



VFBV | VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

SUBMISSION TO
GREEN PAPER – *'TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SAFER VICTORIA'*

14 NOVEMBER 2011

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14 November 2011

The Hon Peter Ryan MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Department of Premier and Cabinet
1 Treasury Place
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Deputy Premier

VFBV SUBMISSION TO GREEN PAPER - TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SAFER VICTORIA

I refer to the release of the above Green Paper on 12 September 2011 and your correspondence dated 19 October 2011 requesting a VFBV submission to Government as part of its overall consultation process. VFBV welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important matter which will inevitably shape the manner in which emergency and crisis management is conducted in the State in the future.

Accordingly these change proposals and the subsequent White Paper process are of extreme interest to Victoria's emergency service volunteers and as you rightfully reiterate in the paper require the active involvement of volunteers to make the arrangements work effectively.

Within the eight-week timeframe involved with making a submission on such a significant and longer term issue, VFBV has spent considerable time and resource to soliciting the views and feedback of CFA volunteers and more generally other emergency service volunteers on this important matter. To this end, I am pleased to say we have received significant interest and feedback on this issue which has informed the development of its submission.

Accordingly, I have much pleasure in providing you with a copy of VFBV's submission for Government's consideration. Appreciating the scope and options outlined within the Green Paper, VFBV has taken a holistic approach to the issues, coupled with the outcomes of the recent *Jones Inquiry* and has sought to address these in an integrated manner within its submission.

I trust you find the submission both comprehensive and useful in determining the outcomes of the Green Paper and the subsequent development of a White Paper. Having regard for the reliance of emergency service volunteers and their significant contribution to the well-being and safety of the community through the State's emergency management arrangements, I look forward to ongoing involvement and consultation throughout the White Paper development process.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Ford
Chief Executive Officer

PREFACE

On 12 September 2011 the Victorian Government released a Green Paper titled *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria*. The Green Paper follows recent bushfires, drought and floods, the outcomes of the *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report* and the *Interim Report of the Victorian Floods Review*. The Green Paper will play an important role in the process to reform Victoria's crisis and emergency management arrangements.

Government's reform goals for crisis and emergency management outlined within the Green Paper¹ focus on:

- service delivery to Victorians across government and communities;
- building community resilience;
- achieving a genuine 'all-hazards, all agencies' approach; and
- enduring and sustainable change.

The Green Paper outlines that Government's reform goals will be achieved by:

- enhancing capacity for whole-of-Victorian Government planning and preparedness for prevention, mitigation, response and recovery;
- renewing legislation and governance arrangements;
- removing legislative, policy and cultural impediments; and
- embedding a culture across government and ESO's focussed on community engagement and building resilience.²

Within the Green Paper the "Victorian Government acknowledges and values the essential contribution of the many volunteers who deliver Victoria's emergency and support services. The contribution by volunteers is one of the major strengths of our system that we should maintain and strengthen. In examining Victoria's emergency management arrangements, the Government seeks to enhance [emphasis added] the volunteer experience and volunteers' capacity to contribute to community safety. Whatever changes may be implemented through the Green Paper – White Paper process, volunteers will remain a critical part of Victoria's emergency management arrangements".³

On the basis of the above, the reliance placed upon volunteers as part of the State's emergency management arrangements and having regard for the significance of the issues contained within the Green Paper, Victoria's emergency service volunteers should play a major role in providing Government with its expertise and knowledge on the issues to ensure they enjoy the best possible chance of success in the future.

¹ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.2

² Ibid. p.52

³ Ibid. p.40

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the complexity of this issue and the tight timeframe for input volunteers across Victoria have demonstrated a keen interest in the issue outlined in the Green Paper. Through established VFBV volunteer consultation and engagement networks, volunteers have not only demonstrated a willingness to be involved but a strong desire to help shape the future and a valuable viewpoint about what needs to be addressed in order for future emergency sector changes to be successful.

There are mixed views on some of the matters raised in the Green Paper but common support for improvement that Implementation of structures, system and processes that enhance and drive inter-operability, standardisation, coordination and streamlining of governance, oversight, reporting, policy direction and procedural matters from a whole of sector (cross agency) perspective that makes it easy for and empowers volunteers to get the best combined effort from existing resources. This is consistent with VFBV's previous submission 'that there needs to be a stronger arrangement in place to ensure inter-agency coordination, cooperation, interoperability and common purpose'⁴ and that 'there is a place an overarching body or position to drive organisational reform amongst the fire agencies'.⁵

Of significance is a view that any future arrangements must empower local level decision making throughout all aspects of emergency management if they are to have any real impact on improving service outcomes to the person/community in need.

Whilst there is a reasonable appetite for many of the options explored in the Green Paper this is premised on the need to ensure an all-hazards/best-agency approach to emergency management is based on a structured local level '*capacity driven*' rather than being a '*universally mandated*' process. There is support for tenure blind and all hazards emergency management planning approach.

There is good support for better overarching coordination and streamlined governance arrangements but question about whether this needs the creation of an overarching board and concern about the creation of an umbrella body that could become remote and add even more bureaucracy. There is a strong view that retention of the existing agency entities, consistent with the commitments given by the Minister, is important.

There is strong advice that the desire for increased coordination requires focussed effort on establishing a common operating platform, regardless of any structural or governance changes.

As recognised in the Green Paper Victoria's emergency management capability would not exist without volunteers and it is well recognised that the volunteer based resource model is also fundamental to the notion of community sharing responsibility for their own safety and the desire to achieve more disaster resilient communities. To this end, any future arrangements need to continue and improve a focus on encouraging, maintaining strengthening the capacity of volunteers. Hand in hand with this is the need for genuine, transparent and active engagement/consultation with volunteers not just because it is now a legislative requirement for CFA but because it is volunteers who are relied heavily on to deliver the services, it is volunteers and local brigades that have connection with and understanding of their communities and because it is volunteers who know what will and will not work 'on the ground'.

⁴ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 19 April 2010, p.15

⁵ VFBV correspondence to Minister for Police and Emergency Services 13 August 2010

Volunteers have a strong view that any changes to the future emergency sector governance arrangements must retain Agency Boards and *volunteer skills* within the composition of any overarching decision making structure/s and agency boards.

A key message received from volunteers is that any new arrangements need to achieve 'enhanced' volunteer representation at all key decision making levels with a structured issue escalation and resolution process. This needs to be underpinned and driven by an ongoing and increased focus on implementing CFA's legislative requirements in relation to volunteerism and making organisational cultures and arrangements conducive to greater recognition, engagement and support of volunteerism across the sector.

Volunteers will remain willing to do what is needed to support individuals/communities in need. VFBV caution that there is the fine balance between optimally utilising available capacity and tipping the balance beyond a sustainable contribution (i.e. just because the capacity might be apparent today it doesn't necessarily follow that it is wise to use it up. This doesn't mean that services can't be provided by volunteers across a broader range of demand rather it means that it might be necessary to engage additional volunteers rather than stretching the good will of existing. There needs to be careful analysis before binding expectations or irreversible habits are set in train either through a 'capacity driven' process or mandated new arrangements.)

VFBV appreciates that the Green Paper is the start of a journey rather than the end point. This submission provides an initial response to help shape further consideration. On behalf of our members VFBV is committed to assisting further development of recommendations and look forward to an opportunity to contribute to the development of the White Paper.

The results of this Green Paper process and success of any future emergency sector arrangements will rely heavily on the ongoing commitment of emergency service volunteers and encourages forward planning to factor in an appropriate mechanism and period for consultation and input to the White Paper and final decisions.

In anticipation of changes which may occur as a consequence of the Green Paper process, VFBV, in partnership with the other volunteer representative bodies is committed to progressing the implementation of some form of improved overarching arrangement to support all emergency service volunteers, whilst maintaining existing agency volunteer representative bodies and structures.

The following provides a high level overview of the feedback received from volunteers in the field:

- There is general support for the concept of some form of overarching arrangements/focus to drive greater cohesion, coordination, standardisation, interoperability and generally getting the agencies to operate more closely together. Some mention is made of the potential for this to result in more efficient resource utilisation across agencies but a strong expectation that this would result in the introduction of a common operating environment, communications, systems and training. The retention of the CFA Board and its statutory autonomy is seen as important to any future arrangements.

- There is logic for and a strong volunteer expectation that volunteer expertise continues to be a key element of the composition of the CFA Board and that this extends to any overarching arrangement that may arise.
- Some negative issues of establishing an overarching board have included loss of identity, autonomy, loss of focus on agency specific issues, potential to lose existing resources by them being shared across other agencies and the potential breadth of what would be required being too big for a single board.
- There is a strong view and desire for the retention of the powers of the Chief Officer and that these powers are delegated to the local level and empower volunteers to undertake their roles.
- There is generally a positive view about the role of the Commissioner providing a single point of direction and leadership across the sector.
- Consistent with previous submissions by VFBV, there is a need for an agency or position to be assigned overall responsibility for fire prevention planning across the whole landscape with a differing view whether this should be the CFA Chief Officer or someone else.
- Retention of CFA identity and image is generally seen as an important issue.
- Some responses express an appetite to explore amalgamation of SES into CFA however this is not the prevalent view in achieving an all-hazards/all-agency outcome.
- There was commonality between input to this discussion and the *Jones Inquiry* regarding a need for better leadership and appreciation of volunteers; respect for volunteer knowledge and expertise and effective utilisation of volunteer capacity.
- There is almost unanimous comment regarding the need for increased, more effective and transparent engagement/consultation with volunteers.
- Almost without exception the issue of more agency and cross agency training and exercising is mentioned as a pre-cursor and key enabler to getting agencies to work more closely together and the achievement of an all-hazards operating environment.
- There are not a lot of comments on collocation but what has been provided is generally supportive if the size of facilities support multi-agencies rather than bring 'expected' to collocate within existing facilities
- Significant comment on the need to 'support' and facilitate the retention of volunteers availability and use within IMT's, including the use of local knowledge. Many believe 'the system' currently does not support volunteers in IMT roles, quite the opposite.
- There are mixed views with respect to formalising a shift to all-hazards operating environment but an absolute requirement that any adoption of more/broader roles under all-hazards must be locally driven with any decisions with respect to adopting additional/broader roles being taken by those directly affected at the local level and not a mandated requirement placed on volunteers.

