called out manually because that is the important part of any process in relation to fires that people know what to do in the case of an emergency; that they are not uncertain at all. There has to be something like that in place. We see that as a top requirement as is any work in relation to doorways, exit signs—things of that issue. We do not hesitate for a moment, it is highly appropriate that they be responded to."

8.5 Since the taking of evidence from DEA further action has been taken by that Agency to reinforce procedures already in place for the handling of emergencies and critical incidents. Following is a copy of a Circular Memorandum to all School and College Principals, and all other Site Managers dated 13 November, 1995 regarding "Emergency Plans".

SECTION 9—PROPOSALS SUBMITTED IN EVIDENCE

9.1 During this enquiry, the Public Accounts Committee received evidence on a number of proposals put forward to get best value for money in relation to the protection of assets. Below is a brief description of those proposals, which may be considered separately or jointly.

9.2 Action should be taken to have the Tasmanian appendix at the back of the Building Code of Australia amended so that the current stringent Tasmanian requirements are brought more in line with those applicable to other States. This particularly applies to Class 9B, dealing with the minimum size of schools requiring fire protection. Extending the minimum size from 500 square metres to 1000 square metres is considered to be the first step in reducing costs. This option was strongly supported in evidence.

9.3 More extensive use should be made of the exemption clause No. 26 in the General Fire Regulations but only after a proper risk analysis has been conducted and only if exemption can be justified. Where exemptions are requested but not granted by Tasmania Fire Service, good and sufficient reasons should be given in writing to the requesting Agency.

9.4 Give Agencies the flexibility to make decisions regarding the installation of fire protection systems in individual cases, but only after a proper risk analysis has been completed, and only if justification is acceptable.

9.5 Take out "Disaster Insurance Cover" through a selected insurance broker. Evidence was given that this may be more cost effective than the installation of fire protection systems.

9.6 A self-insurance fund to be established by the Government, eventually on a "Whole of Government" basis. Because of the considerable amount of funds that would be required, such a proposal would probably need to be introduced over a period of years on an agency by agency basis. Such Government Self Insurance could be managed by a broker or group of insurance experts. It is understood that experience in New South Wales has shown that a most cost effective means of managing this problem over a long term basis is the installation of fire protection systems in conjunction with Government Self Insurance.

The Public Accounts Committee believes that on a long term basis this option is the most preferable when used in conjunction with a system of adequate fire protection systems being placed in schools on a priority basis where such systems are deemed by proper risk analysis to be needed.

SECTION 10—DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE ARTS SUBMISSION AND EVIDENCE

10.1 During supplementary evidence given on 1 November, 1995 the Committee posed the following question to DEA representatives:—

> "Committee—It has been drawn to the Committee's attention that in the regulations which of course lay down the compliance needs for fire protection in schools, there is a provision, I understand, that the Minister may speak with the head of Fire Services and ask that special consideration be given to vary regulations that may apply if the department thought that a particular school was not in such a high risk area and for certain reasons the laid down regulations could be varied to some extent. My understanding is that that does not happen very often, or perhaps the choice is that it would not be wise to seek variations. Would you like to comment on the fact that apparently it is possible within the legislative framework of the regulations to vary them somewhat for special reasons, and whether you have in fact had discussions along those lines with the Fire Services? I would like you to comment on that, as well as giving us any other information that you wish us to have at this time. I invite either or both of you to do that and then we can perhaps ask some questions and move along. Thank you.
>
> Witness—In response, to our knowledge and understanding of the regulations, the department is aware that there is provision within the regulations that we can make approaches on an ad hoc basis to vary those regulations. To my knowledge we have not made a practice of doing that and we are concerned, or it would appear to us to be a somewhat ad hoc process of addressing what is a very fundamental and serious issue. Our preferred view is that, as we put previously to the Committee, we would prefer that the regulations themselves be changed to be in conformity with other States in Australia."

and further—

"Committee—You would see that if you approached them on an ad hoc basis it could lead to various degrees or differences between one place and another, one school and another and so forth.

