

1977

(No. 55)



1977

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

FIRE PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS IN THE STATE OF TASMANIA:

REPORT OF BOARD OF ENQUIRY

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command

By Authority:

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15 Polglass Way
ARDROSS WA 6153
31st July, 1977

The Honourable Sir Stanley Charles Burbury,
K.C.V.O., K.B.E.

Governor of the State of Tasmania

Government House

HOBART TASMANIA 7000

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to your order to me dated 11th May, 1977 concerning an Inquiry into the fire prevention and protection arrangements in the State of Tasmania, I have the honour to submit a report of my findings.

I am, Your Excellency's obedient servant,

R. G. COX

MINUTE PAPER FOR HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL

11 May 1977

SUBMITTED:

That His Excellency the Governor-in-Council be pleased to appoint RONALD GODFREY COX, Esquire, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, upon whom has been conferred the George Medal and the King's Fire Service Medal for Distinguished Service, to be a Board of Inquiry pursuant to the provisions of the Evidence Act 1910, to inquire into and report upon the various aspects of the Fire Brigades Services in Tasmania, as set out in the accompanying Order-in-Council.

W. A. NEILSON, Premier

Tasmania Fire Service
Library



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ORDER-IN-COUNCIL

ELIZABETH THE SECOND, by the Grace of God
Queen of Australia and Her other Realms and
Territories, Head of the Commonwealth.

To our trusty and well beloved RONALD GODFREY COX, Esquire Officer of the Most
Excellent Order of the British Empire, upon whom has been conferred the
George Medal and the King's Fire Service Medal for Distinguished Service.

Greeting:

WHEREAS it is expedient to refer certain questions regarding fire prevention and protection arrangements in the State of Tasmania to a Board of Inquiry for review: Now therefore I, the Honourable SIR STANLEY CHARLES BURBURY, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me and acting with the advice of the Executive Council, do, by this my Order-in-Council, appoint you the said RONALD GODFREY COX, Esquire, to be a Board of Inquiry pursuant to the provisions of the Evidence Act 1910 to inquire into and report upon:—

1.—

- (a) The effectiveness and adequacy of the existing urban, rural and departmental fire systems.
 - (b) Whether or not there should be integration or further alienation of urban and rural systems with specific regard to areas of operation.
 - (c) The efficiency of the financial structures in relation to cost benefit with particular regard to (b) above.
 - (d) Staffing with regard to the benefit or otherwise to be derived from an integrated system with open interchange and service continuity resulting from promotion between areas.
2. The constitution of the Fire Brigades Commission and its effectiveness vis-à-vis the Fire Brigade Boards, with particular regard to duplicate membership and areas of possible conflict of interest.
 3. The financial structure of the Fire Brigades Commission and Boards.
 4. The uniformity of fire-fighting equipment throughout the State.
 5. The command structure of the Commission and the Boards with particular regard to the duties of the Chief Officer and his deputies.
 6. Fire-fighting training and examination requirements and responsibility for the conduct of same.
 7. Fire protection training, methods, facilities, and inspections.
 8. Adequacy of and possible duplication of legislation relating to fire protection and prevention, including fires on ships.
 9. The volunteer system.
 10. Any other matters which may be considered to be appropriate to the inquiry.

And I do further order that you the said RONALD GODFREY COX, Esquire, shall reduce into writing under your hand what you shall discover in the premises and shall on or before the fifteenth day of August 1977, certify to me in writing your proceedings by virtue of these presents together with what you shall find touching or concerning the premises upon such inquiry as aforesaid and I do further order that this instrument of appointment shall continue in full force and virtue and that you shall and may from time to time proceed in the execution hereof and of any matter or thing contained herein although the same shall not be continued from time to time by adjournment and I do hereby direct and appoint that RUSSELL HERBERT BUTLER, Esquire, shall be Secretary to the Board.

GIVEN under my hand at Hobart in Tasmania this eleventh day of May, One thousand nine hundred and seventy-seven.

STANLEY BURBURY, Governor

By His Excellency's Command,
W. A. NEILSON, Premier

R. G. COX, O.B.E., G.M., K.P.F.S.M., F.I.FireE.**Brief Biography**

Following five years' service as a Naval Cadet, the author joined the Fire Services in the United Kingdom forty-six years ago as a volunteer, becoming a paid fire-fighter in Greater London in 1933.

In 1940, he was appointed His Majesty's Inspector of Fire Brigades South East Region, U.K., supervising ninety-eight fire authorities situated in Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex.

Upon the nationalisation of the Fire Services in August 1941, he served as Senior Staff Officer to the Chief Regional Fire Officer, followed in November 1943 with the appointment to Officer Commanding 32B Division of the National Fire Service.

In February 1944 Mr Cox transferred to the Colonial Fire Service upon being selected for the position of Chief Fire Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Fire Brigades. In 1948 he also became Fire Adviser to the Governments of the Windward and Leeward Islands in the West Indies.

In June 1958 Mr Cox was sent to Hong Kong to reorganise the Fire and Ambulance Services of that Colony, and subsequently to command them.

In 1960, he was appointed Director of Fire Services, Hong Kong, also administering the Ambulance Service, Ship and Harbour Fire Fighting Services, and Civil Aviation Crash and Rescue Services.

In addition to his war-time experiences of civilian disasters, Mr Cox served as Emergency Administrator for the city of Castries, St Lucia W.I., when the latter was largely destroyed by fire in 1948, and carried out a similar role for the Island of Carriacou in 1954, when its 10 000 inhabitants were made homeless by a devastating hurricane.

The services in Hong Kong which Mr Cox commanded, augmented as required by Civil Aid Services, were responsible to the Government for rescue operations during and following landslides, fires, floods and buildings' collapse caused by frequent direct hits by typhoons.

During the past twelve years in Australia, Mr Cox has been Technical Consultant to a prominent firm of Fire Protection Engineers, which connection he severed to head the Technical, Research and Planning Branch of the Western Australian Fire Brigades Board.

APPRECIATION

In carrying out the Command of His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania and its Dependencies, dated 11 May 1977, I am indebted to the following persons.

To Mr R. H. Butler, Secretary to the Board of Inquiry for his indefatigable efforts without which the time frame set for the Inquiry and submission of this Report would not have been achieved.

To Professor J. McB. Grant, University of Tasmania, my guide and mentor on methods of financing fire protection.

To Mr J. Little, A.C.I.S., A.A.I.M., Administration Officer of the Western Australian Fire Brigades Board for his invaluable help in assisting me to edit the final draft of the Report and making arrangements for its printing.

METHODS EMPLOYED FOR THE INQUIRY AND ORGANISATIONS AND PERSONS INTERVIEWED TOGETHER WITH PLACES VISITED

Immediately following my interview in Perth with the Minister Administering Fire Services, the Honourable B. Miller, I commenced a research of the history of Tasmania from the wide variety of publications obtained from the Western Australian State Public Library Service. This was followed by an examination of the Chambers and the Brimfield Reports, also the Annual Reports of the Fire Brigades Commission dating back to 1947 and those published by the Rural Fires Board in more recent times.

Before leaving for Tasmania on 16 June, I was able to speak to a number of fire brigade personnel who had, at one time or another, served in brigades in Tasmania, and other persons who were familiar with the history of the fire services of the State.

During my stay in Tasmania, I examined the minutes of the meetings of both the Fire Brigades Commission and the Rural Fires Board, covering a period of some five years.

In the evenings, I visited permanent and volunteer stations and spent many hours listening and talking to officers and firemen and examining equipment.

All organisations and individuals who observed, more or less, the deadline for submissions and who requested to appear before me were given the opportunity to do so. As a general rule, a limit of one hour was applied at all interviews, although on occasions this time limit was exceeded.

It would be appropriate to place on record my thanks to members of all delegations and individuals for the courtesy they extended to me and the capable manner in which representations were generally made. I was particularly appreciative of the kindness displayed to me by the many wardens and councillors of the municipal authorities.

During the course of the Inquiry, I visited seventeen brigades, and met some 400 persons involved in one form or another with fire protection services in Tasmania.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

	PAGE
1. Fire Brigades Commission	11
2. Fire Protection Authority of Tasmania	11
3. Fire Protection Development Plan	11
4. Financing Fire Protection in Tasmania	11
5. Staffing	11
6. Training Officers for Senior Positions	12
7. Training Recruits to the Permanent Service	12
8. State Training School	12
9. First Aid Training	12
10. Driver Training	12
11. Urban Fire Boards	12
12. Rural Fires Board	13
13. State Fire Control Officer	13
14. Supply of Appliances and Equipment	13
15. Radio Communications	13
16. Fire Control Centres	13
17. State Emergency Services	13
18. Hobart Turntable Ladder	13
19. Standing Committee on Fire District Boundaries	13
20. Mobilising of Urban Brigade Resources	14
21. Dual Responsibility at Fires	14
22. Fire Restrictions and Fire Break Policies	14
23. Protecting Exposures of High Rise Buildings	14
24. Recognition of Services	14
25. Ship Fire Control	14
26. General Fire Regulations	14

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO FIRE SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND COMMAND IN TASMANIA	14
2 FIRE BRIGADES COMMISSION	16
3 URBAN FIRE DISTRICTS PROTECTION	17
4 RURAL FIRE PROTECTION	18
Rural Fires Board Headquarters—Cambridge	18
Appliances and Equipment—Updating	18
Shedding of Appliances and Equipment	18
Supply of Appliances and Equipment	19
Breathing Apparatus	19
Radio Communications	19
Organisational Structure vis-à-vis State Emergency Services	20
5 ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES	21
Stage 1	21
Stage 2	21
6 UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION	25
General Observations	25
Manpower Strength	25
The Relieving of First Officers	25
Appointment of Deputy First Officers	26
Fire Prevention	26
Training	26
First Aid Training	27
Driver Training	27
Overseas Training	27
Maintenance of Appliances and Equipment	27
Standards of Protection	28
7 TASMANIAN RURAL FIRE BRIGADES' ASSOCIATION	28
General Observation	28
Dual Responsibilities	28
Boundary Problems	28
Control of all Volunteers by Rural Fires Board	28
Training of Volunteers	29
Variations in Performance by Municipal Committees	29
Registration and Usage of Private Vehicles for Fire Protection Duties	29
Telephone Charges	29
Workers' Compensation	29
Fire Restrictions	29
Fire Breaks and Site Access	29
Public Relations	30
Main Roads	30
Manuals of Instruction	30
8 DEPARTMENTAL AND INDUSTRIAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES	30
9 TRAINING	30
Training Needs	30
Creation of a State Fire Training School	31

CONTENTS—(continued)

CHAPTER		PAGE
10	HOBART FIRE BRIGADE AND DISTRICT	32
	Water Supplies	32
	Equipment Records	33
	Mobilising Resources	33
	Rank Structure	33
	Training on Specialised Appliances	33
	Turntable Ladder	33
	Fire Boots and Protective Leggings	34
	Manpower	34
11	FINANCING FIRE PROTECTION EXPENDITURE	34
	Present and Proposed Methods of Funding Fire Services	34
	Constraints in Funding	36
12	COMMONWEALTH FUNDING	37
	Fire Fighting Appliances	37
	Communications	37
	Imports	37
	Taxation Incentives	38
13	ALTERNATIVES TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF FUNDING	38
	Alternative 1—Compulsory Fire Insurance	38
	Alternative 2—General Rates	38
	Alternative 3—Part Insurance and General Rate by Default	38
	Comment—State Funds	38
	Comment—Tobacco and Match Tax	39
14	FIRE PREVENTION TECHNOLOGY	39
	General Fire Regulations 1975	39
	General Observation	39
	Differing Disciplines	39
	Fire Prevention Bureau	39
15	MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS	40
	Council Rating System	40
	Use of Fire-fighting Equipment for Non-fire-fighting Purposes	40
	Daytime Manning by Permanent Staff	40
	Recognition of Services	40
	Grant Assistance to Farmers and Orchardists for Equipment	41
	Danger Periods—Prohibition to Burn	41
	Damage to Personal Clothing	41
	Howden	41
	I.D. Cards	41
	Servicing of Fire-fighting Hand Appliances	41
	Launceston Fire Brigade	42
	Role of Municipal Councils	42
	CONCLUSION	42
	Figure 1—Stage 1 Structure	22
	Figure 2—Stage 2 Structure	24
	Table 1—Expenditure of Fire Boards 1970-71 to 1976-77	35
	Table 2—Average Sum Insured and Fire Services Levy 1976	36

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Fire Brigades Commission

I recommend—

That immediate steps be taken by the Parliament to abolish the Commission and appoint in its place an Administrator to manage Urban Fire Brigades. Fortuitously, the Chairman of the Commission is past the age of retirement and the Secretary is currently due for retirement. I further recommend that the Administrator of Urban Fire Brigades be appointed a member of the Rural Fires Board.