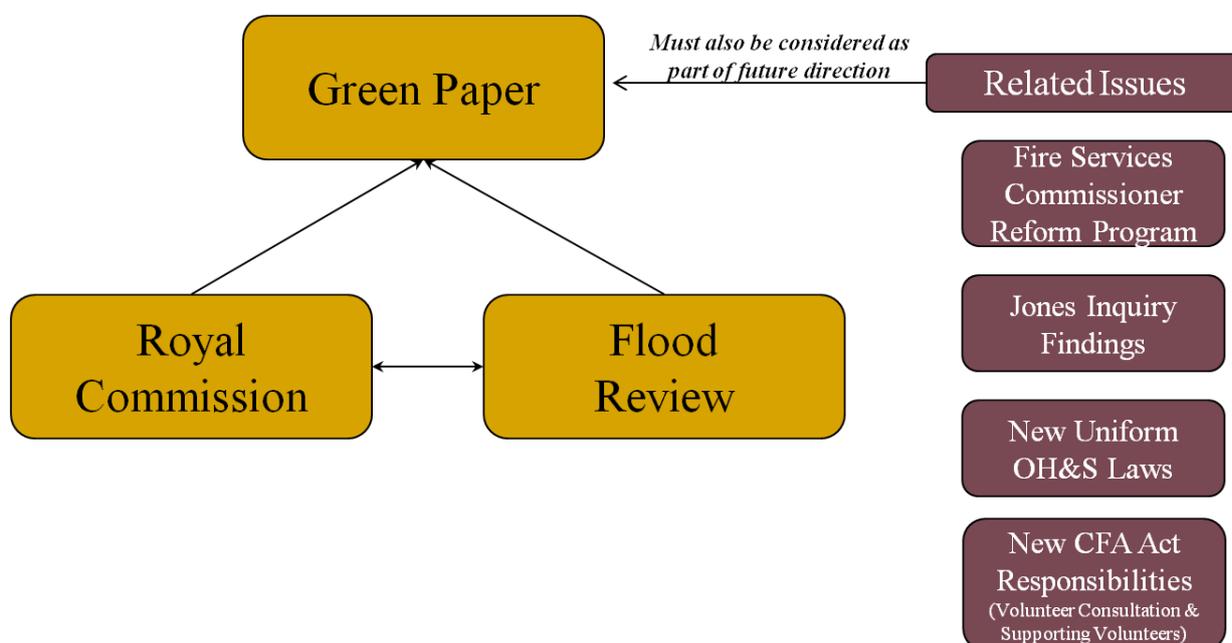
- In some parts of the State there is strong caution that a shift to broader roles may adversely impact on the viability of volunteerism and/or volunteer capacity. In some communities volunteers indicate that they are already at capacity doing what they do now, whilst others have identified additional capacity that could be better utilised.
- Volunteers caution that any additional burden and expectations on volunteers to take on more roles may strain relationships with employers who are currently tolerant for ‘fires’ and ‘time critical/life threatening emergencies’ but would be less tolerant and supportive of other events (e.g. search, storms, line searches, crime scene preservation etc.).
- There is a general desire for an increased and broader role in an all-hazards/all-agency setting at the local level, including fire prevention (regardless of any new arrangements volunteers believe this should be facilitated now). There is also caution that there is the fine balance between optimally utilising available capacity and tipping the balance beyond a sustainable contribution (i.e. just because the capacity might be apparent today it doesn’t necessarily follow that it is wise to use it up. This doesn’t mean that services can’t be provided by volunteers across a broader range of demand rather it means that it might be necessary to engage additional volunteers rather than stretching the good will of existing. There needs to be careful analysis before binding expectations or irreversible habits are set in train either through an ‘capacity driven’ process or mandated new arrangements).

2. VFBV'S APPROACH TO THIS SUBMISSION

Upon release of the Green Paper VFBV immediately initiated a multi-faceted approach to solicit the input and feedback from volunteers and other key stakeholders to inform the development of its submission to Government by 14 November 2011.

Whilst the *Green Paper* is the culmination of Government thinking with respect to the outcomes of the Royal Commission, implementation of its recommendations and the Interim Flood Review Report, VFBV believes a number of other pertinent issues are also relevant and need to be considered in designing any future arrangements. The combination of these interrelated issues is outlined below:

Figure 1 – Interrelated Issues Involved in Sector-wide reform

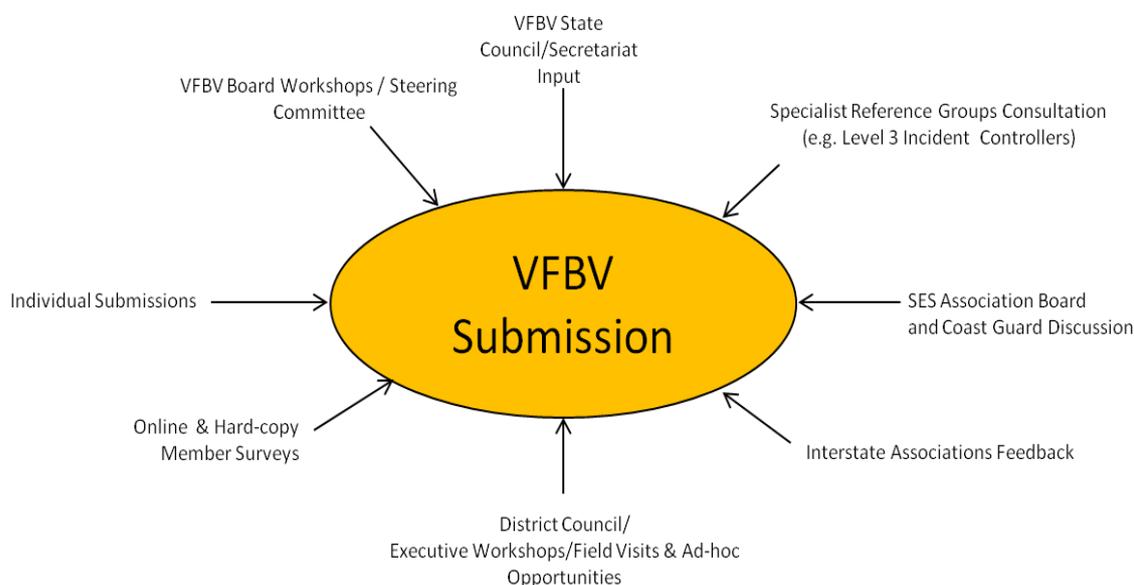


2.1 Volunteer Input/Consultation

Considering the long term and significance of the issues involved, VFBV considered it vitally important to solicit as much input and feedback from volunteers as possible within the tight eight-week timeframe for feedback. VFBV uses a multi-faceted approach to engage input and feedback from volunteers across the State on issues that affect them. This process has been used to inform the development of this submission.

This involved the following approach to consolidating input and feedback:

Figure 2 – Approach to Consolidating Feedback



In addition to the above, VFBV have also shared volunteer feedback and the emerging VFBV position on various options with CFA.

The combination of the above continues to provide valuable information not only for this purpose but also informing VFBV more generally on issues of importance and concern to volunteers. The thrust of the feedback has identified a good appetite of volunteers to explore change that achieves greater coordination within and between agencies and provides enhanced service to the community. Volunteer support is contingent upon a change context aimed at empowering local level decision making and service delivery; recognise, respect and optimally utilise volunteer capacity; proactively reduce unnecessary red-tape and administration; provide necessary training and resources for volunteers to operate at desired levels; freeing up legislative and other barriers to enable volunteers to do what needs to be done in support of individuals and communities in need and building on the strengths of the existing agencies for better combined effort.

Direct discussions have also occurred with the National Coast Guard Commodore and VESA Board on these matters and where appropriate outlined and included in the relevant areas of this submission.

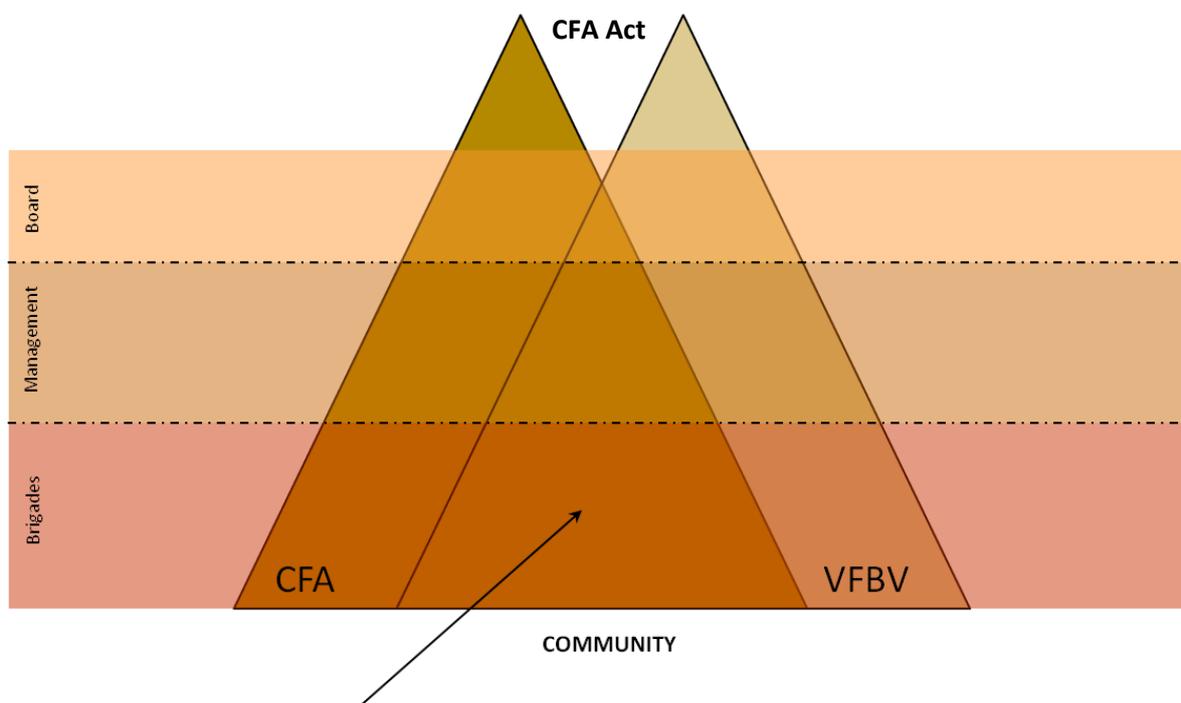
This submission outlines the current thinking of VFBV for the main high level issues having regard for the tight timeframes involved. This current thinking is based on a combination of:

- VFBV Board Workshop and Steering Committee discussion;
- Survey responses from volunteers (to date);
- Field visits and District Council discussions (to date);
- VFBV submissions to Royal Commission and Jones Inquiry;
- Royal Commission Report and Jones Inquiry Report;

- Liaison with interstate volunteer associations and other Victorian emergency services associations and members.