Witness—So forth, and it possibly would leave us open to criticism that we did apply different standards to different schools when we would prefer to have a clear, regulative framework in which we would operate with all of our schools and colleges."

also,

"Committee—Perhaps just a review of the issue in terms of—I think the big issue is certain schools or certain buildings do not justify installations on an economic basis. That seems to be pretty clear and we have evidence from a number that in some of these situations there is not any life and limb risk at all. You might just comment on that a bit further. We need to be satisfied very clearly and unequivocally about that and perhaps to what degree the department goes to in respect to fire drills and the like and perhaps outline in a little more detail that aspect of it.

Witness—There are statutory requirements for fire drills as well and these are adhered to. In fact we had a fire drill in the building area just the other day. The State Library, where I work, is constantly having fire drills. All of our buildings are required to carry out fire drills on a regular basis.

Committee—You certainly see them in the cities—you talk about the library. I was thinking more of schools.

Witness—Yes, that is a requirement. The fire brigade inspect our buildings on a regular basis in any case and they will regularly highlight issues that need addressing. These are there and often if something then occurs such as someone will lock an access way, whatever it might be, they report directly to the school on those issues and the school responds. We get a drop copy of those.

And fire drills—this is something that both the fire brigade and ourselves ensure are carried out on a regular basis.

Committee—Is there a documentation of the drills and the dates when they are carried out and so on by the principals of the schools or whatever?

Witness—The person in charge of the site is responsible for the safety and welfare of the people on the site and it would normally be the principal who would sign those drills and comment in terms of what has been found if there are any deficiencies.

Committee—So I could go to a school at any time at any school and say 'Could you give me a look at the last few occasions when you had your fire drill' and see that documented and attested to.

Witness—I would hope that would be the case. I would expect it to be the case.

Committee—It is a pretty important matter particularly if the Committee decides to take a certain direction and it is the area where I guess we would be scrutinised on as well.

Witness—It is a requirement of schools and school principals to undertake that task. We have been cautious in our response because we have not personally checked every school to ensure this. Clearly having had this meeting we will make sure that the paperwork in every school is in place.

Committee—Yes, there is a lot of responsibility and a lot of regulations. People do not always meet them to the fullest and proper extent. That is why this is one that has to be established to be a rigorous one with a lot of control and monitoring over if, say for instance, it was deemed appropriate that some buildings do not have protection on the basis that the surveillance and the supervision of the teacher and children know before the detectors would tell them and respond appropriately as well.

Witness—Of course the detectors would tell them which way to go. It is very important they still conduct a drill whether the fire alarms are there or whether they are called out manually because that is the important part of any process in relation to fires that people know what to do in the case of an emergency that they are not uncertain at all. There has to be something like that in place. We see that as a top requirement as is any work in relation to doorways, exit signs—things of that issue. We do not hesitate for a moment, it is highly appropriate that they be responded to."

10.2—

"Committee—Mr _____the Committee has had evidence that the chances of a school catching fire and being a loss are pretty low, and in relation to what the costs would be to the State versus the cost of putting fire alarm systems into every school. Now obviously we are not likely to take the fire alarms out of the schools which already have them, but in relation to a new school being built, would you care to comment to the Committee your appreciation on the money side of the department; whether you feel the fire alarms are worth it—keeping life and limb out of the equation at the moment—and what would be the disruption to a school if one were to be a total loss. Just think of any school you like which is about to be built. What implications does that have to the department and to the education of the children? I guess there are two questions there.

Witness—I suppose in terms of excluding the loss of life, the loss of an asset is a very serious problem for the department, both in terms of the function and the service which it provides. But we believe more importantly its trauma impact on the students and the staff of even a small fire is a very traumatic process for a school to go through. We had one at Chigwell recently, you will recall; two years ago we had a fire at St Marys District High School. Apart from the damage to the asset, the trauma to the school is serious and we take that as a serious issue. So protection from fires is very serious to us.

We acknowledge the fact that there are a range of probabilities of fires, both in terms of the type of construction of the school and the location of the school. Each impacts on the probability both of a fire and the manner in which the extent of that fire may damage the asset and that is a consideration to us as well.

In an ideal world we would like to provide a full range of fire detection devices in our schools. We acknowledge the fact that it is an economic issue and to provide fire protection we have to forego something else; it is a matter of balancing our assessment of the risk against the available funds and what has to be foregone in other areas to provide it. It is a matter of judgment, but the bottom level of that judgment is to ensure that we comply with the appropriate regulations.