2. Fire Protection Authority of Tasmania

I recommend—

The early appointment of a Working Party consisting of the Urban and Rural Fire Brigades Administrators and the Minister's nominees to prepare legislation providing for the establishment of a Fire Protection Authority of Tasmania as proposed in this Report with all the necessary powers to administer, on behalf of the Minister, all fire protection services within the State, provision being made for the Act to be fully effective by 1 July 1979, and for the early appointment of a Chief Administrator Designate.

3. Fire Protection Development Plan

I recommend—

That as soon as the Chief Administrator Designate is appointed, that he forms, with the Urban and Rural Fires Brigades Administrators (and any other person he desires to co-opt), a Planning Panel, the objective of which is to produce to the Minister by 31 December 1978 a comprehensive fire protection plan for Tasmania aimed at meeting the needs of the latter up to the year 1990.

4. Financing Fire Protection in Tasmania

I recommend—

That the Government appoint a Working Party to report on the practicability of establishing a policy of compulsory fire insurance on all property owners, the income from which shall be collected by fire insurance companies and the State Insurance Office and paid direct to the fire authority.

That the same committee consider and report on an alternative revenue-raising method, namely, one which will make it mandatory for ratepayers when paying their general rates, to produce evidence that they insure their properties and are currently paying premiums to insure against fire. Failure to do so would require the additional payment of a fire protection loading on the general rates.

That so long as insurance premiums include a fire levy content, the proposed fire authority appoints a Standing Committee to monitor the system to ensure that no property owner who insures against fire is able to evade paying the levy.

That in the absence of one or other of the recommendations set out above being operative, on and after 1 July 1978, from that date fire protection expenditure, both urban and rural, shall be met—75% from insurance premium levies and 25% from municipal rates, and that from 1 July 1978 financial assistance from the State to be limited to providing capital funds required for appliance and building programs, and major equipment.

5. Staffing

I recommend—

That senior appointments be made under the guidance of the Public Service Board and that all incumbents should have the right of appeal against termination of service.

That job descriptions for every permanent position in fire protection services should be drawn up and published together with qualifications required.

That, as a matter of urgency, the whole time manpower establishment of all urban brigades be examined.

That, in consultation with the United Fire Fighters' Union and the Tasmanian Volunteers' Association, a method of daytime manning by permanent men at certain volunteer stations during harvest time and the danger period for bush fires be examined.

That Station Officers should be permitted to act as First Officers in brigades such as Burnie and Devonport.

That the posts of Chief Officer and Secretary to the Fire Brigades Commission should not be filled.

6. Training Officers for Senior Positions

I recommend—

That, pending the establishment of the proposed fire authority, the two Administrators prepare a program providing for officers having potential for appointment to senior positions, e.g., Superintendent and above, to be sent to England for command and administrative training.

That, subsequent to the Administrator, Urban Fire Brigades, taking up his appointment, the existing Deputy Chief Officer to the Commission be sent to England for extensive instruction in fire prevention technology.

7. Training Recruits to the Permanent Service

I recommend—

That where there are less than four recruits to train, arrangements are made for their inclusion in a recruit induction course in one of the brigades on the mainland.

8. State Fire Training School

I recommend—

That a planning officer from the Education Department be seconded to the two Administrators to advise generally on training procedures for permanent and volunteer fire brigade personnel, and in particular to assist in preparing a comprehensive plan for the establishment and usage of a single State Fire Training School.

9. First Aid Training

I recommend—

That early action be taken to implement the proposals contained in this Report.

10. Driver Training

I recommend—

That the drivers of all heavy fire-fighting appliances undertake a test, and where necessary, a refresher course under the guidance of competent instructors.

11. Urban Fire Boards

I recommend—

That these be reduced to a maximum of five and redesignated Municipal Fire Committees.
That urban fire brigades be limited to the Greater Hobart, Greater Launceston, the North Coast and New Norfolk Fire Districts and possibly a Huon Fire District if the latter proposal is approved.

12. Rural Fires Board

I recommend—

That this Board continues to function through the proposed Administrator, pending Stage 2 development of the restructured organisation when the Board will become the cadre for the Minister's Fire Protection Advisory Council.

13. State Fire Control Officer

I recommend—

That the title of State Fire Control Officer be changed to Administrator, Rural Fire Brigades, and the latter be appointed a member of the Rural Fires Board.

14. Supply of Appliances and Equipment

I recommend—

That early action be taken to devise a system which will provide for central purchasing of all fire-fighting appliances and equipment under the guidance of the State Government Stores. Concurrently, I recommend investigation into the adequacy or otherwise of the existing maintenance facilities for all appliances and equipment in Tasmania by a Working Party comprising permanent and volunteer personnel.

15. Radio Communications

I recommend—

That a thorough examination of existing methods of communications and advise that a competent person may be obtained from the Country Fire Authority of Victoria for this purpose.

16. Fire Control Centres

I recommend—

The establishment of three fire control centres to cover the whole State which, by the simplest combination of telephone numbers, can be contacted by members of the public reporting a fire. Permanent staff at these centres (Hobart and Launceston being the principal ones) would activate the appropriate brigade, urban or rural.

17. State Emergency Services

I recommend—

That Government give full publicity to all echelons of fire protection services in particular and the public in general, giving assurances that command of fire situations will always remain in the hands of experienced Fire Officers.

18. Hobart Turntable Ladder

I recommend—

That as soon as practicable, an engineer from the manufacturer visit the brigade and submit an engineering report on this ladder.

19. Standing Committee on Fire District Boundaries

I recommend—

The early appointment of the proposed Committee of Review.

20. Mobilising of Urban Brigade Resources

I recommend—

The preparation and adoption of a rationalised system for mobilising resources in urban brigades, especially Launceston and Hobart.

21. Dual Responsibility at Fires

I recommend—

That steps be taken to prohibit persons being at the same time, members of both rural and urban volunteer fire brigades.

22. Fire Restrictions and Fire Break Policies

I recommend—

That further discussions are initiated with the Managing Committee of the Tasmanian Rural Fire Brigades Association with a view to advising the proposed Administrators on matters concerning fire restrictions, fire breaks policy, and ground fuel problems.

23. Protecting Exposures of High Rise Buildings

I recommend—

That First Officers of Hobart and Launceston brigades inspect and report on the need or otherwise for the installation of dry drencher systems on exposure hazards of high rise buildings.

24. Recognition of Services

I recommend—

The appointment of a small committee to consider a practicable method for the recognition of the services of volunteer fire brigade personnel.

25. Ship Fire Control

I recommend—

That a 'task force' of personnel specially trained and regularly retrained in fighting fires in ships, be provided within the permanent establishment of both Hobart and Launceston Brigades. Upon a confirmed report of a ship fire, personnel from the task force would be despatched by the quickest available means to the effected vessel.

26. General Fire Regulations

I recommend—

That the Minister calls for an early report from each of the authorities specified in Section 2 of the Regulations to ascertain the extent to which they have been implemented. In the instance of the Commission and Fire Boards, the reports should be prepared by Fire Officers based on experience in the field. Reports should also include the number and duration of deferments granted under Section 4 (subsection (2)) and Section 7 (subsection (4)).

CHAPTER 1**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO FIRE SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND
COMMAND IN TASMANIA**

1. More than in any period in history, even the Second World War, effective methods of fire protection and prevention have become vital to the economic well-being of individuals, separate communities and nations alike.

2. In primary and secondary industries, both of which are essential to the public as employers and to the nation as exporters, prompt and effective means of fire suppression, more than most factors, have become the critical margin of safety between economic survival and financial collapse.

3. Capital has become so expensive for rebuilding, retooling, and restocking, that resumption of production in a reduced form, or even going out of manufacturing altogether, has often been the consequence of a damaging fire.

4. To the prudent society, fire protection engineering has become in consequence more of a science, having been forced by events to embrace a wide variety of the technologies of other professions. It has itself become one requiring, in the prime public interest, that appointments to top fire service management are only awarded to men possessing the highest level of organisational, administrative and technical expertise, and, most desirably, high qualities of leadership.

5. In its Fire Boards, Australia, with the exception of the Capital Territory and until recently New Zealand, has a unique system of managing fire brigades, the latter being the principal component of fire protection services. Membership of these Boards is not based on fire engineering expertise. The practical effect of the Board system, whether or not intended, has resulted in the senior uniformed fire officer functioning as a 'Principal Fire-fighter' rather than the Chief Officer of State Fire Services.

6. Apart from being detrimental to the morale of uniformed personnel in general, such a policy has disenchanted the ambitious and capable young officer who comes to realise that even if he achieves the ultimate in his profession, he will never exercise the authority which is common to his colleagues elsewhere in the world.

7. What is more unfortunate than this personalised aspect is the fact that the officers who, early in their career, begin to demonstrate potential for top command, become, as the years go by, more and more aware of the omnipotence of the Board in relation to their Chief. In consequence of this, even the best begin to lose the extra and continuous drive necessary to equip themselves for the 'top spot'. Thus, when at last appointed, one finds them apprehensive of risking conflict with their Boards, even on a point of professional principle.

8. Inasmuch as the latter invariably have the unappealable right to 'hire and fire' their Chief Officers, the former situation is perhaps understandable. One finds recurring evidence of this in that by the time officers, usually by virtue of seniority alone, become candidates for the position of Chief Officer, they are either too old or too fixed in attitudes generally to commence acquiring the skills needed even to convince their employers that they are administratively or organisationally, and sometimes even technically, competent to totally manage State fire protection services.

9. The history of Fire Boards in Australia demonstrates that, for reasons already stated, it is not practicable for them to exercise executive power, nor should they. As Chief Officers were not in the position to do so, Board Secretaries have been forced to step into the vacuum. This has had the effect of dividing fire protection services into two main echelons—administration and finance, and operational.

10. During the past ten years, certain mainland States have adopted a policy of employing a bridge over the Secretary and the Chief Officer by the medium of a full-time paid Chairman. The fact that, in the eyes of his subordinates, this step further reduces both the authority of the Chief Officer and his prospect of ever assuming top command of a State fire protection service, causes me to condemn it as even a medium-term solution to top command problems. A most unsatisfactory aspect of this system is the 'one off' nature of these appointments, that is to say, when an incumbent retires, he is replaced with another non-professional who has to start from scratch learning both by his own mistakes and from the existing staff he has been appointed to manage.

11. The circumstances described above appear to have had an effect on Urban Fire Services in Tasmania, where, in my presence, senior fire officers were on occasions, treated with scarcely concealed contempt by Commission and Board members.

I was, for example, dismayed to find during my interviews with the Commission and Boards that Chief and First Officers were either not invited, or when present, did not sit as equals round the Board table.

12. It is of little use for Commission or Board members to say that these officers are not capable as administrators, or of brigade management generally. For more than thirty years in Tasmania, the Commission and Boards have carried the sole authority to hire and fire, to train and to prepare their

permanent and volunteer staff for all the duties and responsibilities of protecting the public and its property from fire. The failure of the senior officers to meet the demands of top management can only be viewed as the failure of the Commission and Boards.

13. The seeming indifference of the Commission and the principal Urban Boards as regards training systems to progressively prepare permanent officers for executive responsibility, is deplorable and not in the public interest, and is in marked contrast to many brigades on the mainland. Also in marked contrast, the Rural Fires Board has a respect amounting to admiration for the administrative achievements of their State Fire Control Officer.