The thinking also aligns to the strategic philosophy of VFBV being partners in the delivery of the CFA Act as outlined in the following diagram:

Figure 3 – Partners in the Delivery of the CFA Act



Overlap areas demonstrate where VFBV and CFA collaborate and support each other at the respective levels in delivering the requirements of the CFA Act and services to the community through communitybased fire brigades.

The proactive engagement networks inherent in the VFBV arrangements have been instrumental in providing an opportunity for volunteers to input to this important issue albeit within a very tight timeframe. Whilst the feedback has been extensive it would be preferable to have a more appropriate timeframe for engaging feedback from volunteers on a State-wide basis. VFBV's established consultative networks have allowed us to coordinate significant volunteer input already however it is important to note that much feedback is still being received, even now at the close of feedback. VFBV will continue to monitor this feedback and advise Government as appropriate, specifically in relation to the Green Paper. This experience should inform both Government and the Agencies of the value of actively engaging VFBV in developing any future change proposals, consultation processes and the implementation of the outworkings from the Green Paper.

In addition to feedback received from VFBV District Councils/Council Executives throughout Victoria (14/20), VFBV also received in excess of 160 individual/brigade submissions. Of note is the level of interest and the number of responses still being received at the close of feedback.

The VFBV District level discussions and the individual/brigade submissions represent the collective views of a much larger group of volunteers. The breadth and diversity of this view is of particular note and should give weight to the level of interest and the volunteers views contained within this submission.

2.2 Next Steps

VFBV anticipates there could be specific issues requiring further detailed consideration leading up to the development of the White Paper and remains ready to provide whatever input is required to facilitate volunteer input to matters that might affect them and/or to assist communicating to volunteers about the deliberations emerging from the Green Paper feedback.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERISM AND SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE/ARRANGEMENTS

The importance and reliance on volunteers to deliver Victoria's emergency management arrangements is widely known and recognised by Government. This has been reinforced by recent independent inquiries⁶ and also through the Green Paper with the Government clearly articulating "Government seeks to enhance [emphasis added] the volunteer experience and volunteers' capacity to contribute to community safety. Whatever changes may be implemented through the Green Paper – White Paper process, volunteers will remain a critical part of Victoria's emergency management arrangements."⁷

The Hon. David Jones AM also recognised that 'while it is useful to measure the value of volunteers in economic value, the true value of volunteerism cannot be captured in dollar terms. Across Victoria, the social value that CFA volunteers contribute towards creating and maintaining dynamic, engaged and resilient communities is significant'.⁸

This is a vitally important distinction which underpins this submission throughout. Not just simply because the State could not afford an alternative but more importantly because of the critical role that emergency service volunteering plays to achieving community resilience through being community based and strongly supported by local communities in responding to their respective roles within emergency management. This should not simply be interpreted as relating to CFA volunteers but more broadly across all emergency service volunteers. This aspect is outlined further in the following section relating to community resilience.

Another important consideration is the recent legislative amendments made to the CFA Act⁹ that entrench into law:

s.6F Recognition of Authority as a volunteer-based organisation

The Parliament recognises that the Authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

s.6G Recognition of the Volunteer Charter

The Parliament recognises that the Volunteer Charter—

(a) is a statement of the commitment and principles that apply to the relationship between the Government of Victoria, the Authority and volunteer officers and members; and

⁶ Hon. Gordon Lewis AM report, February 2008, 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission Report July 2010, Hon. David Jones AM Report July 2011

⁷ Towards a More Disaster Resilient and Safer Victoria, Green Paper: Options and Issues, Victorian Government (September 2011)

⁸ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011, p.121

⁹ Country Fire Authority Act 1958

(b) *requires that the Authority recognise, value, respect and promote the contribution of volunteer officers and members to the well-being and safety of the community; and*

(c) *requires that the Government of Victoria and the Authority commit to consulting with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Incorporated on behalf of volunteer officers and members on any matter that might reasonably be expected to affect them.*

s.6H *Authority to have regard to Volunteer Charter*

The Authority must, in performing its functions, have regard to the commitment and principles set out in the Volunteer Charter.

s.6I *Authority's responsibility to encourage, maintain and strengthen capacity of volunteers*

The Authority has a responsibility to develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteer officers and members to provide the Authority's services.

The Fire Services Commissioner also has legislative function:

s.10(3) The Fire Services Commissioner must, in performing his or her functions, have regard to the importance volunteers of the Country Fire Authority have with respect to Victoria's firefighting management and capacity.¹⁰

Having regard for the above, and as fundamental to any future emergency management sector arrangements, volunteers believe there is an absolute requirement to incorporate the above legislative responsibilities into the new arrangements and for agency boards/management (individually and collectively) to actively execute their assigned responsibilities in this regard.

The legislative responsibilities outlined above are an extremely important recognition of the importance of volunteers but legislation alone will not embed a culture which actively encourages, maintains and strengthens the capacity of volunteers to deliver Victoria's emergency management services.

From CFA volunteer's perspective, some good progress has been made in recent times however as evidenced within the *Jones Report*¹¹ there is substantial further work required. In addition to detail recommendations, the *Jones Report* recognised:

- *'...CFA volunteers are a valuable resource and it would benefit the CFA to ensure experienced and qualified volunteers are utilised at all levels of the CFA, in leadership, as well as incident management roles'¹²*

¹⁰ Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010

¹¹ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011

¹² *Ibid.* p.184

- ‘...qualified volunteers are under utilised in incident management teams’ and ‘there is certainly a perception amongst volunteers that they are the last resort’¹³

Of particular note in this regard is the observation by the Chief Officer that ‘from consultations to date, I had the impression that volunteer feel undervalued, that they are not looked after by CFA and feel that there is a lack of appreciation of their culture’.¹⁴ These are important considerations in considering any reform proposals which emanate from the Green Paper. In this context volunteers are concerned that a simple assumption is being made within the Green Paper that significant volunteer capacity exists to transition to an all-hazards/all-agencies approach without fully appreciating the complexities involved with any further reform being imposed upon volunteers. Whilst volunteers generally accept the need for change across the sector and that in ‘some locations’ additional capacity may exist to undertake a broader role beyond what currently occurs, this is certainly not universal across the State and should not be taken for granted.

Government is also cautioned about the potential ‘fatigue’ of current volunteers in implementing the change expectations being placed on them, taking on broader functions and the related considerations relating to employers willingness to release volunteers for broader activities. This should not be seen as an absolute restriction to achieving reform but merely a consideration that must be incorporated into the change program.

Volunteers believe that unless a number of current issues are fixed prior to commencing on any new journey, the current underlying frustration that exists in some areas will only be exacerbated. They are also overwhelmed by the level of red-tape and bureaucracy that exists within the agencies and sector and believe this need to be addressed, including a changed culture that is volunteer friendly and supportive as a priority in order to enable a number of the reforms proposed.

Volunteers believe the objective of the Green Paper can be achieved in a number of different ways than outlined within the Green Paper and have included some alternative proposals throughout this submission.

Work currently underway with the Department of Justice and involving VFBV and other volunteers is exploring an ‘*Emergency Services Volunteer Framework*’. The issues emerging from this work have relevance to the direction desired by the Green Paper. For example one issue being explored is the development of a more holistic volunteer life cycle which is agency blind, streamlines and simplifies the ability to volunteer across the sector, identifies volunteer career paths throughout their volunteer lifecycle and best matches their community orientation with availability, capability and interests. Some of these aspects may prove fundamental catalysts to achieving an all-hazard/all-agency approach and these should continue to be progressed as a priority with strong engagement of volunteers and further testing of ideas on the ground.

The collaborative approach taken by staff within the Department of Justice to develop initiatives such as the ‘*Emergency Service Volunteer Framework*’ and the ‘*Valuing Volunteers Program*’ are good examples of how effective collaboration between departmental policy/research staff and volunteers through their associations can achieve meaningful outcomes for volunteers. In the future arrangements, particularly with regard to any departmental change, these functions need to

¹³ Ibid. p.193

¹⁴ Ibid. p.100

continue and ideally be strengthened. Just as agencies need well established processes to engage and consult with volunteers, any future governance arrangements need to ensure this engagement and consultation also occurs at departmental level.

Volunteers remain ready to accept change and work in partnership with Government and the agencies to achieve reform but must be actively involved in all key decisions on issues that affect them and volunteerism in general. As outlined within this submission they are proactively arranging themselves to provide a better sector-wide approach to support these issues and look forward to being actively involved in the development of the White Paper and its implementation.

4. BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

4.1 Volunteerism an essential ingredient

The Green Paper recognises that “it has become clear that governments now need to give greater focus to strengthening community resilience in order to manage the changing risk and hazard environment.

Resilience is derived from the Latin word *resilio*, meaning ‘to jump back’, and refers to the ability to recover to original form. The concept of resilience can be applied to individuals, organisations, sectors and communities. These units integrate to create a resilient society¹⁵.

The building of community resilience forms a major part of Government’s reform goals for crisis and emergency management.¹⁶

As the ‘community is usually the first responder to any disaster’¹⁷, community engagement is an essential ingredient in developing community resilience. Volunteers practice this on a day-to-day basis either within their respective agency roles or simply as being valued and active leaders/contributors within their local community.

This is the simple but significant value proposition that volunteer based, community embedded agencies bring to the States emergency management arrangements. The issue of Disaster Resilience has also been extensively considered at the national level with the development of a *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*¹⁸ which is a useful tool to further considering this issue. Within the strategy a number of indicators of what a disaster resilient community looks like are outlined. One of the principle indicators is “**the emergency management volunteer sector is strong** [emphasis added]”.¹⁹ It is therefore incumbent to ensure this key indicator is clearly recognised in any reform proposals that may emanate out of the Green Paper process and in doing so ensure the sector and agency/ies arrangements in fact encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of emergency management volunteerism across the sector.

A proactive and deliberate focus on achieving this resilience indicator is required if agencies are to support local emergency service volunteers in their efforts to positively contribute to building community resilience (from planning through to execution) in partnership with their community. It is also essential volunteers are fully empowered to be able to continue to actively contribute to the leadership and delivery of the necessary supporting programs and social support systems, such as neighbourhoods, family and kinship networks, social cohesion, mutual interest groups, and mutual self-help groups, which are all recognised within the national strategy as being essential elements to achieving community resilience²⁰.