Committee—Do you have a disaster plan—if you like to call it that. Take Dodges Ferry which is a fairly new school, just suppose that school was burnt to the extent that the children could not go there; do you have a plan now of where those children would go for education or would you just shut the school and the kids stay home?

Witness—We do not have a plan. We do not have an all-embracing plan for every school in the State as to where the children would go. With previous experience again, at St Marys we had a fire I think three years ago—at Riverside High School—where we initially closed the school for one or two days to clear up to assess the damage and to get our own contingency plans into operation. Those contingency plans always involve the school community, so the school council and all the parents are involved. There is a round table discussion as to what the advice is both on the extent of the damage, the level of disruption to the school, and it is through that community consultation which we will then decide how best to address it.

I reference the fire at Ravenswood High School when we lost the gym—I think that was three years ago, members will remember—and the school community collectively agreed that they would like the students to be bussed to a neighbouring school for the use of their gymnasium and the Government, through the department, provided additional funds for buses. So one needs to make that judgment on a case by case basis. I do not think you can pre-plan issues of that nature; the variables are such that it would be unlikely to be useful.

Committee—Keeping in mind the answer you gave to the first question, where you have a new school built—and you might like to take this on notice—with the cost of installing fire alarms and the incidence of fires where the school, where there are people in attendance, is extremely low, almost to the point of nil, would it be more profitable to the department, in your opinion, not to install fire detecting systems but instead, where the school is not occupied, to employ a person or persons to be on the site permanently? Would that be more beneficial to the department dollar-wise and I guess for vandalism and so on?

Witness—For the construction of a new asset we would be complying with all the regulatory -

Committee—Let us just put that aside for the moment.

Witness—Yes, but that implies that there would be fire protection in the building. Whether we would need an enhanced protection above that is really the issue that you are raising -

Committee—No, actually if we had the power, the magical power at the moment, just to get rid of all the fire alarms, would you prefer that and have someone in there permanently, or would you go for a fire alarm system?

Witness—We would prefer a fire alarm system which is in conformity to an Australia-wide standard.

Committee—Getting back to the fire drills at school, and you seemed a little bit hesitant of saying everything there is in place, what type of procedure would you envisage to happen and what kind of a screed would you be putting out to the schools because if the Committee gave powers for the Education Department to be exempt from certain powers in respect to fires, you would need to have some protection. Could you give a list of the number of schools which have had their fire drill in the last month?

Witness—Yes, we could provide that information. The reason why I was hesitant in so far as that I know there are procedures in place at all schools. I know that there are regulations which require each and every school to have a fire drill. I could not in conscience say—I have not checked—every school to say, yes, everybody has done. From time to time one could be embarrassed by giving an overall advice and then find for some reason somebody has let the side down.

Committee—Then you have a model fire drill code?

Witness—At each school there is an agreed fire drill as to what the process and procedure is. Now I have attended on more than one school I suppose, three or four schools—not a huge number—but I have actually witnessed the fire drill where clearly there is a set down and laid down procedure where there is an assembly point and the whole thing works, I must say, well. But there are something in the order of 235 schools and I have not checked each and every one of them.

In terms of the second part of your question, as a consequence of the meeting today we will be putting out a circular to all schools that the issue of fire drills has been raised and we will be asking all principals to ensure that all of their fire drills are current and that they are in fact all holding fire drills in accordance with the requirements and regulations. We would be reluctant to set up a bureaucratic process of reporting back. You then get quite an administrative and clerical process of sending forms which we do not tend to favour. Once we ask the schools to comply with regulations we have found that they are happy to do that and they accept their responsibilities. We would then as part of the normal conversations between the district superintendent and the schools in the district, these issues would be raised if there are problems or if there was some area which comes to our attention.

Committee—Would it be the responsibility of the district superintendent in your eight districts to make sure that fire drills were carried out within the schools?

Witness—Initially it is the responsibility of the principal in the school and then it is the responsibility of the district superintendent to ensure that those fire drills and all other statutory requirements of the school have been complied with.

Witness—Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the responsibility rests with the person in charge of the building for all occupation, health and safety issues. So the principals are well aware that if they are deficient in undertaking these things, such as fire drills or any other inspections they are required to do, that the onus is back on them as the party that would be punishable by law if things went wrong. So they are extremely conscious.