14. By any standard, fire officers in Tasmania are well paid for the level of experience required and operational responsibilities to be faced. It is therefore in everyone's interest that efforts are made to equip them for total and complete command of fire protection services. This subject is enlarged upon in more detail in the section dealing with training.

15. To conclude, the Commission and Boards have no one but themselves to blame for any measure of inadequacy or incompetence of their fire officers, either permanent or volunteer.

CHAPTER 2

FIRE BRIGADES COMMISSION

16. Despite its many years of existence, the Commission produced no evidence of possessing any carefully researched plans for the maintenance and development of fire protection services in urban areas. In a society faced with ever-escalating costs of fire protection, the absence of such plans is inexcusable and not in the public interest.

17. During many interviews, a lack of respect was sensed for the Commission's ability, a view which, following my own interview with them, I regret to have to share.

18. The Commission has failed to give adequate direction to overall personnel training. During my interview with them, I referred to the almost criminal inadequacy of recruit training—their response to this observation confirmed the situation and their attitude. The reference made by two Commission members to breathing apparatus training begs the larger question, because the latter was largely forced upon the Commission by events.

19. Little has been achieved in the very important area of officer training, especially in fire prevention technology. In consequence, brigade officers, unskilled in the necessary 'arts and sciences', have been let loose upon the business community to enforce the General Fire Regulations, with embarrassing and unfortunate results.

20. The Commission was questioned as to whether or not, in submitting the General Fire Regulations to the Minister, they had assessed the implications for the fire service of the former in terms of manpower and special training. The answers offered by various members placed sole responsibility upon their late Chief Officer. Whatever is the truth of the matter, it is clear that the administration of the General Fire Regulations needs urgent review, a matter upon which is commented upon elsewhere in this Report (paragraph 190).

21. I find the Commission negligent in the matter of first aid training for fire brigade personnel. There was no understanding of the primary reasons for uniformed members of fire brigades being trained (and re-trained) in this subject, namely:—

To give immediate succor to—

- (i) Members of the public trapped in fire situations; and
- (ii) Their colleagues, when injured in a fire, especially when suffering from broken bones and arterial bleeding.

The fact that fire-fighters are particularly prone to heat exhaustion and asphyxiation, demands frequent training in kiss-of-life techniques.

22. It was necessary to question the Commission as to whether or not they were aware of the fact that members of the Hobart Fire Brigade were not supplied with fire-fighting calf-length protective footwear, and that in consequence fire-fighters in that brigade were thereby being required to operate amongst debris and fallen power lines and in water in ordinary footwear to the very real hazard of the fire-fighters. I understand that some form of rubber boot was offered but was rejected by members of the brigade on the grounds of inadequacy.

23. Notwithstanding that water supplies continue to be the most effective means of fire suppression in property fires, I could find no evidence that the Commission had ever even considered the adequacy or otherwise, of supplies or had planned the use of alternatives. That they appear convinced that this is a matter for 'someone else' is evidenced in the existing tactical deficiencies in major urban areas, and in the unsatisfactory situation which had developed at the oil installation at Selfs Point, Hobart.

24. Answers to questions put to the Commission on the reasons for terminating the appointment of two Chief Officers within the comparatively short space of ten years served only to convince me that the Commission is not competent to make such appointments.

25. The Commission's work during the past five years provided no evidence that they have evinced appropriate interest in the welfare of fire brigade personnel. There is a complete absence of planned educational and physical training programs, and, indeed, of any interest in the health of personnel.

26. The Hobart Fire Station in which the Commission has operated for years, is an abomination and should have been replaced in the early 1960s and failure to do so is going to prove most costly to all concerned when it is eventually replaced.

27. Elsewhere I have recommended that the Commission be abolished forthwith, the Fire Brigades Act of 1945 and all relative legislation being amended to provide for its functions and responsibilities to be temporarily exercised by an Administrator, appointed by the Minister, pending Parliament's decision upon the advice contained in this Report. The work load is well within the capacity of a competent person with minimum technical and secretarial support. The post of Chief Officer should not be filled—the Deputy Chief Officer continuing to act as one of the technical advisers to the Administrator, others being seconded from existing senior uniformed staff to function as a temporary Technical and Planning Advisory Panel.

28. Whilst amending the Fire Brigades Act 1945, the opportunity should be taken to restore the nomenclature 'Chief Officer' to the First Officers of urban brigades where appropriate, and re-designate the post of Deputy Chief Officer 'Technical Adviser'.

CHAPTER 3

URBAN FIRE DISTRICTS PROTECTION

29. Urban Boards continue to operate as separate units and the Commission has failed to provide and maintain adequate leadership, either administratively or technically. The wearing of the two hats (in reality it is in some instances three) by members of the Commission and Board has served to undermine any authority past Commissions may have established.

30. So far as supply of appliances and equipment to urban brigades is concerned, no evidence could be found of long range planning. The decision to purchase two costly elevating platform appliances for Burnie and Devonport has not been based on either historical evidence of need, or definitively established building development trends in these two townships. By contrast, both Hobart's and Launceston's needs for modern hydraulic platforms would be greater, both in terms of building development and the age and condition of existing aerial equipment.

31. Organisationally speaking, the situation surrounding the fire protection of Hobart and Launceston is much too fragmented and, in the former especially, provides an ever-present and very real risk of operational chaos in a fire-oriented emergency on the one hand, and wastage in resources on the other. Between Stages 1 and 2 of the recommended plan for restructuring the top echelons of fire

protection management and command in Tasmania, the Chief Administrator Designate, the proposed Administrators—Urban and Rural Fire Brigades should firstly prepare detailed plans for regrouping urban brigades and to re-align boundaries between the urban and rural brigades, based solely upon practical fire-fighting considerations.

32. The basis for planning should be to establish a 'Greater Hobart Fire District' embracing all existing and proposed residential and industrial development up to say, the year 1990. Similar treatment should be applied to the Launceston area, and to a North Coast Fire District stretching from Wynyard in the west to Devonport in the east which should be established.

33. The existing fire district of New Norfolk should be extended to embrace adjacent danger areas surrounding this strategically vulnerable town.

34. With the possible exception of a Huon Estuary Fire District embracing Huonville, Franklin, Geeveston and Cygnet, all existing urban fire brigades should be re-designated rural and automatically become part of the command of the Administrator—Rural Fire Brigades.

35. The changes outlined above would provide a number of advantages to brigade personnel and the public. Principal amongst these would be a more reliable command system in fire emergencies, whether urban or rural in character, or a combination of both. The planning and implementing of training programs would be simplified and would overall, be less costly. Communications in both methods of callout and radio-telephony would benefit.

Interchange and maintenance of appliances and equipment would be simplified and thus improved.

CHAPTER 4

RURAL FIRE PROTECTION

36. I see the changes recommended in the overall organisational structure as extracting the best from the existing rural framework and applying it to the whole of Tasmania.

37. The principal areas within the administration of the Rural Fires Board requiring attention are, in my view, the following:—

- (i) Rural Fires Board Headquarters.
- (ii) Appliances and equipment.
- (iii) Breathing apparatus.
- (iv) Radio communications.
- (v) Organisational structure.

Rural Fires Board Headquarters—Cambridge

38. Work being undertaken at the Board's Headquarters needs to be accelerated. With building costs rising at 1½ % per month cumulative, then, from the financial viewpoint alone—the quicker the project is completed, the better. The site is most suited for the establishment of a single State Fire Training School, and current planning should have regard to proposals set out in the section of this Report dealing with training.

39. It is essential that the Rural Fires Board Control Centre should be manned around the clock, pending a decision on the proposals for united fire control centres.

Appliances and Equipment—Updating

40. It is inevitable that some rural fire brigades are going to become more and more involved in fighting fires in property and transport outside any 'bush fire' season. For this purpose, they will require not only some additional equipment but more training in general fire-fighting.

Shedding of Appliances and Equipment

41. Irrespective of any decision made upon the recommendations contained in this Report, it is only prudent for funds to be provided to house appliances and equipment, create some suitable space for a small club room to be established at volunteer fire stations, and to maintain equipment.

Supply of Appliances and Equipment

42. Time and funds are wasted, costs unnecessarily escalated, and volunteer captains and their men alike irritated by the present system of budgeting, individual tendering and finally acquiring of equipment. The best interests of all concerned would be served by central purchasing and stockpiling through State Government Stores. Once budgets have been approved, and where appropriate councils (or volunteers themselves) have deposited funds, equipment can be either despatched to, or collected by, both rural and urban brigades.

43. It has to be remembered that a decade has passed since the disaster which gave rise to the spectacular growth in rural fire protection measures. Thus the appliances and equipment acquired during that period, some of which was already 'second-hand', will need to be updated and replaced. Central purchasing and stockpiling will provide an essential base for a renewal policy, and will provide substantial financial advantages.

44. Without well supervised appliances and equipment maintenance and replacement programs, the climatic and human factors which primarily gave rise to the disaster in 1967, will be replaced by mechanical and equipment failures as the cause of some future disaster.

45. Thirty years ago, the First Annual Report of the Fire Brigades Commission of Tasmania had cause to be critical of the uneconomic appliance and equipment purchasing policies of some twenty-two fire boards.

Such observations would be equally valid today in both urban and rural protection services.

46. Whilst the standard of management prevailing in the Rural Fires Board is in marked contrast to the inadequate performance of the Fire Brigades Commission, the observation made thirty years ago as regards uneconomic purchasing by individual units still exists today in rural areas.

47. This Inquiry has revealed that not all brigades have the same level of dedication amongst their members. On the basis of inspections made during the course of this Inquiry, it can be stated with confidence that a detailed inspection and test of equipment across the State would reveal much which needs attention in one form or another and probably would require the replacement of appliances and equipment. In other States faced with similar problems of distance, the periodic testing and servicing of equipment from mobile service vans has proved practical and highly successful. This measure provides an insurance against waste and failure, and failure of equipment and thus the efforts of crews at fire situations.

Breathing Apparatus

48. An open-handed policy as regards breathing apparatus equipment is not favoured because of the high levels of training and maintenance required to avoid firemen themselves becoming casualties, usually fatal ones, through inexperience or over-enthusiasm.

49. Basically, self-contained breathing apparatus is provided to defend the fireman against known and unknown toxic gases present, and in the instance of numerous non-toxic fires involving busy brigades, to protect the lungs of firemen from too frequent exposure to by-products of combustion. It is also essential in special situations, such as fires in confined spaces, where the oxygen content of the air will not support life.

50. In the average low rise property fire, breathing apparatus is no more essential to the volunteer wearer than when working in the path of a bush fire.

51. A need is seen for training and re-training volunteer officers, and for a mobile training and servicing facility to assist them in turn to train their men.

Radio Communications

52. It is held that this vital aspect of rural fire brigade operations requires examination by an expert, and it is suggested one be obtained from the Country Fire Authority of Victoria. This officer should meet all captains, and especially the Rural Volunteers' Association Committee, and be present at joint exercises where R/T is employed in brigade group and boundary fire simulated situations.

53. I have certainly come away from Tasmania with an intuitive feeling that if anything were suspect in fire ground operations in rural areas, it would be communication systems.

Organisational Structure vis-a-vis State Emergency Services

54. Having regard to the current, and what is seen to be an ever-developing situation in Tasmania, it behoves one to sound a note of warning to the Government of the dangers of a 'third force' entering into the fire protection structure of Tasmania.

55. Practical experience at many and varied civilian disasters throughout the world has made it abundantly clear that to change source of command and direction during any stage of an emergency—whether caused by a conflagration, tidal wave and flooding, typhoons and the like—or to attempt to superimpose another command structure over existing statutory authorities, is an invitation to create chaos and breakdown at the grass roots level which, albeit sometimes of a temporary nature, would have lasting and costly effects.

56. The Government is urged to make it abundantly clear to all personnel of all statutory authorities involved in fire protection and the public in general, that, where an emergency is a matter of law and order, the Commissioner of Police and his officers remain in command at all levels and at all times, and where the emergency is caused by fires, whether in urban or rural areas, the appropriate 'fire authority' remains in command at all levels.