¹⁵ Templeman, D. Bergin, A., (2008) “Taking a Punch: Building a More Resilient Australia” Strategic Insights, p.2

¹⁶ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.2

¹⁷ Walia, A. (2008) ‘Community based disaster preparedness: need for a Standardized Training Module’. The Australian Journal of Emergency Management. Vol.23. No. 2.p 68

¹⁸ National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Building our nation’s resilience to disasters, 2011,

http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national_strategy_disaster_resilience.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid. p.5

²⁰ Ibid. p.5

The philosophy of shared responsibility between communities and agencies has underlined emergency management for many years and is at the heart of how volunteers operate within their local communities. The principle of shared responsibility and that emergency services need to ‘work *with* the community’ rather than work *for* them²¹ is well understood and practiced by volunteers across the State.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report also declared the following in relation to shared responsibility:

“The various roles played by fire agencies in preparing the community and in protecting lives in the circumstances of 7 February have weighed heavily in the Commission’s consideration of the evidence, and in its reflections and recommendations. Such an emphasis is natural and proper feature of an inquiry of this kind. However, the necessary focus on the role of agencies and the State should not obscure, and should not be seen as diminishing, the responsibility of the community in preparing itself for, and protecting itself against, the extreme hazards posed by bushfires.

The long-term aim expressed in the Victorian policy and legislative framework and community safety in bushfires is to build resilient communities, meaning those in which individuals, households and entire communities are able to effectively draw on personal, social and structural resources to positively take steps to protect themselves against the risks posed by bushfires. This approach uses the language of partnership between agencies and communities. Agencies, as an embodiment of the state, accept responsibility to educate and inform and to protect the community using the resources available to them. Community members accept responsibility for their own decisions.”²²

Volunteers agree with the proposition that well informed individuals and communities, with suitable levels of preparedness, complement the roles of agencies and offer the best way of minimising bushfire risks to lives, property and environmental assets.²³ They also accept this principle can also be extended beyond bushfire into an all hazards environment.

There is no doubt that developing community resilience is the foundation for effective disaster recovery. Where ‘the whole population has to understand precisely what to do in a disaster situation because the services and infrastructure of the community will inevitably be overwhelmed, resilience is the positive side of vulnerability, it is the capacity to prevent or resist damage, as well as to recover’.²⁴ Emergency service volunteers, who live, integrate and operate within their communities on a daily basis are best placed to embed this philosophy and prepare their communities for this inevitable outcome in times of major emergencies.

Likewise, volunteers are best placed to work within their local communities, in partnership with other key stakeholders, to progress the following actions outlined within the national strategy²⁵:

²¹ Esplin, B. 2000 Essential Services Disruption Seminar, 1140-1125, 9 May 2000. *Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Justice, Victoria.*

²² 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission Interim Report. Paragraph 32 and 33. p6.

²³ Ellis, S. Kanowski, P. Whelan, R. (2004). COAG Report, National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management, March 2004. www.coagbushfireenquiry.gov.au/report/docs/chapter4.doc

²⁴ Robinson, L. (2003) ‘*Education for Resilience. A Community Safety Communication Model for Natural Hazards*’, Paper prepared for the NSW State Emergency Service, Nov 2003. p 1

²⁵ National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Building our nation’s resilience to disasters, 2011, pp.7-12

- Leading change and coordinating effort
- Understanding risks
- Communicating with and educating people about risks
- Partnering those who effect change
- Empowering individuals and communities to exercise choice and take responsibility
- Reducing risks in the built environment
- Supporting capabilities for disaster resilience

Any proposals to have community resilience activities administered and/or undertaken by systems and persons remote to and not known to communities or without the buy-in, input and ownership of local community based volunteers who live within, operate within and execute resilient outcomes in times of need is destined to fail. Volunteers frequently raise a concern about this being an increasing first option by agencies and the preferred approach must be to place the emphasis and resources at the closest possible level to the grass-roots and local community. These community engagement and capacity building processes cannot be seen to be run as ‘top-down’ Melbourne based activities or they will not be accepted, respected, readily adaptable to the local community environment and most importantly embraced by the volunteers and/or communities who they are intended to support.

Any proposal to simply ‘rebrand’ resilience and programs and/or ‘change terminology’ should not be seen as the panacea to changing community behaviour without them being incorporated within a broader community level culture change program to change community behaviours as part of a broader strategy. Whilst increased effort and Government resources as outlined within the Green Paper would be welcomed by volunteers, it is vitally important these integrate with overall strategy for adaptation by volunteers as part of their own local planning and community engagement processes.

VFBV does not have sufficient knowledge of the NZ model to specifically offer any comments on this model over others that may apply but support any initiative to provide the community with additional and timely information in order for them to make informed decisions and be active participants in emergency management arrangements.

5. INTRODUCING AN ALL-HAZARDS/BEST-AGENCY APPROACH TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

5.1 Overview

The Green Paper focuses heavily on the adoption of a genuine all-hazards/all-agency approach to emergency management within Victoria rather than each agency operating as a silo, focussed on their separate legislative obligations. Volunteers support the breaking down of silos to achieve the best collective effort to support the person in need.

The definitions²⁶ of all-hazards/all-agency contained within the Green Paper are:

- *The ‘all-hazards approach’ assumes that all emergencies create similar problems and that many of the measures required to deal with emergencies are generic such as warnings, evacuation, medical services and community recovery. At the same time, the approach acknowledges that many emergencies will require specific prevention, response and recovery measures.*
- *The ‘all-agencies’ approach assumes that all agencies have some role to play in emergency management. While the nature of emergency management will vary from agency to agency, common tasks are likely to include ensuring the continuity of services, protecting the agency’s own assets, interests and personnel, and protecting the community and environment from risks.*

To facilitate this the Green Paper proposes, amongst other things, to remove any barriers (e.g. organisational, legislative, procedural etc....) that may currently exist that prevent the introduction of an all-hazards/all-agency approach.

On the surface this appears to be a very sensible and simple solution to achieving increased capacity to manage the State’s diverse risks. However, volunteers have identified the following issues that in writing the White Paper need to be addressed:

- Fully appreciating that simply adding existing agencies capacity (primarily volunteer numbers) together and assuming this is the total capacity available to fill any gaps across an all-hazards/all-agency operating environment is a flawed assumption;
- What does all-hazards/all-agency really mean;
- How is this achieved and how are decisions made;
- What is the impact and increased expectations placed on volunteers and employers (including additional training required);
- How would this process be facilitated through existing systems and processes;
- The potential loss of specialisation across the sector and an expectation that incident management skills are transferable across different hazards types.

Whilst the majority of volunteers support the adoption of an all-hazards/all-agency approach to emergency management, this support needs to be considered in the context of the following.

²⁶ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.5

5.2 What is considered to be included within the meaning of ‘all-hazards’

To clarify, VFBV’s submission uses the term ‘all-hazards’ to include those activities generally undertaken by the fire services, SES and Coast Guard with the addition of emergency medical response in partnership with Ambulance Victoria. These activities can generally be described as ‘fire and rescue’.

It does not extend to the responsibility and management of law enforcement/crime related activities, biological or radiation hazards, pandemic, livestock/agricultural disease, pest disease/incursion/plague, provision of general first-aid services, life guard activities and essential service disruption. Volunteers will continue to provide support to these other emergency management activities as and when necessary.

The Green Paper raises the question whether or not Ambulance should be considered within the proposed reform arrangements. CFA Brigades, SES Units and Ambulance Units work together and rely on one another to respond to emergencies on a daily basis. For the purposes of this submission it is VFBV’s view that Ambulance Service activities, although a critical part of emergency response, are also of a broader health and patient care continuum which is more appropriately aligned with the health/hospital governance and administration arrangements and should continue to be so. This obviously does not preclude the participation of ambulance within the state’s emergency management arrangements as currently occurs.

5.3 Adopting an all-hazards approach

Considerations for volunteers taking on a broader role within the all-hazards environment needs to be accompanied by a structured and locally driven framework that balances any additional responsibility and/or community expectation on volunteers (which may arise from promotion of an all-hazards/all-agency model). Consideration of a similar approach to current arrangements applicable to RAR and EMR within CFA volunteer brigades would be valuable in developing the process to achieve an all-hazards/all-agencies outcome.

Volunteer feedback indicates an expectation that decisions on the adoption of a broader all-hazards approach must be ‘*managed on local basis*’ using a local ‘capacity driven’ principle rather than being a ‘mandated requirement’. Considerations in making these decisions need to include the combination of the following interrelated issues:

- Community identifies need and assesses community capacity to support the adoption of a broader role, including volunteers to fulfil this need;
- Actual hazards and risk is identified and assessed through the structured landscape level, agency/land tenure blind and locally driven all-hazards planning framework;
- Assessment of community resilience, shared responsibility and alternative means of achieving a public safety outcome rather than agency/response intervention;
- Capability and capacity of the agency to support the broader role;
- Whether volunteers are willing to take on the broader role (including considerations of a broader membership solution to attracting volunteers for the roles identified);
- Employer willingness to release volunteers to take on a broader role;
- Work/family life balance for volunteers;
- Criticality of the role (i.e. life threatening/time critical versus non-critical support activities);
- Provision of appropriate equipment and operating environment;

- Additional training burden associated with the broader roles, volunteer capacity to undertake this training and how this will be delivered in a manner that cater for volunteers;
- If necessary the adoption of the ‘continuum of support’ that supports volunteerism as the baseline but ensures service delivery to the community according to need, the criticality of service and the most efficient way to achieve the outcome.

In this manner, local communities and their emergency service volunteers will be empowered to make decisions which directly affect them and their communities.

By adopting a genuine, up-front engagement and consultation and empowering local volunteers to make key decisions that directly affect them and the manner in which they will be executed has been proven to lead to:

- Programs, policies, initiatives and systems that work for volunteers and get the most out of what volunteers are prepared to contribute;
- Better understanding of challenges and context for proposed solutions, policy or organisational arrangements and early engagement of volunteer leadership to help resolve issues and generally a better, faster and lasting outcome;
- Consultation effort focuses on solving the problem not reacting to volunteers being unhappy about decisions forced from ‘the top’;
- Local knowledge and expertise being effectively utilised and therefore programs designed to meet differing needs of local situations; and
- Ownership and buy-in from the people that will ultimately need to do the implementation and a determination to ‘make it work’.

This equally applies in this context and will facilitate a sound/robust assessment of volunteer capability and capacity, including but not limited to identification of any potential and/or actual increased burden on volunteers, their families and employers and the resolution of any identified issues.

Whilst generally supportive of the adoption of an all-hazards/all-agency approach volunteers have indicated a general concern that any additional burden and expectations on volunteers to take on more roles may strain relationships with employers who are currently tolerant for ‘fires’ and ‘time critical/life threatening emergencies’ but would be less tolerant and supportive of releasing volunteers for other events (e.g. searches, storms, line searches, crime scene preservation etc.). This very legitimate concern further emphasises the need for volunteers themselves to be involved in these types of decisions in order to properly understand and incorporate these issues in the overall considerations of adopting a broader role. Moreover, volunteers will also be able to assess alternatives and the general capacity of communities to support increased levels of volunteerism to cater for broader roles being undertaken. In CFA this can be facilitated through the *broader membership* principles. There was mixed feedback from volunteers regarding additional capacity within the community to undertake existing/future roles.