I went to a seminar only last week where there was a group of aspiring principals who discussed these very issues at length and they are very conscious of their responsibilities in this regard.

Committee—If you are given additional powers therefore the Committee has got to make sure that everything is correct and carried out. Because if we make a recommendation, and then a school went up in smoke and there was a loss of life and the procedures had not been followed through, then the Committee would be seen to be negligent and this is why I think we need to get something on it.

Witness—If proper regulations and procedures are required by Government, it is our responsibility to ensure that those requirements are properly followed out. If the Committee makes recommendations, the regulations are altered, those new regulations are binding upon us. If we have not complied with the regulations to the point where there is something untoward occurs, then that responsibility lays with the department and the appropriate officers of the department. I do not believe it goes further than that. We are accountable to ensure that all regulations and procedures are in fact followed and implemented. If we have any doubt at all—and today's discussion is one of them—then it is our responsibility to follow that through to ensure that they are properly carried out. And that was the cause for me to comment that if I cannot give you a firm undertaking that every school has fire drills, it is my responsibility to go back and to ensure that that does happen.

Committee—You are quite happy with the Code, that everyone is applying themselves to the Code at the national standard and there is not an over-servicing of the requirements or not.

Witness—I believe we are well over-serviced in Tasmania on the basis with other States' codes in respect of fire protection systems in class 9B buildings, which are public buildings. In Tasmania clearly the requirements are much more stringent. The difficulty that I face is that one, there is not sufficient funding to meet that code—we have never received sufficient. I would wait a long time to get funding to be able to address that code fully. Certainly I could attempt to negotiate with the Fire Brigade and say 'Well what about putting these on the back burner', but eventually they would catch up with us because at some stage one of those schools would burn down and we have not addressed it and the Fire Brigade would say 'Well here you are, we did talk to you about it in 1982 and nothing has been done yet'

So we would consequently have a problem on our hands that we could not fully address. It seems to me that a very logical solution to the whole problem is to apply the same standards as apply in other States. I know the Director of Local Government would like to see that happen as well because I think their office also believes that the requirements in Tasmania are unjustifiably too stringent.

Committee—Just to carry right on from there, your evidence to us clearly is that the regulations to the Class 9B category should be, in Tasmania, brought into line with that which is operating in other States.

Witness—Yes.

Committee—And you are happy as a department to adhere to those standards in the schools of Tasmania?

Witness—Certainly. Absolutely."

10.3 The Committee also examined DEA on their choice of options:—

"Committee—So given that, I would like to know what your choice of options are that you would want us to really recommend; what flexibility you would like us to recommend in these other areas of insurance as opposed to fire detection devices—warning devices.

Witness—I raised the insurance issue because I think the fire brigade representative had raised the point that it was important to preserve the asset, that there was some benefit—and said the trauma of losing the building and all of that. To insure the buildings and thereby guaranteeing that all of the costs would be recovered would be a cheaper option than relying on fire alarm systems, and totally effective because you would get everything back, whereas with a fire alarm system there is still an element of risk that the building might burn down anyway, and certainly some damage would be done.

We have had costings on various insurance options. In fact we are just going through some of these options at the moment, but it is still a more expensive option than do nothing. In fact just before this meeting I was talking with our insurance brokers and they put forward some scenarios, and depending on what scenario you selected there is a range of costs, but they are certainly higher costs than the 'do nothing' option. I guess that is the dilemma that our preferred option appears to be do nothing, not insure, then if the Government were concerned with the risk of some asset, particularly big ones, being exposed—if a large college burnt down, for example—the Government could be exposed to a significantly high payment to restore it, then the insurance option is available. It was in that context that I introduced that.

Witness—Just to summarise that. We acknowledge that it is not a black and white situation of either protect with fire protection or insure or do nothing. We see it as a mixture of all three options where you see the principal object is to ensure that we meet the standard regulations with regard to fire protection for all of our facilities. We would then seek to make a judgment with professional advice on installations which are considered to be high risk and we would then be seeking to make an appropriate investment in fire protection in those facilities.

Other facilities where we would have a very low risk probability then we would probably rather than insure, take the line of self insurance, as the Government does for most of its installations, and take the risk and spread the risk across all of these installations and take an economic view on what it would cost you in fact if you did insure in terms of the policies. And then take a view as to what the loss on an individual installation which was unprotected, and measure the cost of replacing a facility as against the annual cost of the insurance premium.