57. The Government is assured that there exists and it has been made clear to this Inquiry, a great deal of unease and apprehension amongst permanent and volunteer fire brigade personnel who were interviewed on the activities (existing and potential) of the State Emergency Services. Criticisms were raised as regards duplication of equipment, competition for volunteer manpower (often critical in rural areas) and intrusion into what should be a part of the duties of fire protection statutory authorities.

58. In the long history of Tasmania, no evidence is found of repetitive disasters which were other than law and order, fire or maritime in character.

A great deal has been made in Australia of the potential role of State Emergency Services in evacuation drills and procedures in situations likely to become hazardous to the public. In practice one finds, whether it be high rise buildings, bomb alarms generally, or potential industrial disasters, that the police, fire and ambulance services will be the first on the scene. In rural situations, police and fire brigade personnel will be first on the scene. It follows therefore that pre-planned procedures for public safety are a matter for the police and fire protection services, according to the particular hazard potential.

59. It is deplored that whilst the control centre of the State Emergency Services in Hobart is manned round the clock, the Rural Fires Board Control Centre is not. This Inquiry was informed from two independent sources that as a consequence, fire calls in rural areas in southern Tasmania are being routed into the State Emergency Services in Hobart outside normal working hours. If it is necessary to route calls to a central control, then the more obvious place is Hobart Fire Control Centre.

60. Whilst the organised involvement of members of the public not already committed to voluntary service to supplement statutory authorities such as police, fire and ambulance is strongly advocated, it must be made abundantly clear that the management team of these resources should carry no authority to give directions, even on behalf of a Minister, to the statutory authorities managing police, fire or ambulance services. Nor should they take any unilateral action in matters of public safety which properly fall to the duty of police, fire and ambulance authorities. The reason for this statement is that only the statutory authorities themselves will be intimately aware of the deployment of resources on a day-to-day basis, and of the legal and operational constraints and techniques which must be followed even in times of stress and crisis.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

61. To sum up: The fire protection services in Tasmania are as fragmented organisationally speaking today as they were thirty years ago, and in consequence there is a very real possibility of strategic and tactical failure during operations at a major incident of fire, especially one occurring in the business centre of Hobart, or the wharves with a ship alongside.

It is very necessary that there should be a progressive move in two stages over two-three years, to graft all the existing fire protection services under one command structure, without either of the echelons losing their identity.

Stage 1

62. Development of Stage 1 is set out in Figure 1.

63. Between the first and second stages, the Minister's Fire Protection Services Secretariat, together with the management of urban and rural echelons, should create a Standing Committee of Review comprising urban and rural fire officers to determine boundary questions. The criteria to resolve problems must be on the basis of *public need* (for example, the time of response and attendance in relation to appliance and equipment standards) and not on the basis of municipal boundaries or financial considerations.

64. Such a Committee, on behalf of the managements of urban and rural brigades, should also review the boundaries of existing special fire areas.

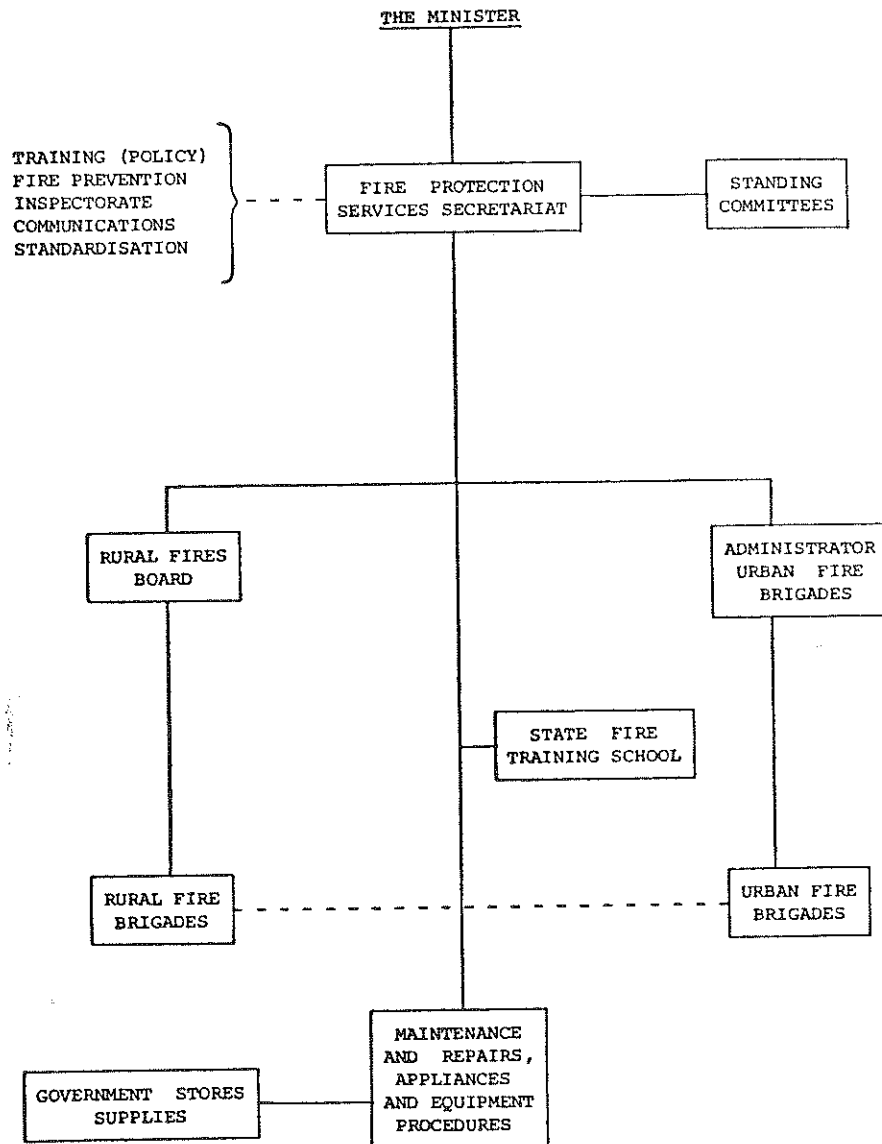


FIGURE 1: STAGE 1 STRUCTURE

65. As part of the first stage, another Standing Committee comprised of nominees of the managements of both urban and rural fire brigades, representatives of the United Fire Fighters' Union and the Tasmanian Rural Fire Brigades Association should get to work, under the chairmanship of an officer of the Minister's Fire Protection Services Secretariat, to resolve questions of standards of appliances and equipment, methods of purchase and supply, and matters involving repairs, maintenance and replacement of appliances and equipment.

Stage 2

66. It is estimated that it would take one financial year to achieve Stage 1, and two years to give effect to Stage 2 which, schematically, would appear as shown in Figure 2.

67. The two Standing Committees (Boundaries and Appliances and Equipment) at Stage 2 would be responsible to the Chief Administrator as would the Minister's Fire Protection Services Secretariat. In Stage 2, the latter would become responsible for establishing and maintaining a fire protection research and planning unit for the whole of Tasmania.

68. Membership of the Minister's Fire Protection Advisory Council could follow along the general lines of the existing Rural Fires Board, e.g.—

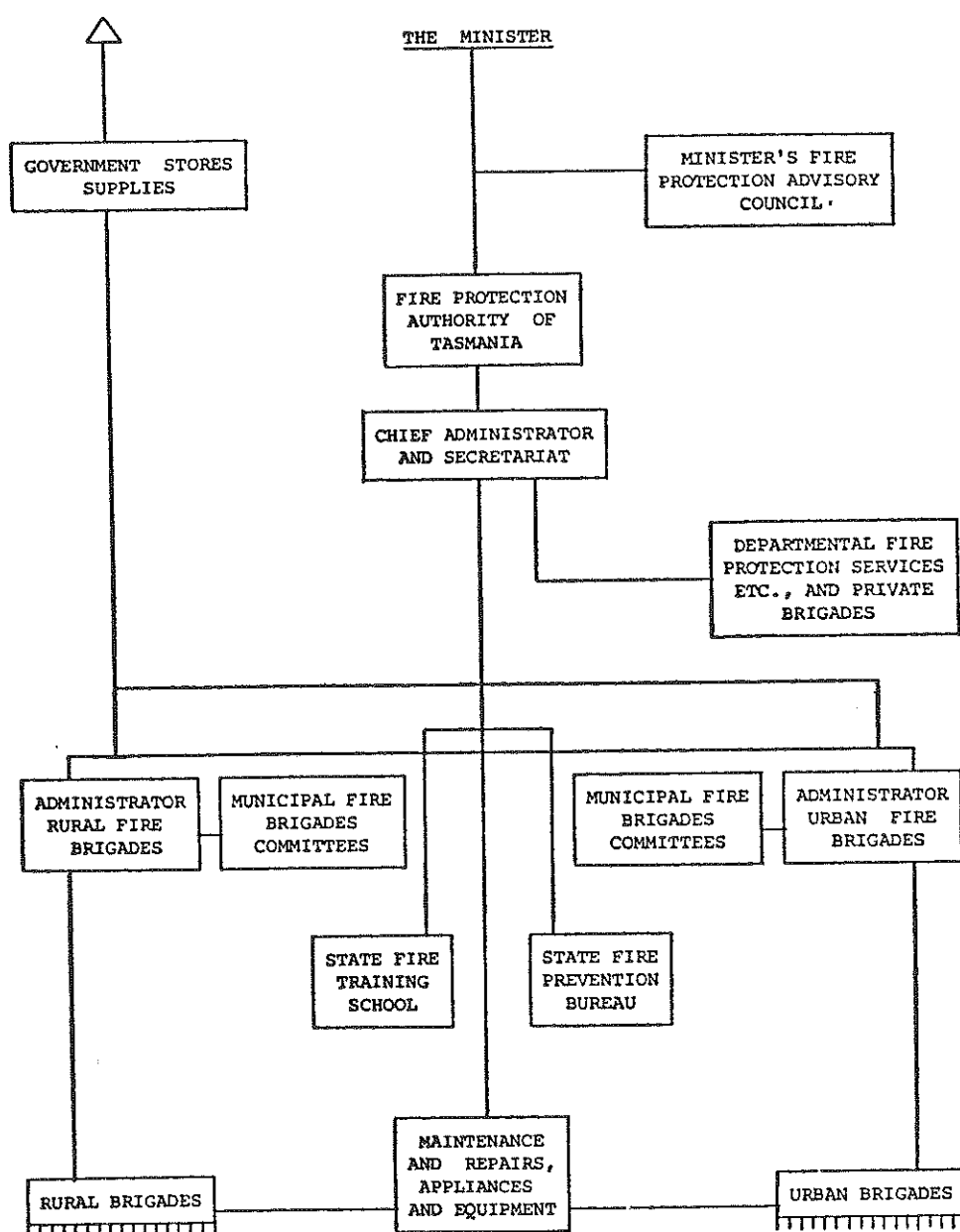


FIGURE 2: STAGE 2 STRUCTURE

Chairman—Minister's Nominee
Deputy Chairman—Chief Administrator
Municipal Association—One Representative
Sawmilling Trade—One Representative
Tasmanian Farmers' Federation—One Representative
Pulp and Paper Making Industry—One Representative
Forestry Commission—Fire Protection Officer of the Commission
Tasmanian Stockowners', Farmers and Orchardists Association—One Representative
United Union of Fire Fighters—One Representative
Tasmanian Rural Fire Brigades' Association—One Representative
Administrator, Urban Fire Brigades—Incumbent
Administrator, Rural Fire Brigades—Incumbent.

CHAPTER 6

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS' UNION

General Observations

69. Members of the delegation were impressive because of their drive, enthusiasm and desire to contribute to remedying existing deficiencies in brigades. Their support for the volunteer system, providing it was not specifically aimed at preventing growth of permanent staff but on rational planning, is to be welcomed.

70. On evidence put to the Inquiry and confirmed by independent investigation, it is clear that mobilising techniques in the urban brigades leave much to be desired. Stations at Claremont, Moonah and Hobart Main Station appear most adversely affected.