A number of general variables and themes underpinned volunteer’s feedback on this issue which further emphasises the importance of their direct involvement in the planning for and decision making processes at a local level regarding these issues. These can be summarised as follows:

Figure 5 – Variables impacting on volunteers and employers decisions to take on or support broader roles



A survey of some Level 3 Controllers regarding their position on the potential transition to an all-hazards operating environment and their utilisation within this environment, revealed the following:

- There is recognition that there are elements of incident management which are transferable to an all-hazards operating environment. This is particularly applicable to the cognitive and individual behavioural traits necessary to manage a team in a dynamic life threatening environment in addition to the systems and processes offered by the AAIMS.
- The workload and expectations associated with accreditation just for ‘bushfire’ incident management is a significant requirement which all Incident Controllers must meet.

- There is a concern that the specialist skills and competencies associated with each unique hazard may diminish over time in pursuit of a generalist all-hazards approach to incident management (i.e. jack of all trades/master of none analogy).
- The time commitment associated with establishing pre-formed teams in a 'hot-start-up' arrangement for periods of high bushfire risk is already a significant expectation for volunteers to fulfil. The commitment associated with an extension of an individual's availability to respond to an incident or resource an ICC in anticipation of an impending incident in an all-hazards operating environment may amount increase the frequency of demand and become an unsustainable impact on employers and/or valuable personal and family time.
- There needs to be a common operating platform and single reporting structure put in place to facilitate this potential expectation.
- Concern exists that the individual skills set for hazards other than fire that would need to be in place in order not to expose individuals to personal liability if they were to be required to operate in an environment for which they did not possess 'a depth' of skills and technical experience or received appropriate training in, (particularly in light of the forthcoming changes to the uniformed OH&S legislation). They also felt that CFA volunteers could 'generally' not be expected to meet the same level of technical competency as they possess relating to bushfires or bring the same level of tacit knowledge to the table across an all-hazards operating environment.
- A need for agency parochialism to be addressed (at all levels) in order to facilitate any common incident management across the all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment.

The combination of the above factors resulted in 'some reluctance' by incident controllers to participate in an all-hazards operating environment. However, notwithstanding this there is a commitment that they will always be available to support incident management across other hazards, as required, within the limits of their nominal availability recognising other whole of life expectations.

6. AN ALL-HAZARDS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

6.1 Overview

Volunteers believe and have made previous submissions 'that there needs to be a stronger arrangement in place to ensure inter-agency coordination, cooperation, interoperability and common purpose'²⁷. They have also made accompanying submissions that 'ultimately, the protection of life must drive fire prevention and response across land tenure and this should be an explicit obligation governing all fire and emergency service planning, preparation and response'²⁸ and 'any future structure or structural arrangements, and the legislation underpinning those arrangements, should reflect this'²⁹. They continue to hold this view and believe there remains an issue of empowerment of local volunteer leaders to have input into and influence on the enforcement of fire prevention and mitigation activities particularly on public land.

Despite the introduction of the Integrated Municipal Fire Management Planning framework which arose out of the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry into the 2002/03 bushfires (VBI), this was unfortunately not accompanied by a holistic review of fire management, let alone emergency management, planning frameworks. The IMFMP (now known as IFMP) planning framework has evolved since this time but continues to stand-alone from other planning requirements which remain in place and in some cases adds an additional planning layer, is predominantly bushfire specific, lacks any form of legislative backing and does not necessarily fully embrace volunteers and the local community.

Whilst the implementation of a 'pilot' *Landscape Bushfire Plan* was launched for the Dandenong Ranges in October 2011³⁰ this still appears to perpetuate these same issues. The 'pilot program' is aimed to specifically address existing gaps in fire management plans, while identifying short and long-term issues and priorities to improve bushfire safety by reviewing:

- public and private land management
- demographics and population;
- community planning and preparation; and
- understanding fire behaviour.³¹

This is seen as a positive approach to starting to address a number of these issues. However, volunteers believe this approach needs to continue to evolve to be a community centred/lead, land/agency tenure blind and an all-hazards emergency management planning framework across the State (i.e. move from Integrated Fire Management Planning [IFMP] to Integrated Emergency Management Planning [IEMP] and integrate all planning requirements into a single planning framework). Volunteers believe the adoption of this planning regime needs to be aligned to and integrated with the '*single line of control*' principle.

²⁷ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 19 April 2010, p.15

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Dandenong Ranges leading bushfire planning in Victoria, Fire Services Commissioner, 20 October 2011

³¹ Ibid

Within this framework, volunteers have previously made submissions regarding the need for a 'single agency to be responsible for fire prevention planning across the whole landscape'³². Part of this submission was 'CFA should be this single agency'³³ because it 'is impartial and independent from any organisation or individual who owns or manages land and has ultimate responsibility to deal with the residual risk treatment strategy of fire suppression when fire threatens communities, life and property'³⁴. It further submitted 'public land managers should remain responsible for the implementation of fire prevention measures and risk mitigation in accordance with the directions set by the single agency after consultation with the public land managers'³⁵.

Volunteers recognise the operating landscape has changed since this time with the outworkings of the Royal Commission, the implementation of its recommendations including the introduction of the Fire Services Commissioner role, and the experience and review into the recent floods but continue to believe these base principles should still apply to the planning framework.

They continue to believe there should be a single agency or position responsible for fire prevention planning and enforcement regardless of land tenure and that a single agency or position should be impartial and independent and therefore should not be a land owner/manager/occupier. In this manner any perceived or actual conflict of interest in determining and executing fire prevention [including fuel management] and/or mitigation activities will be eliminated and be transparently included within the overall planning framework posited purely on the protection of life, property and community safety.

This should not be interpreted as proposing that there should be a shift of the responsibility for mitigating risk from the land owner/manager/occupier (whether they be a private or public land owner/manager/occupier). Clearly volunteers believe the individual land owner/manager/occupier should still retain the accountability for mitigation but this should be done in accordance with the promulgated emergency management plan incorporating prevention and mitigation priorities.

Without the implementation of a new system of emergency management planning which cascades from the local community level up to State level (not the reverse), appropriate buy-in and execution of these plans will not occur and be effective to manage the diverse risks which exist across the State.

Locally based plans need to have the capacity to identify local hazards, assess the risk associated with these hazards and from this assessment appropriately assign priorities and responsibility for the mitigation and management of these hazards throughout the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) continuum to the most suitable agency. This is a significant but necessary departure from the current approach that views the assignment of priority determination and responsibility for hazard management through agency silos without a local assessment of agency and land tenure blind priorities and capability.

Conscious that there will need to be clarity about ultimate accountability, a community centred approach to all hazards emergency management planning and assignment of responsibility could

³² VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 19 April 2010, p.15

³³ Ibid

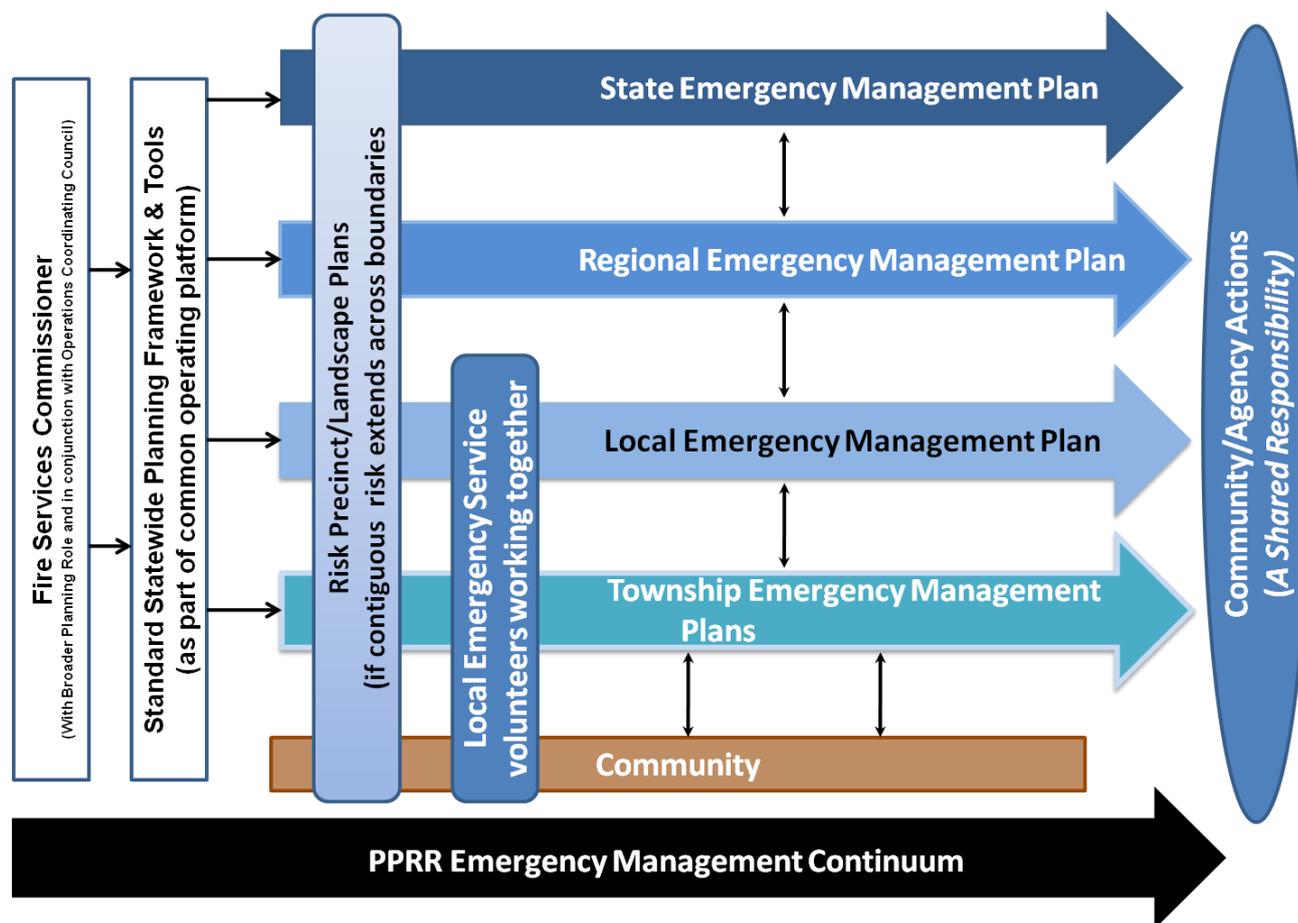
³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

provide a structured land/agency tenure blind assessment of hazard/risk and in turn drive greater collaboration, removal of ‘silos’, ‘best agency’ delivery, a clearer focus on building local capability (regardless of agency) and the ultimate sharing of locally based resources.