Committee—Am I hearing you correctly in saying that you would like, as an Education Department, to have that flexibility? Have you that now; do you decide not to put protective devices in some schools where the regulations say you should?

Witness—No. Always we are required by the regulations to meet the standard regulation and we do that where we can.

Committee—But you have not been able to because you have not had the funds.

Witness—This is on existing ones.

Witness—On existing facilities. What I am providing advice on, in an ideal circumstance we would be seeking, as was explained before, the regulations to be of the standard which are uniform across Australia. We would like to use that as our benchmark standard, comply with that standard for all of our facilities—not just schools but libraries and other facilities. We would acknowledge some of our facilities are not professional but are at a higher risk than others. We would then wish to make a judgment as to whether we would upgrade our fire protection on the basis of that risk. If we have a facility in a very high risk environment or whatever, we would seek to invest in fire protection to respond to that risk. But most of our facilities are very much at the low risk end of it and we would seek the self insurance option.

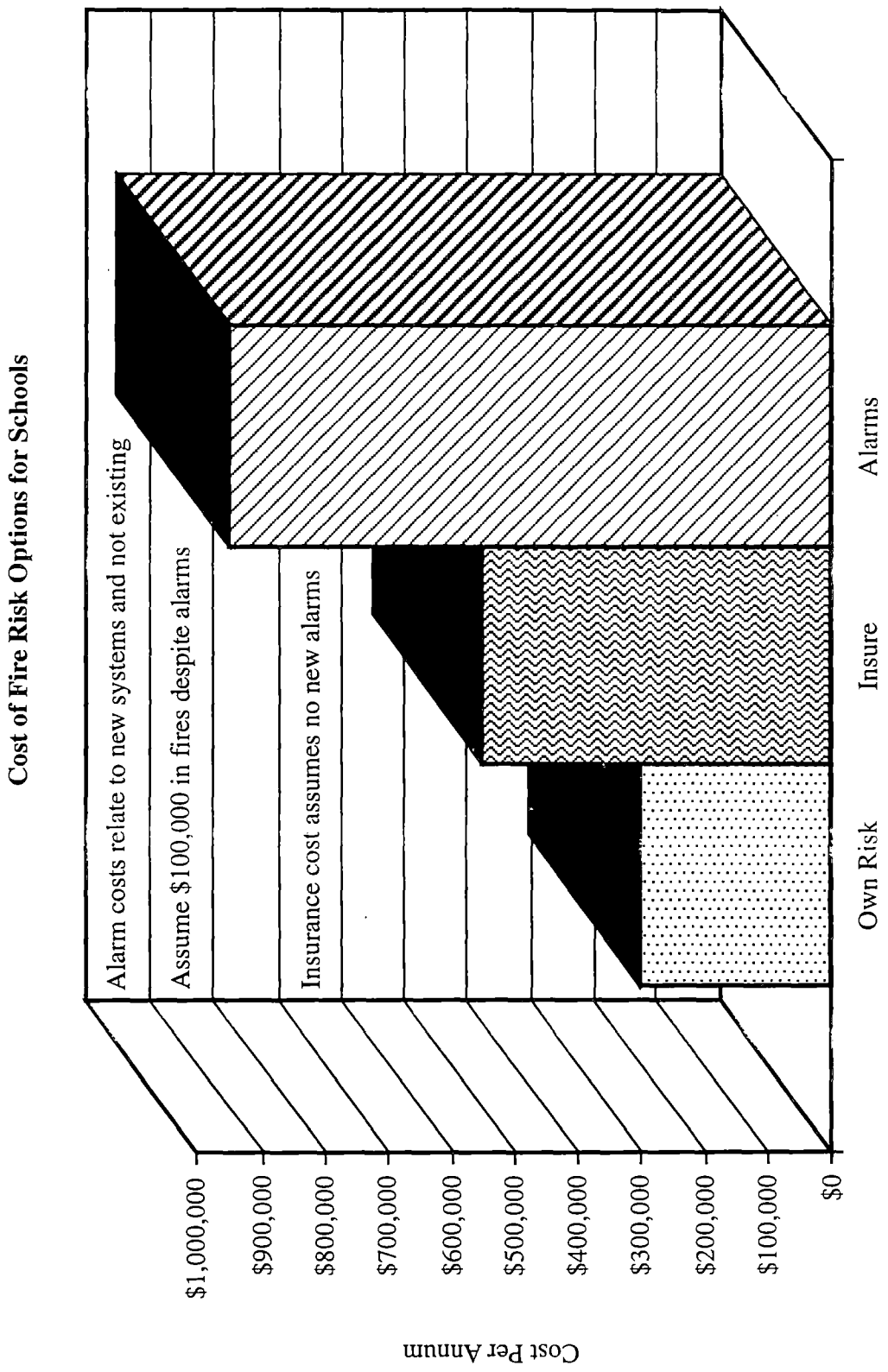
Committee—If you take Evandale, for example, which you have given us—and I think that is about a million dollar capital value building—would any fire detection devices in that be wired; back to Launceston or the Evandale Fire Station?