71. *Ad hoc* mobilising by individuals is dangerous without a pre-planned strategy, and the proposed Administrator of Urban Brigades should study the examples of Standing Orders for Mobilising in overseas brigades covering similar hazards to those existing in urban and rural areas of Tasmania.

Manpower Strength

72. On the question of permanent manpower, it was observed from the 1976 statistics published in the Commission's 1976 Annual Report, that on a population-to-fire-fighter ratio of approximately 700 : 1, Launceston is significantly better off than Hobart (which is approximately 1 000 : 1) in permanent manpower.

73. The average daily availability of twelve permanent fire-fighters on Hobart's Main Station is dangerously low. With an establishment (1976 Commission's Report) of twelve prime movers, plus seven trailer pumps, each of which requires towing to an incident, one finds the ludicrous statistic of one fire-fighter to one and a half prime movers. When one adds to this the fact that the existing turntable ladder is fitted with four outrigger jacks which must be independently wound down by hand before the ladder can be operated, and that it takes four men to remove the wheeled escape from another fire-fighting appliance, the unsatisfactory level of management of this brigade is revealed. This, however, is still only one aspect of the manpower problem which faces brigade officers.

74. Hobart City seems committed to high rise development, a concomitant of which in any brigade is a per capita manpower strength significantly higher than that needed in development averaging 25 metres in height, or less.

75. Hobart and Launceston Brigades are the only ones with the capability of assisting Burnie and Devonport with relieving manpower. The alternative is the high cost of holding back existing permanent staff for additional duties.

76. The proposed Administrator should take early steps to examine the permanent manpower strength, as between one brigade and another, and in urban brigades overall, as well as the duty systems, the all-important needs of time for adequate training, and the essential technical work on and off stations. Cleaning work should be contracted out to specialists on all occasions when it consistently prevents fire-fighting personnel carrying out more meaningful professional duties.

The Relieving of First Officers

77. United Fire Fighters' Union delegates made a strong submission that, whilst they had no objection to a volunteer officer acting in the absence of a permanent First Officer, it was reasonable to expect that he should be similarly qualified. They also made it quite clear that they were not 'having a shot' at the volunteer officer.

78. My view on this issue is unrelated to the volunteer aspect, but that permanent Station Officers must be given the opportunity to act in a higher rank (subject to capability) as of right to provide them with the only practical opportunity they are likely to have to prove their suitability for further promotion.

Appointment of Deputy First Officers

79. The delegates were emphatic in their submissions for the appointment of a permanent Deputy to the First Officers at Burnie and Devonport.

80. To accept this submission would be productive of a permanent establishment where there would be as many 'generals' as 'indians'. There is a need for additional permanent men at Burnie and Devonport. The consequences of leaving the stations unattended whilst attending an alarm and waiting for a volunteer to arrive at the watchroom are viewed with apprehension. In Burnie, it was claimed that one man stayed behind in such situations. If this is so, and there was a conflict of submission here, then it is still a 'frying pan or fire' policy for with one man to operate the pump on the appliance, the Officer must enter the fire by himself. Such a policy during a major sporting event could prove very costly, at a time when commercial premises are most vulnerable. Even during working hours when the First Officer could normally stand in, the situation is really not satisfactory.

81. It may be of interest to note that existing technology can provide for all calls received at a station (when unattended) to be put through to the R/T set on appliances attending a call. The cost is approximately equal to the salary of a permanent fireman for three and a half years.

Fire Prevention

82. Not surprisingly, in view of the humiliating and frustrating experiences of brigade officers in carrying out assignments under the General Fire Regulations, the United Fire Fighters' Union delegates argued strongly for the establishment of a Fire Prevention Department.

83. As will be observed, provision has been made in both Stages 1 and 2 of the proposed reorganised structure. It cannot be agreed on economic or practical grounds that any single urban brigade should have its own Fire Prevention Department. Officers from a central bureau which, as time proceeds, can be reinforced as required by officers on secondment from urban brigades, would prove quite adequate in Tasmania.

84. In addition to the work of the bureau, the proposed State Training School should also include fire prevention technology in its programming for both permanent and volunteer personnel, since much can be done at grass roots level with minimum involvement of officers of the central bureau to assist the small municipalities in the approval of plans as regards fire safety measures.

Training

85. It was pleasing to observe that the United Fire Fighters' Union supports the proposed policy of a State Fire Training School, aimed at training all fire-fighters, both permanent and volunteers. Delegates accepted the fact that to facilitate training, it would be necessary to temporarily place students on daytime duties, and that Industrial Board determinations would have to be altered to make this and other changes necessary and practicable, without the need to meet crippling payments under special training awards.

86. The concern of the United Fire Fighters' Union delegation is shared as regards the total inadequacy of training, especially the lack of tactical mobility drills at major risks, relaying water from the Derwent and Tasman, recruit training, and special hazards instruction. Much of this lack is brought about by a combination of insufficient men to clean station premises and the carrying out of hydrant and building inspections.

87. To achieve mutually desired objectives, the United Fire Fighters' Union must agree to a revision of annual and long service leave schedules which will enable the permanent brigades to be at full strength for a particular period of any one year, thus permitting a percentage of staff to proceed onto day duty for planned training programs. Such a system will, nonetheless, require some reinforcing of overall strength to ensure that all staff can be processed through such programs at least once per annum.

First Aid Training

88. Grave deficiencies have already been discovered in the area of first aid training in discussions with personnel when visiting stations in the evenings. A start has been made in this area but it is hampered by the immutability of the rules of the St John Ambulance Association as regards the number and spacing of lectures. The shift system makes it almost impossible to observe these rules, and pending adequate training programming, it is recommended that abridged first aid instruction be given for one hour daily on each shift to concentrate on respiration, bleeding, compound fractures and spinal injuries. Lay lecturers of the St John Ambulance Association are qualified to give this instruction which could be rounded off by one general lecture from a medical practitioner.

Driver Training

89. The driving experience of the average fire brigade recruits today is limited to light transport, mostly cars, and it really is quite inexcusable to turn them loose in the streets driving 5-10-tonne fire appliances. Pending the establishment at the proposed State Fire Training School of basic and advanced driving techniques, steps should be taken to hire the best heavy vehicle instructors available and examine the proficiency of all brigade drivers who do not possess a satisfactory background of experience.

Overseas Training

90. The United Fire Fighters' Union were questioned on their attitudes to overseas training as it is impracticable in the immediate future to provide the level of expertise required for either senior officer training, or, for that matter, training in fire prevention technology. I advised that it was valueless to press for a Fire Prevention Department if costly obstacles were going to be put in the way of managements in attempting to properly train officers in the skills required when these could only be carried out overseas. Nor would it be reasonable to expect the ratepayers to pay for wives, for instance, to accompany their husbands on overseas training courses.

91. The Secretary gave assurances that his Committee and members would certainly adopt reasonable attitudes to proposals.

Maintenance of Appliances and Equipment

92. Delegates raised this issue which had also been causing me concern. Fire appliances are costly, take a long time to replace, and such factors as stability, condition of brakes, steering and hydraulic systems have a direct effect on other road users, motorists and pedestrians alike. It was noted that the Hobart Board had to send to Brisbane for an engineer to examine and make a judgment on the Metz turntable ladder used by the Hobart Brigade. Tasmania now has four costly aerial appliances, unfortunately not manufactured locally, or even on the mainland.

93. There exists a policy of purchasing second-hand appliances from overseas which, to a major extent, must really be categorised as purchasing obsolescence which can, in the long term, be a costly experience.

94. Steps must be taken to appoint and train a modest team of fire brigade mechanics in Tasmania to periodically examine and report on the condition of appliances—urban and rural, inspect repairs and maintenance effected by outside agencies before payment is made, and especially to service and periodically test aerial appliances.

Standards of Protection

95. Understandably, delegates were apprehensive of a non-growth situation of permanent fire-fighting resources in a growing community and changing hazards and especially the effect of high rise fire situations on their limited manpower.

96. Comments have been made elsewhere on the absence of adequate research and onward planning on the part of the Commission and Boards, especially in Hobart. Increases in resources are not a matter for *ad hoc* decisions, whether or not based on pressure from sectional interests. Neither are increases in population alone sufficient to justify increases.

97. With the high costs involved in providing permanently manned stations fitted with the most modern low labour-intensive fire-fighting appliances and equipment, an essential prerequisite to growth is research. In Tasmania this is, in urban fire brigade terms, non-existent, and must be an early objective of the proposed Urban Fire Brigades' Administrator.

CHAPTER 7

TASMANIAN RURAL FIRE BRIGADES' ASSOCIATION

General Observation

98. I was most impressed with both the delegates and the submissions of the Association, and commend the following for the immediate attention of the existing State Fire Control Officer and the proposed Urban Fire Brigades' Administrator.

Dual Responsibilities

99. Steps must be taken to avoid the circumstances where volunteers belong to both urban and rural brigades, and/or the State Emergency Services. In practice, such a situation becomes 'Keystonian Cops' in character, when, as the urban fire brigade, personnel stop at the fire district (or reticulated water supply) boundary, only to reactivate themselves as the rural fire brigade, which in practice means they change vehicles and equipment before carrying on to the fire. Fortunately, and as is so often the case in rural areas, common sense prevails at the expense of the rules.

100. During various interviews, there were assertions however, that the dual role factor, combined with the immutability of the boundary questions, had been responsible for unnecessary damage by fire and delays in dealing with outbreaks of fire, which in one instance resulted in fatalities.

Boundary Problems

101. Time did not permit carrying out on-the-spot investigations of each alleged incident, however the sincerity of the men making the submissions left me in no doubt but that there is a fire district boundary problem of significant dimensions both in the matter of property protection (classic examples being Magra, Fairview, Lawitta, and the environs of Deloraine and Burnie), and its effect on personnel serving both urban and rural fire brigade formations. These matters must be amongst the first to receive the attention of the Standing Committee on Boundaries proposed elsewhere in this Report.

Control of All Volunteers by Rural Fires Board

102. Another proposal advanced by the Association was to the effect that all volunteer-manned urban brigades become integrated under the Rural Fires Board. I regret that I am unable to support such a proposition as it is believed it would have the same adverse effects on volunteers as would the adoption of a reverse proposal, i.e., rural fire brigades protecting built-up areas of any consequence being transferred to the control of the Urban Fire Brigades' Administrator. The second stage development of the organisational structure is seen as satisfactorily meeting the point raised by the Association.

Training of Volunteers

103. I support the view expressed that all volunteers should be trained to similar standards. The proposed State Fire Training School will provide the basis for this policy, which should be extended to the grass roots of both rural and urban brigades through the medium of mobile training units, exploiting to the full the employment of visual aids, the pioneering work of which, by a prominent volunteer fire officer has been disregarded.

Variations in Performance by Municipal Committees

104. The Association expressed concern with the variety in standards of interest displayed by municipal fire committees and which materially effects performance of rural brigades. It has been suggested that municipalities should be required to contribute a percentage of their revenue into a central fund, which when matched dollar-for-dollar by the State Government, would be re-allocated on a regional basis according to needs as seen by a joint conference of regional officers. Stage 2 of the proposed restructuring of existing organisations would meet this point through the medium of central purchasing of all appliances and equipment, and their allocation by the Rural and Urban Administrators.

Registration and Usage of Private Vehicles for Fire Protection Duties

105. Whilst being used for *bona fide* fire protection duties, private vehicles should automatically be covered for third party insurance, and no legal action should be taken against the operator/driver of an unregistered vehicle when employed on *bona fide* fire protection duties.

106. The Association is concerned, as indeed should be every member of the public, that for the want of accommodation (shedding), much valuable fire-fighting equipment is exposed more or less permanently to the elements. If funds for accommodation cannot be found, then it would be prudent, between 'bush fire seasons', to withdraw the equipment and store it under cover on a regional basis.

107. It is to be remembered that often as not volunteer fire brigade accommodation is illustrative of the chicken and the egg controversy, namely that by providing a meeting place for volunteers, fund raising functions can be held which, over a reasonable period thus meets two purposes—repaying loans and providing at greatly reduced cost, adequate accommodation for fire-fighting hardware.