The following outlines the proposed elements of the new all-hazards emergency management planning framework which VFBV is advocating needs to be implemented:

Figure 4 – Elements of the proposed all-hazards emergency management planning framework



6.2 Resilience Planner concept

A community centred approach to all hazards emergency management planning as outlined in the previous section requires leadership and coordination. Consideration should be given to the appointment of a network of ‘Resilience Planners’ located within local communities (which in some cases may be a single local government area or in other cases across a defined ‘landscape’ which may include more than one local government area commensurate with risk).

Expanding on the combination of the principles outlined within the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience³⁶ and the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework³⁷ to an all-hazards environment it is proposed this position (in partnership with State/Local Government and agencies) could facilitate the planning framework that achieves a shared responsibility for public safety between the State and local

³⁶ National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Building our nation’s resilience to disasters, 2011

³⁷ Bushfire Safety Policy Framework, Fire Services Commissioner, September 2011

government, agencies, the private sector and non-government organisations, communities and individuals. The position could also contribute and/or play a leadership role to strengthening the emergency services volunteerism sector as a key attribute of community resilience. This could include:

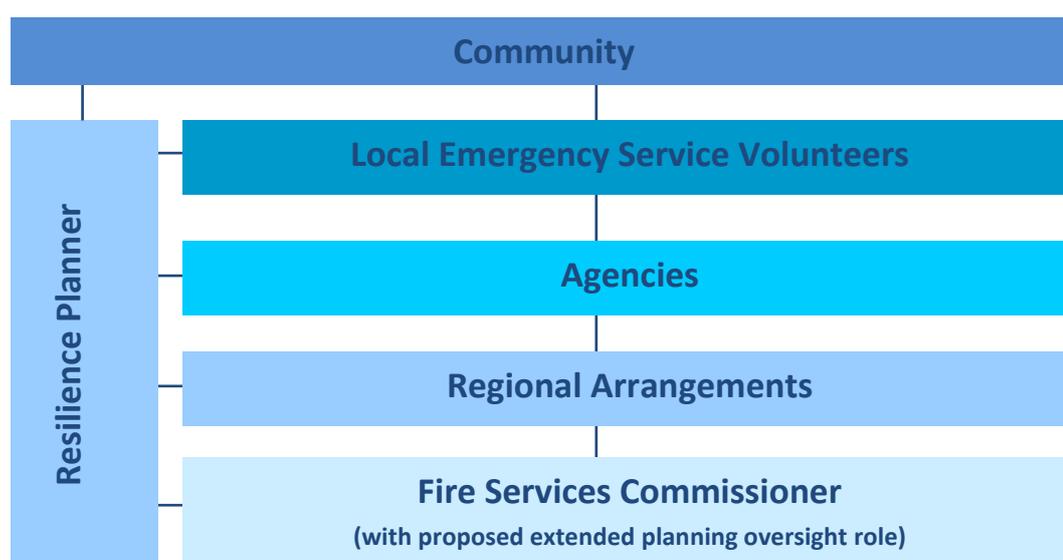
- Actively driving a sector-wide culture, values and behaviours that recognise the majority of Victoria’s emergency service agencies are first and foremost volunteer based organisations.
- Recognise, value, respect and promote the contribution of volunteers to the well-being and safety of the community.
- Consult and engage with volunteers and their representative body on all matters that affect them or volunteerism in general.
- Develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteerism across the sector.

The position could play an important role in increasing the level of public understanding of local risk and the ability of people to make informed decisions to protect lives and property.

There would be logic to integrate this position into the ‘*single line of control*’ arrangements with reporting lines independent to any individual agency, to ensure that the position has a level of independence and an unfettered ability to identify and escalate issues beyond the local level or agency/ies for resolution as required.

The following builds on the outline provided above showing the relationship and key role of emergency service volunteers to contributing to community resilience and how the proposed Resilience Planner sits outside of the agencies but has a key relationship to facilitate the process with the key players with an ultimate reporting relationship to the Fire & Rescue Commissioner in order to escalate and resolve any issues that may eventuate through the planning process.

Figure 4 – Interrelationships of the proposed Resilience Planner in facilitating a new all-hazards emergency management planning framework



7. STREAMLINING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 Context

The objectives of the Green Paper will not be able to be achieved without continued strong emergency service volunteerism. Regardless of any changes to overall governance structures/arrangements the operating environment across the sector needs to facilitate and empower local community based volunteers to work together to get the best combined effort at the coalface. Any changes to overarching arrangements need to incorporate a legislative responsibility to:

- Drive a sector-wide culture, values and behaviours that recognise the majority of Victoria's emergency service agencies are first and foremost volunteer based organisations in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner;
- Recognise the Volunteer Charter as the statement of the commitment and principles that apply to the relationship between Government, the agencies and volunteer officer and members;
- Recognise, value, respect and promote the vital importance of volunteers not only as the only viable resource model for Victoria's risk context but also as the cornerstone to active community participation, shared responsibility and community resilience;
- Consult and engage with volunteers and their representative body on all matters that affect them or volunteerism in general; and
- Develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteerism across the sector.

Whilst fully appreciating the need to incorporate an appropriate suite of *generic skills* within the arrangements to achieve 'good governance' (e.g. financial, risk, legal, commercial etc...), volunteer support for any revised overarching arrangement is absolutely contingent on the inclusion of *volunteer skills* within the composition of any overarching decision making structure/s and agency boards. Specifically this volunteer expertise needs to be in the context of fire and rescue emergency service operating environment.

With specific reference to CFA volunteers this also includes the caveat that the introduction of any overarching structures should also not divide firefighting organisations into urban and rural (or bushfire) services. To do otherwise is considered detrimental to a range of critical factors and is counter to the concept of adopting an all-hazards/all-agency approach to achieving seamless emergency management and most importantly the Ministers continued undertakings regarding the retention of the existing agencies as being Government Policy.

VFBV has previously recognised 'that there needs to be a stronger arrangement in place to ensure inter-agency coordination, cooperation, interoperability and common purpose'³⁸ and that 'there is a place an overarching body or position to drive organisational reform amongst the fire agencies'.³⁹ Despite the changed landscape across the sector with the implementation of the Fire Services Commissioners role, this position remains current. VFBV observe since the creation of the Fire Services Commissioners role some good progress is being made. VFBV supports any further opportunities for improvement, particularly to achieve even greater coordination; improve

³⁸ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 19 April 2010, p.15

³⁹ VFBV correspondence to Minister for Police and Emergency Services 13 August 2010

interoperability; removing barriers to operating within an all-hazards environment; and the streamlining of structures and decision making (including empowerment to the local level), all of which are consistent with the underlying objectives outlined in the Green Paper.

VFBV questions whether the introduction of an *'overarching board'* and/or an *'umbrella body'* as proposed within the Green Paper is the best approach to achieve these improvements. VFBV believe there are other ways to achieve these outcomes without adding additional layers of governance and the consequential potential of adding further confusion across the sector. Volunteers believe there is no place for an *'umbrella body'* as outlined within the Green Paper regardless.

The key messages from volunteer feedback on this issue are:

- Volunteers recognise that there needs to be a stronger arrangement in place to ensure inter-agency coordination, cooperation, interoperability and common purpose and that there is a place an overarching body or position to drive organisational reform amongst the fire agencies.
- In response to the direct question regarding the establishment of an overarching board, volunteers were generally supportive. Discussion and subsequent feedback raised the question about whether the role/need warranted creation of a board in the strict definition and preference for the objectives outlined within the Green Paper to be achieved by other means. VFBV (see below) suggest consideration be given to the establishment of a Ministerial coordinating or advisory committee and/or a new dedicated department focussed on public safety.
- The introduction of any revised arrangements must maintain the individual agencies independence, reporting relationship with the Minister and refocus individual boards on agency specific governance and compliance regimes.
- Neither agency boards nor any new governance arrangements should have an operational role.
- The focus of any overarching structure or position must be to enhance and drive interoperability, standardisation, coordination, oversight, reporting, policy direction and procedural matters from a whole of sector (cross agency) perspective that makes it easy for and empowers volunteers to get the best combined effort from existing resources.
- Volunteer skills set must be included within the composition of any overarching structure, supporting Ministerial Council or other sub-structures.
- Clarity around the division of accountability and roles of each part of the overall structure is critical to achieving the necessary reforms.
- Any new arrangements must avoid creating remoteness from or between the decision makers and service delivery operatives.

Consistent with previous submissions⁴⁰ amalgamating services is not the panacea to achieving the desired all-hazards/all-agencies objectives and in fact runs the real risk of eroding the benefits the current agency arrangements provide as the key building block to achieving these outcomes. In addition there is a risk that a preoccupation with building an overarching or umbrella body will generate significant difficulties typically associated with merging large organisations and more importantly distract agencies from finding ways to work better together to deliver the best possible service to the person in need. This is consistent with the Ministers continued undertakings regarding Government Policy of maintaining the existing agencies. If there is any move away from this policy position then this would warrant reconsideration of this submission and specific coverage of the impact on volunteers and the risks associated with such a proposal.

Volunteer feedback is generally supportive of the concept of an overarching ‘structure’ of some description to enhance and drive inter-operability, standardisation, coordination and streamlining of governance, oversight, reporting, policy direction and procedural matters from a whole of sector (cross agency) perspective. In particular volunteers are supportive of a mechanism to ‘*break down silos*’; provide clarity and clear direction; and where necessary to ‘*bang heads*’ to ensure coordinated, timely, transparent and community needs driven decisions.

Volunteers also believe regardless of the introduction of any overarching structure, the CFA Board still has a place within any new arrangement to lead the above issues at an ‘agency level’ and maintain connection with service delivery on the ground. Whilst an overarching arrangement could improve focus at a ‘whole-of-sector’ level the risk of this structure becoming remote from or detached from the community embedded service units must be avoided.