Witness—This is one of the poor aspects of the requirements of these regulations. Presumably if it was wired to Evandale, the opportunity for that to be responded to quickly would be limited. If it was wired back to Launceston, then by the time the Launceston brigade got there you would not even have the fire alarm system left I would imagine. I used Evandale as an extreme example because it was the example that drove home to me we had a problem.

We have no fire alarm system at Risdon Vale Primary School and we seriously believe, irrespective of what the regulations are, we should have one there and we are proposing funding of a fire alarm system at Risdon Vale. On the other hand we are compelled to provide fire alarm systems where we have done alterations and additions to schools under the statute. So we have to address those first whereas our real priority would be Risdon Vale. We have not the funds to address the one we believe is on the top of our list because we recognise clearly that that is under risk.

The other issue—places like the museum where they hold valuable collections and the like, we do not hesitate to put in the best possible fire protection measures at those locations because the assets are irreplaceable. So it is a case by case basis. We believe with professional advice and the data that we got, we could come up with a much better outcome than the Government has now, that we would address higher risk locations or locations that have valuable assets in them. At the moment we are addressing locations at relatively low risk."

10.4 A comparison of the Cost of Fire Risk Options for Schools was provided to the Committee, and this is attached.


Cost of Fire Risk Options for Schools
Alarm costs relate to new systems and not existing
Assume $100,000 in fires despite alarms
Insurance cost assumes no new alarms
$1,000,000
$900,000
$800,000
$700,000
$600,000
$500,000
$400,000
$300,000
$200,000
$100,000
$0
Cost Per Annum
Own Risk
Insure
Alarms

SECTION 11—PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 The Public Accounts Committee recommends the following:—

(a) That the DEA and TFS undertake a risk analysis on a school by school basis to determine if there would be an unacceptable risk to life or limb that could result from fire or an associated incident or emergency; and whether that risk would be diminished by the installation of fire protection systems.

(b) Where there are unacceptable risks, early action be taken by DEA to bring those schools to the degree of fire safety stipulated by TFS and General Fire Regulations. Such action to be conducted on a priority basis which is to be established by the abovementioned risk analysis.

(c) That the DEA be empowered to have the flexibility to decide and initiate the priority of installation of fire protection systems in schools (having regard to the result of the risk analysis conducted in conjunction with TFS).

(d) That the Government as a matter of urgency examine the appropriateness of General Fire Regulations and associated legislation. The Committee has received strong evidence that the cost saving involved in bringing Tasmania in line with other States would be considerable (particularly in regard to Class 9b buildings).

The Committee also notes the DEA evidence given in Section 4 paragraph 4.3 and 4.4, and agrees with same.

(e) That DEA take immediate action to ensure that all schools comply with TFS and DEA requirements with regard to fire drills, evacuation exercises, accurate keeping and inspection of relevant documentation etc.

(f) Where exemptions under Clause 26 of the General Fire Regulations (see Section 6 paragraph 6.6) are requested but not granted by TFS, good and sufficient reasons should be provided in writing to the requesting Agency.

(g) That DEA consider the option of Self Insurance against damage to school property caused by fire or security incidents.

(h) That DEA liaise with TFS with the object of training suitable school personnel to undertake the effective testing of school fire alarm systems.

(i) That DEA and TFS report back to the Public Accounts Committee on or before 1 September, 1996 detailing actions taken either on a joint or individual basis regarding matters raised in this Report.

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