Telephone Charges

108. There is a very genuine case in these days of high telephone charges for selected volunteer fire brigade personnel to receive a fixed annual *ex gratia* payment towards the cost of installing and maintaining a telephone, without which the effectiveness of their services would be greatly reduced.

Workers' Compensation

109. Protection must be extended to cover all functions carried out by volunteers, not just drills and fires. Members who attend meetings (one for example travelled several hundred miles in fog and rain storms to see me) should be covered from door-to-door. A suitable rule would be—'Any volunteer member on brigade business including proceeding to and from a place where he will be carrying out either operational or other duties, shall be covered by workers' compensation insurance'.

Fire Restrictions

110. The Association made what appeared to be a very sound case for the adoption of a better system control over fire restriction procedures. They were especially impressed with a system prevailing in New South Wales which *inter alia* employs one telephone number for the whole State. Having studied the multiplicity of telephone numbers to be contacted in Tasmania, I am more than half convinced that the Association have made their point and that the matter should receive early attention.

Fire Breaks and Site Access

111. Following a visit to a site of a substantial 'bush' fire, I needed no prompting to express concern at the absence of adequate fire breaks between ever-increasing building development and the adjacent 'bush' land. In the Kingborough district, there was a dearth of access roads to the rear of properties immediately bordering 'bush' land.

112. If there was one hazard which the 1967 disaster revealed to developers and councils alike, it was the inadequacy of fire breaks between properties and bush land, especially where both were situated in valleys and on hillsides, or on raised plateaus between two heavily wooded slopes. Time did not permit any study of consequence which in any case would be more effectively carried out by local fire brigade personnel more experienced than I of the precise field problems created by these shortcomings as evidenced in the 1967 fires.

Public Relations

113. It is recommended that the Minister's subsequently to be the Chief Administrator's Secretariat, should include a competent Public Relations Officer to develop and maintain rapport between fire protection services and the public at large. People, more than providence, cause fires, and there is a constant message which has to be put over to the former, especially to children and travellers.

Main Roads

114. At a number of interviews, the Department of Main Roads came in for strong criticism for failing to have an adequate hazard reduction program on a continuing basis (indeed, some deputations claimed the Department had none!). It is recommended that early joint discussions on this matter between the Department of Main Roads and a special sub-committee of the Rural Fires Board to take action to allay, in a practical form, the fears of rural fire brigade members on this matter.

Manuals of Instruction

115. A final point raised by the Association concerned standard manuals of instruction. The Fire Service in Tasmania would benefit if there were prepared and published regularly by the Principal of the proposed State Fire Training School, manuals of instruction, on behalf of the fire protection authorities, both urban and rural.

CHAPTER 8

DEPARTMENTAL AND INDUSTRIAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

116. A number of submissions was received, some of which, notably Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife, were informative and helpful to me. It is probable that there is some duplication in effort amongst the organisations. I doubt, however, if it is meaningful.

117. The restructuring proposed in this Report of the public fire services in Tasmania provides for co-ordination of non-public fire protection services to be monitored at Chief Administrator level.

118. It has been suggested that the duties of the permanent fire staff of some departments could be extended to other areas which would have the effect of reducing the annual wage bill of, e.g., the Hobart Special Fire Area Committee. As I do not regard myself equipped to give justice to this suggestion, I must commend it to the attention of the Chief Administrator Designate.

CHAPTER 9

TRAINING

Training Needs

119. It is to state the obvious that in so far as fire-fighting and operations generally are concerned, the greater the frequency and variety of actual incidents, the less becomes the need for practical training. Unfortunately the reverse of this truism is not always appreciated.

120. Good work is being undertaken at grass roots level in rural areas within the limitations of facilities available to Group Captains, and the Rural Fires Board property at Cambridge will fulfil the hopes of the State Fire Control Officer when funds and time permit. But more, much more needs to be done, for training for all persons and at all levels involved in fire protection in Tasmania.

121. In the permanently manned urban brigades, training—from recruit fireman to Chief Officer—is woefully inadequate. In many areas, it is non-existent.

122. An experienced Technical Education Officer needs to be seconded to the proposed Minister's Fire Protection Services Secretariat to provide the expertise needed in fire protection training overall.

123. The United Kingdom Fire Services have available for study and adaption to any local conditions what is known as 'Central Training Progression' planning. Charting provides guidelines for the training of personnel from the time of recruitment to Chief Fire Officer level. The documentation which goes with charts provides for refresher training also.

124. In Western Australia, the Board's Establishments Officer has for some time been placed on detached duties to develop a comprehensive training policy aimed at achieving objectives similar to those established in the 'Central Training Progression' Chart. This officer has linked a number of subjects and training aids to meet differing but related objectives. For example, in setting the material for training personnel to sit for the examinations of the Institution of Fire Engineers under the aegis of the Technical Education Department, the Establishments Officer has brought into line training techniques for day-to-day routine brigade work, such as building inspections and enforcement of legislation, water supplies, hydraulics and pump operations, hazardous goods and breathing apparatus (to mention a few), and requirements in the sensitive area of qualifications for various grades of promotion.

125. Thus the Establishments Officer has succeeded in demonstrating, through planned systematic training methods graded for all levels, that there is a practical relationship between the written word, formulae, calculation, etc., and the day-to-day situations faced by fire-fighters at fires, on stations and at building inspections.

126. Permanent fire-fighters are well paid at all levels in comparison with other occupations, and it is therefore essential to both the public and the men themselves, that when not engaged in fire fighting and tactical training, they undertake the role of fire safety inspectors and advisers to the public and are not society's most expensive charmen! This aspect was one among many sensible points made by the delegation from the United Fire Fighters' Union.

Creation of State Fire Training School

127. One of the many reasons for the proposal for a single fire authority whilst retaining individual status for both urban and rural organisations, is to produce and maintain a single fire training authority for all branches of fire protection services, public and private. Provision has thus been made for one State Fire Training School in Stage 1 of the 'unification' process.

128. The three requirements in the establishment of the school cannot be over-emphasised. They are:—

- (i) A trained technical educationist as Principal supported by selected uniformed fire officers.
- (ii) Full and frequent consultations with the 'troops', both permanent and volunteers, when programming training methods and setting standards.
- (iii) The training of key instructors at Moreton-in-Marsh Fire Service Technical Training College in England.

129. In its establishment, it must be recognised that something more will be required for senior officers, and those specialising in fire prevention technology. It is to be noted that the fire training establishments in the United Kingdom at Moreton-in-Marsh and at Dorking have received international recognition. Upon return from these colleges, officers must, through the State Fire Training School, disseminate their newly acquired expertise to permanent and volunteer students alike.

130. The objectives of the State Fire Training School must be primarily aimed at the complete training of recruits to at least Station Officer level, covering theory and practical in variable proportions according to rank and length of service of students.

131. Training techniques for volunteers must follow a similar pattern but with acceptance of the need to capsule subjects generally, with some effective tailoring to meet both the change of emphasis in operational skills and time available to volunteers.

132. Training on every fire station by permanent staff can be significantly reduced to enable them to be more meaningfully employed on 'fire safety' matters if training programs and manpower strength provide for periodic concentrated daytime and evening sessions in practical drills and tactical fire ground mobility exercises supervised by senior officers.

133. It is understood there will be problems in rural brigades created by time availability during harvesting periods, and mobile training programs must take account of these circumstances.

134. All planned training programming aimed at providing specific courses of instruction followed by a form of achievement assessment, should properly provide also for the issue of successful students of certificates of merit issued under the seal of the fire authority.

CHAPTER 10

HOBART FIRE BRIGADE AND DISTRICT

135. The unsuitability of this station has been raised elsewhere in this Report.

136. Costs apart, it is likely to prove advantageous to replace the existing station with two new stations on different sites. This proposition, or even the building of one station, requires, together with the location of existing and proposed suburban stations, to be thoroughly researched and it is suggested that this might profitably be made a project for final year architectural and town planning students at the University.

Water Supplies

137. A walking tour of the city centre indicates that there are five blocks which present constant potential for a conflagration requiring something better than 180 litres per second to stop and to speedily extinguish.

138. On the information helpfully supplied by Mr P. G. Crawford, City Engineer, there seems little doubt that once the 250 mm ring main is on stream, the city centre and its immediate environs will be well served by mains water.

139. In view, however, of the brigade manpower situation and the degree of congestion in the streets during peak shopping hours, it is recommended that there be provided at strategic sites, a limited number of high capacity draw-off multi-head pedestal hydrants, coupled with a policy by the brigade to specify a minimum of 1 000 g.p.m. pumps on future purchases of fire appliances. Nothing is more conducive to being unable to control the spread of fire than several small capacity pumps, the use of which is un-coordinated when operating from different hydrants often from the same branch main, although the installation of the ring main referred to will largely mitigate the tactical errors of this nature.

140. I also recommend that on exposed faces of high rise structures situated immediately above low profile risk hazards, dry drencher systems are installed enabling fire brigade personnel, with minimum manpower involvement, to adequately protect exposure hazards. At the present time, the Hobart Brigade has neither the equipment nor the manpower to achieve this objective by other means.

141. Once it becomes obvious that a major fire potential exists, 'master pumpers', i.e., 1 000 g.p.m. or better, should be connected to high capacity hydrants, and smaller pumping units cleared from the immediate area of operations. These tactics are productive of savings in manpower, reduced congestion in the immediate areas involved in fire, and greatly improved control of water supplies. In brigades such as Hobart with only one aerial appliance, it then becomes practical to continuously re-position the latter unimpeded by other appliances and scrambled hose lines.

142. It is further advised that plans should be developed to make use of water from the Derwent. At the present time, the average manpower availability in the brigade would be quite inadequate to relay the water beyond 150 to 250 metres from the water's edge with the techniques required with the current equipment. Any member of the brigade holding a Diploma of the Institution of Fire Engineers should be capable of preparing a practical working paper on this matter.

Equipment Records

143. The present system is unnecessarily time consuming. One water-resistant master inventory card for each appliance is adequate, as is one card for the equipment in each room in the complex. Hose records, other than date of purchase and commissioning which should be stencilled on the hose, are of little value.

Mobilising Resources

144. Standard procedures for mobilising brigade resources are required, thus avoiding any risk of differing methods being employed *ad hoc* by the various shift officers, and the danger of collapse of the fire-fighting effort when resources are not immediately available.

Rank Structure

145. This aspect of the current organisation is regarded as being both untidy and, in particular instances, meaningless in the command sense. Having a First Officer in command implies that the establishment includes a Second, Third and so on. Having a Superintendent in charge of a shift would imply that there is a Chief Superintendent in charge of all. Having a number of Station Officers on one station on one shift requires a rank designation to establish beyond any doubt which Station Officer is the senior, and thus responsible in the absence of his supervisor.

146. The problem is common in one form or another to all urban brigades. It is suggested that in the circumstances prevailing in Tasmania, the following nomenclature is adopted in urban brigades, whilst retaining the terms 'Group Captain' and 'Captain' for volunteers in rural brigades:—

Chief Officer (of Fire Districts)

Deputy Chief Officer—Senior Shift Officer who, when on duty, would be referred to as 'Senior Operations Officer'

Senior Station Officer

Station Officer

Principal or Senior Fireman (to wear chevron)

Fireman (to wear arm badges to denote specialisation, e.g., TTL operator, BA or fully trained fireman insignia).

Training on Specialised Appliances

147. Elsewhere the deficiencies which exist in brigades have been discussed. In Hobart and Launceston, however, there is a need for personnel stationed at suburban stations to be afforded more frequent opportunities to train on appliances stationed at headquarters stations. In the case of aerial appliances, all brigade personnel must be given the opportunity to operate aloft at least once a month.

Turntable Ladder

148. The logic behind the decision to restrict the operating limit of this appliance is condemned. It is understood that it is 30 metres (more or less) for drills, but in a fire situation the ladder could be operated at full extension. Either the appliance is safe for usage under all circumstances, or it must be made so, failing which it must be condemned and replaced. A restriction of this nature is fraught with potential problems, the principal ones being: injury to brigade personnel and the public; serious damage to property following collapse at a fire (with a runaway fire in consequence); and an unnecessary high potential for public liability claims.