7.2 Focus of Overarching Arrangements

The focus of the new overarching arrangements should be to achieve:

- Increased collaboration, coordination and interoperability between agencies;
- A seamless framework of resources and service delivery across the emergency management sector;
- Recognition of the vital importance of volunteers not only as the only viable resource model for Victoria’s risk context but also as the cornerstone to active community participation, shared responsibility and community resilience;
- Formal structures and mechanism for consultation and engagement with an appropriate overall emergency service volunteers representative arrangement;
- Sector-wide policies and organisational arrangements encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of emergency service volunteers to provide services;
- Reduction of duplication between agencies in the provision of services to the community, the administration of emergency management and employee/volunteer support across the State;

⁴⁰ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 19 April 2010, p.2

- Sector-wide policies, goals, strategies and performance targets for the organisation to meet both commercial and community expectations;
- Coordinated execution of contracts, provision of shared services and other agreements that span agencies;
- Transparent reporting and sound advice to the Minister.

7.3 Elements of VFBV Governance Arrangements Concept Model

Having regard for the above, VFBV proposes consideration of the following elements to new overarching governance arrangements for the sector:

7.3.1 Ministerial Advisory Council

In lieu of an overarching Board as canvassed in the Green Paper and in light of volunteer's view that agency Boards should be retained, the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Council could achieve the desired outcome.

The advisory council should be chaired by the Minister and consist of the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor), Chief Commissioner of Police, representatives of all agencies and emergency service volunteer representative/s.

The advisory council could perform the following functions:

- Provide the Minister, the Fire Services Commissioner and emergency service agencies advice on matters relating to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery as part of emergency management;
- Provide advice to the Minister, the Fire Services Commissioner and emergency service agencies on other matters within the emergency services sector, particularly in relation to matters affecting volunteers;
- Keep under review and advise the Minister on any arrangements made by agencies that may affect the recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support of emergency service volunteers; and
- Monitor and provide advice on progress and impact of sector-wide reform (particularly the implementation of a common operating platform and inter-operability) to support the introduction of an all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment and improving community resilience.

7.3.2 Expanded Role of 'Fire Services Commissioner' to 'Fire and Rescue Commissioner'

This position could become the State's most senior operational officer and State Controller responsible for all natural hazards with an operational and standards setting responsibility.

The focus of this position should be:

- Proactively driving increased collaboration, coordination and interoperability between agencies;
- Building a whole-of-state capability model and framework that will inform resource allocation within and between agencies;

- Developing state-wide operational doctrine, standards and procedures for universal application within an all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment across agencies;
- Providing direction on priorities for and provision of shared services /sector capability in line with standards;
- Ensuring agencies and the state is at all times in a state of readiness commensurate with current and forecast risk;
- Managing on behalf of all agencies the State Control Centre;
- Being the State Controller for all natural hazards (e.g. fire, flood, all forms of rescue, storms etc.);
- Ensuring sector wide regard for the importance of volunteers and proactively encourage the sector to maintain and strengthen the capacity of emergency service volunteers to provide services; and
- Consultation and engagement of volunteers through formal volunteer representation arrangement(s) on any matter that might reasonably be expected to affect them.

7.3.3 Operational Coordinating Council (i.e. Fire and Rescue Commissioner and Agency Chief Officers)

The focus of this position should be to achieve:

- The achievement of a common operating platform to support the achievement of joined-up all-hazards/all-agencies outcomes;
- Supporting the Commissioner in the development state-wide operational doctrine, standards and procedures; and
- Supporting the commissioner with the identification of need and development of state-wide programs that contribute to improved community resilience and the protection of life, property and the environment through the delivery of services within a joined-up all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment.

7.3.4 Emergency Management Victoria Department

In the context of the above, volunteers do not believe the establishment of an ‘*umbrella body*’ in addition to those arrangements outlined above is necessary. If the above elements are established, replicated for the management of all hazards and working well they should be able to achieve a more collaborative and joined-up approach across the sector without the addition of ‘another layer’ to the bureaucracy. Furthermore it is proposed that the provision of shared services to ‘support’ the agencies can be facilitated without the establishment of such an ‘umbrella body’. Importantly any form of shared services and/or central procurement must be undertaken in accordance with the standards, priorities and plans promulgated by the agency Chief Officers under the direction and leadership of the Fire and Rescue Commissioner in the form of the *operational council* outlined above.

VFBV suggests consideration be given to the creation of a dedicated public safety department, to accommodate the desire for improved governance, coordination and shared services arrangements. Without the competing interests of other portfolios and the consequent need for an additional layer of management and co-ordinating bureaucracy as is the case in the current arrangements in Department of Justice. There could be significant efficiency, effectiveness and accountability gains

through a smaller, tighter, more focused department operating with a flatter structure. Likewise the ability of the Department Head to work in close partnership with the Fire and Rescue Commissioner, Chief Commissioner of Police and the agency heads will provide the necessary catalyst to achieve collaborative reform within an all-hazards/all-agencies environment.

Such a Department could incorporate those existing functions that support police and emergency management and the delivery of shared services for the relevant agencies and statutory officers.

The establishment of this department is aimed specifically to achieving a reduction in the layers of bureaucracy compared to the current environment, and provide a greater focus and accountability for public safety and the streamlining of structures and decision making (including empowerment to the local level).

7.3.5 Agency Boards

The retention of agency boards within this proposed model is seen as important to maintaining the integrity of the existing entities; appropriate connection between decision makers and service delivery on the ground; the volunteer based and community embedded ethos of the agencies; a sense of volunteer ownership/pride with their respective agency; retention of volunteer involvement and skills set within the composition of agency decision making structures.

From CFA volunteer's perspective, some good progress has been made in recent times to provide the basis for strengthened volunteer engagement and demonstrate genuine recognition of the importance of volunteers in CFA (e.g. recent CFA Act amendments, commitments to retention of volunteer skill set on CFA Board post formation of VFBV, commitments to Volunteer Charter). Any perceived erosion of the CFA Board arrangements and/or recent legislative changes has potential to raise question about the veracity of these commitments.

The focus of agency boards should be:

- Good governance and performance of the agency.
- Delivery of the agencies service delivery responsibilities.
- Developing policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of emergency service volunteers to provide services.
- Proactively driving increased collaboration, coordination and interoperability between agencies.
- Manage and report on the performance of the agency against agency strategies and key performance indicators.
- Ensure that the risks to which the agency is exposed are clearly identified and that suitable processes are in place to manage those risks across the agency and its activities.

Agency Boards would not have (as is the case now) operational control of the agency, this being the responsibility of the Chief Officer. Feedback from volunteers, consistent with current CFA reorganisation proposals, indicates a desire for the elevation of the role and influence of Chief Officer within the agencies.

7.3.6 Agency Chief Officers

The focus of agency Chief Officers should be to achieve:

- The control and direction of brigades/units, personnel and equipment within the agency.
- The achievement of the agencies service delivery obligations.
- Proactively driving increased collaboration, coordination and interoperability between agencies.
- Development of agency specific service plans.
- Building agency capability and capacity in line with the State capability model and framework.
- Develop agency specific operational doctrine, standards and procedures. This will be on a by exception basis and must not conflict with those set by Commissioner.
- Ensure the agency is at all times in a state of readiness commensurate with current and forecast risk.

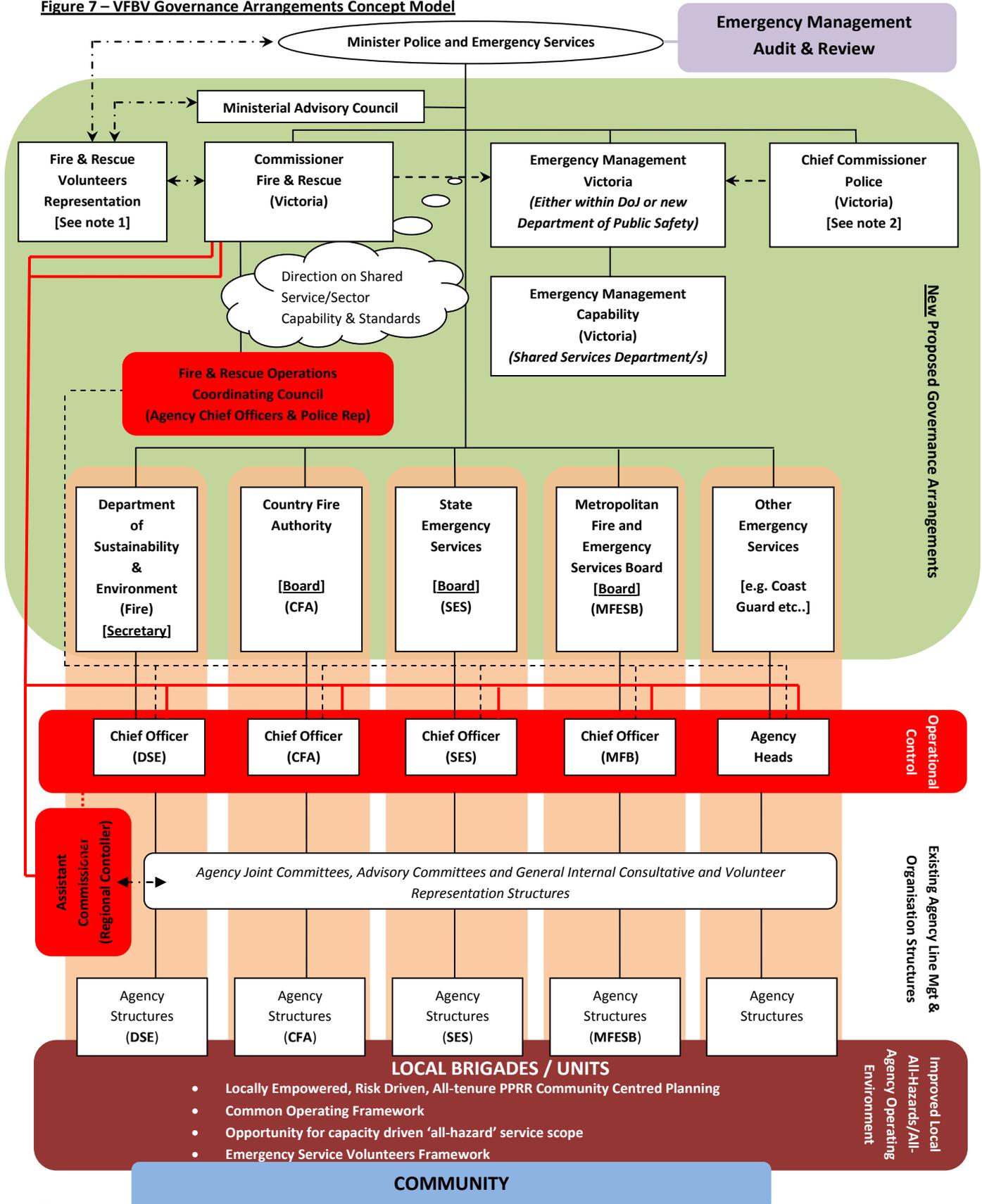
All elements of the structure must play a key leadership role in shaping organisational culture that recognise, value, respect and proactively promote the contribution of emergency service volunteers to the delivery of agency services and the achievement of community resilience.