149. Having regard to the alleged condition of this ladder, the Commission's sense of priority in agreeing to the purchase of elevating platforms for Burnie and Devonport was unrealistic. If it is argued that the critical condition of the Hobart ladder was not known at the time of approving the purchase of the elevating platforms, then one is forced to ask the obvious question, namely, what system is in force to annually test aerial appliances? Were tests carried out before committing the country to the costly purchase of additional units for towns which, on current statistical evidence, could have managed without them in the immediate future as successfully as they have in the past?

150. Replacing turntable ladders is extremely costly. It would therefore be prudent, financially speaking, to require an engineer from the manufacturer of the ladder to visit Hobart and submit a detailed engineering report on the appliance, which I could subsequently comment upon if desired.

Fire Boots and Protective Leggings

151. This extraordinary shortcoming has been referred to in the observations on the Commission. This equipment should be supplied without delay and no better advice can be given as far as the boots are concerned but to adopt the Mark II type which has recently been extensively researched in the United Kingdom and which would represent the best in the current state of the art in this field. Leggings could surely be made locally in Tasmania from a water and flame-resistant material.

Manpower

152. Reference has been made elsewhere to the need to review the day-to-day availability of permanent fire-fighters on Hobart's main fire station, to research the needs of the existing fire districts and to establish a new concept in urban fire districts. I advise against delaying a review of manpower on the Hobart main fire station, whilst research on fire districts is being carried out.

CHAPTER 11

FINANCING FIRE PROTECTION EXPENDITURE

153. Before dealing with methods of funding, comments upon overall costs would be appropriate.

154. Mobile fire protection, i.e., fire brigades, is labour intensive and in permanently manned brigades some 80% of expenditure is taken in salaries and related expenditure such as superannuation, workers' compensation insurance, pay-roll tax and the financial consequences of acting appointments during long service leave, hold backs, due to sickness, training schedules.

155. These factors point up two others, namely (1) the need to equip brigades with fire-fighting appliances which require the minimum of manpower to reduce working time at fires and (2) provide the maximum options to fire-fighters in extinguishing media (e.g., various foams, dry powder, halon gases, high and medium pressure water fog), power rewind hose reels, lightweight alloy ladders and equipment generally.

156. Insufficient attention has been paid (and it is a worldwide shortcoming) to the establishment and maintenance of data systems upon which the cost-to-performance of fire protection services can be meaningfully evaluated. One is, in consequence, left with little but the simplest of criteria to employ, namely:—

$$\frac{\text{Annual Brigade Cost} + \text{Annual Losses}}{\text{Population}} = \text{Cost per capita}$$

157. Figures based on the publication 'Insurance in Australia' and produced by the Commonwealth Statistics Department, shows that costs per capita made up by combining fire brigade expenditure and estimated costs of losses over the past five years have averaged \$15.70 throughout Australia, with Tasmania being the second lowest at \$13.22.

158. As, however, the losses relate to the State in which the policy is recorded, not the State in which the losses were sustained, these statistics are of little value for planning purposes.

159. Notwithstanding there is seen as inevitable, increased expenditure in some urban areas, especially Hobart and its environs, and in rural ones for an appliance and equipment replacement program, and for shedding.

Present and Proposed Methods of Funding Fire Services

160. Under the present method of financing urban fire services in Tasmania, 55% of the cost of fire brigades is paid by insurance companies who, in turn, recover from their policy holders via a fire levy on the premiums, 22½% is paid by local government authorities and 22½% by the State Government.

161. As fire insurance is voluntary, those who do *not* insure their assets only contribute towards the 45% of the cost of fire brigades borne by local government authorities and the State Government. On the other hand, those who do insure their assets contribute towards fire brigade costs via all three sources. Furthermore, the amount which those who insure individually contribute via their insurance companies depends upon the extent to which other persons and enterprises insure. If a person does not insure against fire, then what would otherwise be his contribution via insurance towards the maintenance of fire brigades has to be spread over those who do insure. As fire services are available to the Australian Government, which also does not insure its property, those who insure against fire also bear that part of the cost not covered by the Australian Government. The same cannot be said about the State Government because it contributes 22½% of brigade costs.

162. A further burden is placed upon those who insure against fire in that stamp duty is imposed on premiums. In 1967, the rate of stamp duty was raised from 5% to 6% of the amount of the premium and in 1975, it was from 6% to 7½%.

163. The obvious inequity in the present method of funding fire services is that those who insure subsidise those who do not. The result is that the cost of insurance including the fire levy and stamp duty is higher than it would be if a greater proportion of asset holders insured. Furthermore, when in 1973-74 there was an extraordinary increase in wage costs, which account for about 80% of total fire services' costs, the resultant increase in the fire levy caused asset holders to 'buy less insurance' in much the same way as an increase in the price of an article causes less of it to be purchased.

164. The following table shows that over the period 1970-71 to the present, the estimated annual expenditure of Fire Brigade Boards and hence the insurance companies' contribution, which is 55% of it, has risen more rapidly than premium income, as defined in the Sixth Schedule of the Fire Brigades Act, and thus a rising percentage of premium income is being absorbed by the fire brigade contribution. Over time, this results in asset holders receiving less cover per dollar paid on fire and householders' and homeowners' policies and a growth in under-insurance. There is substantial evidence to show that increases in premiums due to rising fire brigade expenditure and the costs of stamp duty are being offset by under-insuring. See Table 2.

TABLE 1
EXPENDITURE OF FIRE BOARDS—1970-71 TO 1976-77

Year	Estimated Expenditure of Fire Boards	Insurance Companies' Contribution	Total Insurance Premiums in Previous Year	Insurance Con- tributions as Percentage of Insurance Premiums
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000*	%
1970-71	1 192	656	3 708	17.68
1971-72	1 613	887	4 199	21.14
1972-73	1 854	1 020	4 694	21.73
1973-74	2 081	1 144	5 197	22.01
1974-75	3 410	1 875	5 870	31.94
1975-76	3 971	2 184	6 676	32.71
1976-77	4 742	2 608	9 034	28.87

* Premiums included are determined according to the Sixth Schedule of the Fire Brigades Act.

SOURCE: Fire Brigades Commission.

165. It follows from the above points that there would be less under-insurance if stamp duty was not imposed on insurance premiums which have a substantial fire component, and if the community and the Government adopted a less sympathetic attitude towards non-insurers who suffer loss by fire. However, such innovations are unlikely to redress significantly the problem of under-insurance.

TABLE 2
AVERAGE SUM INSURED AND FIRE SERVICES LEVY 1976

State	(i) Average Sum Insured		(ii) Fire Services
	Building	Contents	Levy
	\$'000	\$'000	%
Western Australia	15.41	4.29	46
Queensland	17.38	4.62	27
Tasmania	18.07	5.35	21*
South Australia	18.39	4.61	23
Victoria	19.15	4.78	19†
New South Wales	20.48	5.19	13
Australian Capital Territory	31.57	6.85

* Rural 6% † Country 19%.

SOURCE: (i) Insurance Council of Australia.

(ii) Insurance in Australia and New Zealand, 1976, p. 44.

166. As already noted, local government authorities finance 22½% of the costs of urban fire brigades. This cost is recouped as part of the general rate and hence levied on ratepayers according to the value of their property. Thus ratepayers who have insured their property contribute at the same rate as non-insurers.

167. One way by which a more equitable distribution of the burden of fire services could be achieved, would be for those who insure their property to be exempt from contributing to fire services via local government authorities. This could be achieved by the local authority imposing its own fire levy as part of their general rate, from which ratepayers could be exempted if they produced a receipt showing that an insurance policy was in force which covered the rateable property at least to the extent of its valuation for rating purposes.

168. There would need to be consultations with local government authorities regarding the operation of the fire levy and the calculation of what rate it would need to be in each municipality. In the process of these consultations it could be pointed out that if the effect of the scheme is to cause more asset holders to insure or to insure more fully, which, in turn, would reduce the size of fire levy on insurance premiums (which also encourages insurance), a situation could be reached whereby the percentage contribution required of insurance companies could be adjusted by stages towards the 75% contribution required in other States and at the same time the local government contribution could be reduced by the same amount.

169. If the local government authorities are unwilling to play their part, it could be pointed out that the alternative is to increase the percentage contribution by local government authorities so as to reduce the burden at present carried by the property owner who insures.

170. This Inquiry has established that it is possible for a large company to insure its assets overseas and in this way avoid paying the fire levy. Under the scheme which has been outlined above, it would be possible to compel such a company to pay a fire levy, by making the exemption from the levy imposed by the local authority conditional upon the premium receipt indicating that a fire levy has been paid and the local authority could check whether the broker or insurance company issuing the receipt reported to the Fire Protection Authority.

Constraints in Funding

171. Costs should be borne in equitable proportions, i.e., relative to risk values, by those who are provided with protection, the definition of protection being: 'A service given and maintained which either reduces the risk of, or extinguishes, an outbreak of fire or both.'

172. Parliaments are inescapably responsible for ensuring that the public and its property are adequately protected from outbreaks of fire.

173. Sources of revenue for the provision and maintenance of fire protection services must in no way obligate the Parliament in the choice of persons and systems to manage such services. Taxpayers and ratepayers, whether or not insured against fire, already enjoy rights of representation through ballot boxes, and this, coupled with Standing Advisory Committees at Ministerial and grass roots levels is more than adequate for all sectional interests.

174. The criteria for managing fire protection services must be technical, financial and professional competence coupled with the highest qualities of leadership.

CHAPTER 12

COMMONWEALTH FUNDING

175. I am obliged to comment that the degree with which the Commonwealth Government disassociates itself from public fire protection in Australia is unique and bordering on the impudent.

176. Australia continues to be high on the list amongst the top ten industrial nations in per capita fire losses. In 1974 it was second only to Norway in a five-year average of 0.34% of the gross national product. This, having regard to the fact that such a high percentage of Australian 'production' is non-combustible, should be a matter of grave concern to the nation and its Treasury.

177. The favoured treatment afforded the population of the Capital Territory in the matter of fire protection levies is, by comparison with residents in the six other States, inexplicable.

178. There is ample enough evidence from World War II to highlight the vital importance to national security and the economy of efficient and adequate fire defence of civilian, as well as military, populated areas. This evidence further shows that these conditions depend upon similar attributes existing in 'peace time' fire protection services, to enable them to become an effective cadre of an expanded wartime need.

179. I do not suggest that there should be any attempt on the part of the Commonwealth to create and sustain any form of national fire service in peace time (although a policy of civilian oriented fire fighting training to armed forces personnel stationed in States would be prudent), but rather that the Commonwealth should recognise the foregoing factors in one or more of the ways set out below.

Fire Fighting Appliances

180. The annual bill of all States for the purchase of fire fighting appliances is in the order of \$6 million. In Tasmania, replacement costs, especially in rural brigades, are likely to be exceptionally heavy during the next five to nine years. The best interests of all States would be served by the Commonwealth Government employing its technical expertise and aircraft production facilities to supply fire fighting appliances at cost.

Communications

181. Fire brigades, especially in rural areas, require the best that is available in communications, ranging from multi-channel radio-telephony, direct brigade alarm monitoring equipment, to street index and fire hazard data processing units. Through Telecom, the Commonwealth can provide not only some of the most advanced expertise in the world, but equipment also.

Imports

182. As most fire fighting hardware purchased by States is of local manufacture, it is substantially free from import duties. There are, however, occasions where overseas purchase is necessary when something in excess of 25% of landed costs has to be paid by State 'fire authorities' to the Commonwealth's

Treasury. A decision whether or not to purchase Australian-made fire fighting appliances and equipment must be based on technical considerations, not protective tariffs. There appears to be one rule for the Commonwealth Government fire services and another for States' fire services, e.g., the former purchasing its airfield fire and rescue hardware overseas free of import duty.

Taxation Incentives

183. The Commonwealth Government can encourage individuals to insure their property against fire by declaring premiums and stamp duty tax deductible. Further valuable motivation in self-help can be afforded by making costs of installing automatic means of fire detection and extinguishment also tax deductible within one year. Indeed, all forms of certifiable fire preventive expenditure, urban or rural, should, in the absence of direct financial assistance to State fire authorities, be tax deductible, preferably in the year in which the expenditure is incurred.

CHAPTER 13

ALTERNATIVES TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF FUNDING

Alternative 1

COMPULSORY FIRE INSURANCE

184. By no means as difficult or radical as it appears, compulsory fire insurance is probably the most equitable form of fire protection levy. Society in general is *compelled* to pay a wide variety of taxes to meet the cost of providing services. This is an adequate precedent to justify the compulsory payment of a fire service levy in designated areas.

185. One, amongst many, of the unfortunate and distressing aftermaths of civil disasters, especially ones involving fire, is the fact that those members of the community who were not prudent enough to insure against fire, finish up equal to or better off than those who were. Those who need convincing as regards the justification for legislation providing for compulsory insurance should study the financial consequences to governments and certain residents alike of the Tasmanian and Darwin disasters.

Alternative 2

GENERAL RATES

186. A specific fire levy based on general rates would be equitable, having the added advantage of an existing collection structure. Some inequities could arise in leased properties.

Alternative 3

PART INSURANCE AND GENERAL RATE BY DEFAULT

187. Of all the options next to compulsory fire insurance, I favour one in which, in the absence of fire insurance cover, a property owner is required to pay a fire levy surcharge at the time of paying his general rates.

Comment

STATE FUNDS

188. These would, in the circumstances existing in Tasmania, be better limited to exempting fire insurance premiums from stamp duty, and the provision of capital funds required for the acquisition of land, the building of fire stations and purchase of fire fighting appliances. These capital items could be leased to brigades on annual payments adequate to cover the servicing of loans required to achieve this objective. Such a policy would advance and maintain standardisation, facilitate the transfer of appliances between one brigade and another—urban or rural, and would encourage still further local fund raising for equipment, and the individual needs of volunteer fire stations.

Comment**TOBACCO AND MATCH TAX**

189. Few would deny that one of the more common causes of outbreaks of fire is the use of tobacco and matches. If therefore, in establishing a fire levy on the populace, equity is to be the keynote, there exists a valid case for a tax on these products. There is nothing unrealistic in the Commonwealth Government collecting on behalf of States a 'fire levy content' within the tobacco excise and establishing one on the sale of matches.

CHAPTER 14**FIRE PREVENTION TECHNOLOGY****General Fire Regulations 1975**

190. I am concerned with the fact that personnel employed by the various fire boards to undertake the field work involved, possess no formal qualifications on building design and construction, neither have they received, in my view, anything like the administrative or technical training required.

191. I could find no evidence that between 13 May 1975 when the Regulations were proclaimed and 1 July 1975 from which date they took effect, of a joint conference of the various authorities to determine methods and procedures. As a result, there have been differing standards of application.

192. Submissions were made to the effect that in a number of areas, the requirements of the Regulations bring the fire authorities into conflict with other statutory bodies, such as Labour and Industry (Shops and Factories), Department of Mines (Flammable Liquids), Department of Health (Public Buildings), and Licensing Authorities. Submissions were also critical of the absence in the Regulations of a right of appeal.

193. The objectives of the Regulations were excellent had the Fire Boards employed adequately trained personnel in sufficient numbers, supported by a carefully conceived procedural plan and record system.

194. The current situation points up the urgent need to send a senior fire officer to the United Kingdom for intensive training in the technology of fire prevention in buildings and related hazards, and the establishment, preferably under an experienced officer seconded from the mainland, of a Fire Prevention Bureau.

General Observation

195. This very important aspect of fire protection engineering consists of a number of differing but related applications and techniques. One common factor, however, is the need for specialised training and constant retraining to enable staff to keep up with the latest in the 'state of the arts'. Fire brigade staff employed in the monitoring of fire safety standards must be professionally equipped to a standard which will earn and maintain the respect of the members of the allied professions they are required by law and professional judgment, to advise.

Differing Disciplines

196. The technology is broadly divisible between preventing fires in buildings and other manufactured risks, and vegetation. Both demand specialised knowledge and a great deal of constant training, and it is rare that one finds both disciplines possessed by any one fire officer.

Fire Prevention Bureau

197. The responsibility of a Fire Prevention Bureau in so far as property risks are concerned is to:—

- (a) Advise the appropriate authority on standards of safety from fire which should be placed on the Statute.
- (b) Monitor safety standards existing in buildings and provide advice and assistance to the public on fire hazards generally.

198. In the general public interests, it is necessary to give statutory powers to a fire authority to order the abatement of a fire hazard, and in certain circumstances there needs to be the right of appeal to a magistrate's court against such an order.

199. Fire prevention requirements for the abatement of fire hazards in vegetation give rise to as much conflict of professional opinion as the requirements in buildings, and both fire authorities have to continually compromise with what is practical. It is in this area that the greatest value is seen in the proposed Minister's Fire Protection Advisory Council.

200. A very important aspect of the prevention of fire is work at the basic level of good house-keeping in buildings and careful husbandry on the land. This makes it vital that adequate levels of training are provided both at the State Fire Training School and through the medium of mobile training to permanent and volunteer fire fighters alike.

201. The first step in the establishment of a specialised fire prevention unit in Tasmania is the appointment of a competent and experienced fire prevention engineer, preferably, on secondment, whilst suitable local officers are sent to England and the mainland for the best management, as well as technical, training available.

CHAPTER 15

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

202. During the course of more than a hundred interviews, a number of matters was raised which, whilst coming within the terms of reference, can be more competently dealt with by one or other of the proposed Administrators who, being resident in Tasmania, would be able to devote more time than I would to validate the need for action.

Council Rating System

203. Council fire rate systems should take account of the variables resulting from differing years of revaluation of properties. It was suggested that similar provisions to those existing in the Metropolitan Water Act of 1961 were required. This appears to be a pertinent observation well worthy of early attention.

Use of Fire-fighting Equipment for Non-fire-fighting Purposes

204. There were a few very strong comments made in regard to the practice of councils using fire-fighting equipment for a variety of purposes ranging from road works to pumping operations generally. The main thrust of complaints was that this practice was carried out over the objections of volunteer officers, and frequently resulted in appliances and equipment being returned to stations in very poor state, and not infrequently with partially empty fuel and water tanks. My own view is that frequent usage of appliances, especially out of fire season, is advisable, but that the senior volunteer officer concerned must retain control over the appliance and equipment at all times. In the event of a dispute, both parties should abide by the ruling of the proposed Administrators.

Daytime Manning by Permanent Staff

205. It was put to me on a number of occasions that there were periods of the year, especially at harvest time, and when ground fuel clearing programs were under way, that daytime assistance to volunteer brigades by permanent men would be justified. As a great deal of time and travel would be required to validate this submission, it must be left to the proposed administrators.

Recognition of Services

206. Awards, usually in the form of medals, continue to be part of a way of life, even in communist countries. In our society, there are few persons who, more than fire fighters, deserve some generous treatment in this area. It is not sufficient to rely on awards made by the Imperial or the Australian Government for the competition is so great as to result in but rare instances of recognition being achieved.

207. There is also the factor that Imperial and Australian awards, whilst frequently meeting the needs of long and distinguished service by men who have arrived at senior officer rank, do not really meet the needs of the dedicated service of the ordinary fire fighter.

208. It is understood that some thought has already been given to this issue. I propose, however, that when legislation providing for the Fire Authority of Tasmania is drafted, provision is made for this authority to make meritorious and service awards in medallion form.

Grant Assistance to Farmers and Orchardists for Equipment

209. Views were advanced in a number of instances that financial assistance and/or equipment should be given to the above who are willing and able to proceed outside their property to join in a general (or even an isolated) situation requiring fire suppression, or alternatively they should receive rebates in their rates and fire insurance premiums.

210. I must confess to sympathy with this submission which however, would, in practice, appear to require the judgment of Solomon to meet. I can only suggest that the Rural Administrator pursues this submission and the principle involved, with the representatives of the industry.

Danger Periods—Prohibition to Burn

211. It was submitted that the medium of *Gazette* notices was too slow to be practical and effective. I would suggest that legislation provides for the Rural Administrator, and where appropriate, the Urban Administrator, to be empowered to make the declaration through the media. It was also proposed that permits to burn be based solely on climatic conditions prevailing at the time.

Damage to Personal Clothing

212. Proposals were made, aimed at providing some realistic compensation for clothing damaged at fires beyond further usage. I have experienced the problems of managing this issue and regret to have to advise that I know of no really water-tight system which can be applied generally. The principal problem is where to draw a line, e.g., watches, contact lenses, glasses, dress as distinct from working or old clothes, footwear, even underclothes. In at least one State fire service on the mainland, compensation has been successfully dealt with by an omnibus insurance taken out by the Board.

Howden

213. It was proposed that there should be a rural brigade formed at Howden to cater for the fringe areas of Kingston, and that a number of changes in boundaries affecting Kingston urban special fire areas and regional boundaries in relation to the latter, be made. My lack of detailed knowledge of the situation precludes me from making any recommendation on this proposal. What I can say is that if the need for change equals the impression its authors made on me, then it is justified. I advise the matter receives the early evaluation by the proposed Standing Committee on Boundaries.

I.D. Cards

214. It was proposed that all fire brigade personnel, urban and rural, with duties bringing them into direct contact with the public on matters coming within the framework of legislation, be issued with photo-identity cards. I support this proposal.

Servicing of Fire Fighting Hand Appliances

215. This work is being carried out by a number of Government organisations, including Railways. There is nothing wrong with such a policy providing that charges made fully recoup all costs, and A.S.A. Standards (or better) are observed. In a number of brigades on the mainland, such work is carried out by volunteers, thus providing them with a regular source of income. It must, however, be pointed out that every organisation carrying out such work must ensure that any extinguisher taken away for attention is first replaced by one of equal or better capability, and in all instances, the question of public liability should be examined against a malfunctioning of equipment which has been serviced by a member of a fire brigade.

Launceston Fire Brigade

216. When inspecting Launceston, the following points were noted:—

- (i) The discharge of exhaust gases in the immediate area of breathing apparatus removal is dangerous.
- (ii) The elevating platform needs a complete examination.
- (iii) The method of monitoring direct brigade alarms needs examination.
- (iv) The needs of Gravelly Beach Brigade would be better served if transferred to the Rural Fires Board.

Role of Municipal Councils

217. Every encouragement must be afforded municipalities to take a constant and active interest in 'their' fire brigade in particular, and the fire protection of the State in general.

218. I repeat that collection of fire levies provides no sound reason to claim rights in the management of the fire protection services the levy supports, even by municipal councils. The involvement of elected councils in fire protection services is required to hold a watching brief on fire protection standards as they affect ratepayers, and to give advice to the fire authority on local issues.

219. In the fire prevention area, most municipalities are already fully involved in fire safety measures through Building Regulations, Rural Fires Act, and General Fire Regulations.

220. In the first stage of reconstruction, Urban Fire Boards would progressively be replaced by Municipal Fire Committees, who would be given the opportunity of acting as agents for the Urban Administrator. In the second stage of reconstruction, all councils, urban and rural, would create and maintain a Fire Committee serving both urban and rural needs where, of course, both factors exist.

221. Membership of Municipal Fire Committees would include the most senior local fire officer, or where both urban and rural brigades are involved, a member from each. Special arrangements would be made for membership of the Municipal Fire Committees of Greater Hobart and Launceston Fire Districts, the North Coast, and New Norfolk Fire Districts as recommended.

CONCLUSION

The Inquiry revealed to me much which provides cause for optimism should the State ever again be faced with the climatic phenomenon which to a large extent triggered off the 1967 disaster. The enthusiasm displayed by the many members of the volunteer brigades which I had the pleasure of meeting was tremendous. I was impressed also with the calibre of the permanent staff I was fortunate enough to meet.

The over-riding needs of fire protection services in Tasmania at the present time are ones involving organisational restructuring training and planning backed by adequate research, undertaken by informed and capable administrative and technical officers. Operating under such facilities fire fighters of Tasmania, both permanent and volunteer will combine to maintain a service of which the Parliament and the public can be proud.