7.4 VFBV Governance Arrangements Concept Model

Having regard for the combination of the overall arrangements, focus and specific elements outlined above, the following diagram provides a concept model of how this might work in practice. The concept model:

- ✓ Provides a form of overarching structure to drive a reduction in bureaucracy, a greater focus and accountability for public safety and the streamlining of structures and decision making (including empowerment to the local level)
- ✓ Caters for the implementation of shared services and central procurement
- ✓ Facilitates an increased remit for the Fire Services Commissioner (as Fire & Rescue Commissioner across all natural hazards)
- ✓ Facilitates a sector-wide approach to determining state-wide capability, standards, procedures and plans through an Operations Coordinating Council involving the Chief Officers
- ✓ Maintains a *'single line of control'*
- ✓ Provides a joined-up approach to emergency service volunteers that will support involvement in all bodies and key decisions that affect volunteerism, maintaining agency specific volunteer representative bodies and internal structures
- ✓ Establishes an independent audit and review function for the sector
- ✓ Maintains Separate Agencies (and Ministers Commitment to retain existing agencies)
- ✓ Keeps Agency Boards and Statutory Independence
- ✓ Respects agency identity, autonomy, focus on agency specific issues, existing resources and structures (including volunteer based joint committees, advisory councils)
- ✓ Maintains Agency Reporting relationship to Minister
- ✓ Elevates role of Chief Officers to raise, train and sustain their individual organisations capability and capacity (similar approach to the Australian Defence Force [ADF] model)
- ✓ Is capable of integrating with a new community centred all-hazards emergency management planning framework
- ✓ Can be easily enabled through a single Act

Figure 7 – VFBV Governance Arrangements Concept Model



Notes:

- 1 These arrangements build on existing association roles, structures, processes and links to members within agencies. In addition it provides a conduit for active participation and engagement with the Commissioner, Minister and Senior Agency Representatives as part of the proposed Ministerial Council.
- 2 This diagram is not intended to show any current or proposed Police Emergency Management Coordination functions which are outlined elsewhere in this submission as they relate to the options contained within the Green Paper.

7.5 Single Act of Parliament (Legislation)

Volunteers are not overly concerned with any modernisation and/or consolidation of enabling legislation across the emergency management sector provided it maintains or strengthens the legislative responsibilities regarding volunteers as currently included within the CFA Act and includes the existing powers and individual protections to enable volunteers to do their job. Furthermore, these powers need to be delegated to the local level and empower volunteers. This includes the ability for volunteers to be represented and to bring matters affecting the welfare and efficiency of volunteers to the attention of Board/s and where required the Minister.

Legislation modernisation is consistent with the recommendations of the Hon. David Jones AM who recognises the dated, complex interrelationship, piecemeal nature of amendments, historical language and application of the current legislative framework.⁴¹ Further, and as is covered in further detail later in this submission, he also identified some of the restrictive and historical approaches to volunteer representation, independence and funding (of the Volunteer Association) which also need to be addressed and incorporated within any new legislation to provide certainty and an ongoing commitment to a volunteer based emergency management framework.⁴²

The simplification and modernisation of the legislative framework within a single Act might provide opportunity to reduce some current confusion and more easily facilitate portability of operations within an all-hazards operating environment, including common training and education on legislative responsibilities, powers and protections.

In addition legislative changes need to give legislative effect to a holistic and community centred emergency management planning framework including clarity about fire prevention planning and mitigation outlined elsewhere in this submission.

As previously stated it is essential to volunteers that any revised or new Act:

- Must maintain the existing recognition of volunteers and the Volunteer Charter as currently outlined within the CFA Act but should be broadened to encapsulate all emergency service volunteers.
- Any modernisation or standardisation process needs to ensure volunteers and brigades retain the current legislative powers and protections they currently have and need to perform their roles (both within a fire and potentially broader all-hazards operating environment).
- Any new consolidated single Act of parliament must retain local community ownership and individual agencies identity and recognise their unique and proud history.
- Standard roles and powers should apply universally and consistently across all emergency services (particularly fire services) but the legislation needs to recognise and cater for the unique operation of community based volunteers and brigades/units.

⁴¹ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011, pp.24-28

⁴² *Ibid.* pp.28-30

- The legislation and facilitative arrangements (e.g. complementary regulations and procedures) should also be standardised but must ensure all relevant powers are capable of being delegated to the local level to empower local Captains and Officers (and more broadly other local emergency management leaders).
- The legislation should establish and strengthen a single line of control regardless of agency and/or hazard type to facilitate true all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment as structured through local decision making processes.
- Any single consolidated Act should clearly outline a section that spells out the purposes. Be in plain English and not require statutory or legal interpretation so volunteers and others can easily understand and *'enact the act'* on a day-to-day and practical basis.
- Regardless of whether any legislative changes occur, to overcome the current lack of understanding by individuals who have power under or exercise a function of the Act (at whatever level and whether staff or volunteers), a detailed and rolling education program needs to be introduced.

8. SINGLE LINE OF CONTROL

Volunteers support the findings of the Royal Commission with respect to line of control and incident management and believe the management of emergencies (whether or not an all-hazards approach is formally adopted or not) should be conducted within a single line of control regardless of agency and/or hazard type.

A *'single line of control'* is considered by volunteers to mean:

- Universal conduct of command and control [C2] within a standard framework adopted by all agencies within the State, including Police (e.g. AIIMS or a State derivative thereof).
- An ability of any agency personnel to perform any command and control function regardless of hazard type, unimpeded by legislation or procedural barriers, commensurate with their own skills, experience and sector-wide recognised accreditation.
- A single line of control and reporting arrangements (which is agency and land tenure blind and is scalable to cater for a level 1-3 incident type) and provides a single reporting line from Incident to Region to State Level (i.e. Incident Controller, Regional Controller to State Controller).

Volunteers strongly believe (once again regardless of any other changes that may occur) a *'single line of control'* needs to be enabled by a common operating platform and standardised arrangements (e.g. communications, IT and information systems, SOP's, training, IMT and other accreditation/endorsements, intelligence, warning systems etc...) applied across all agencies. This is further outlined in the following section.

As previously highlighted within the legislation section above, volunteers also believe the powers and relevant protections to undertake roles and responsibilities within a *'single line of control'* and

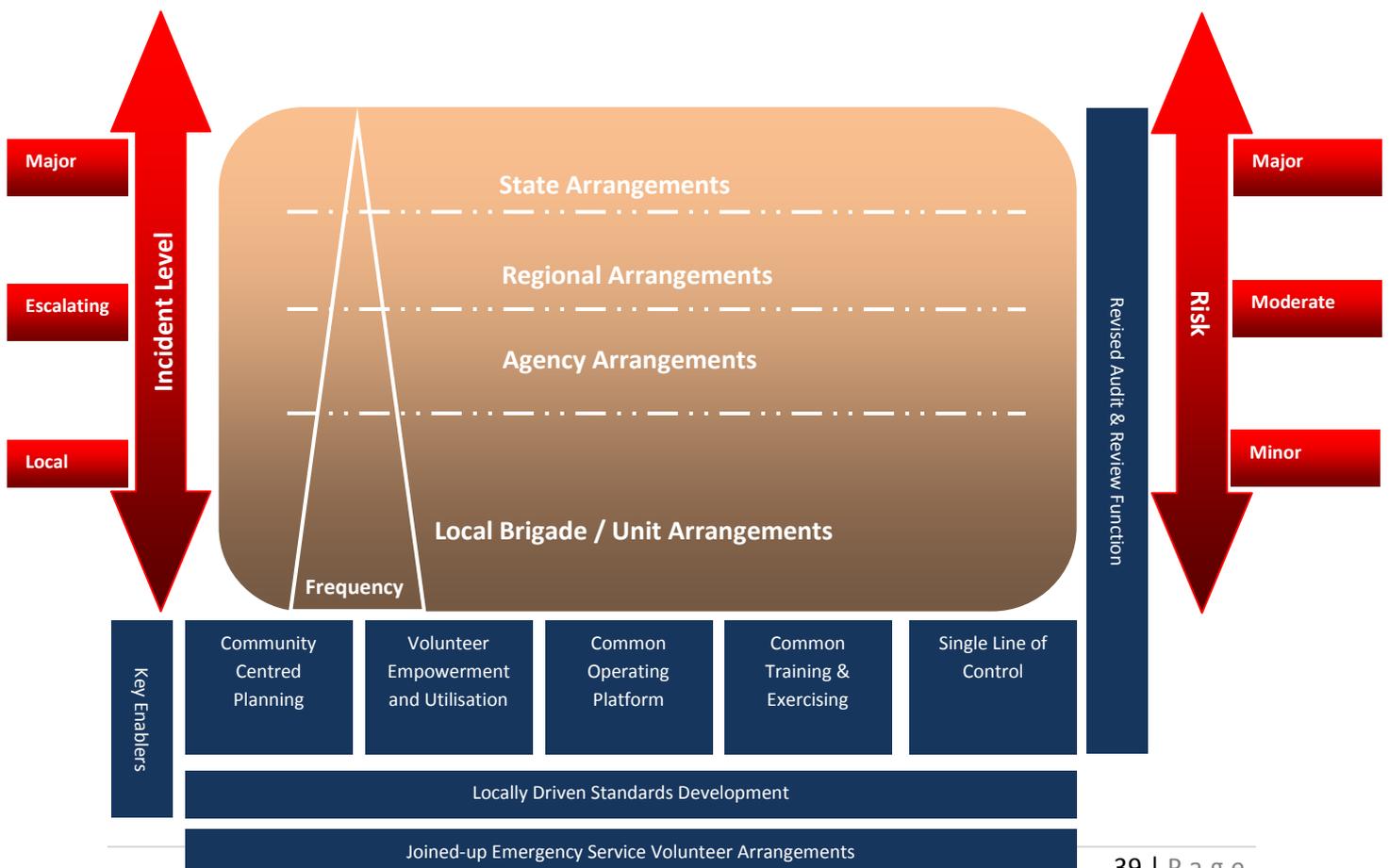
to deliver an all-hazards/all-agency outcome are delegated to the local level Captains and Officers (and more broadly other local emergency management leaders) without any hindrance that ensures they are fully empowered to perform their roles. This includes the retention of current legislative powers and protections they need to perform their roles (both within a fire and potentially broader all-hazards operating environment) regardless of where these powers come from (i.e. from agency Chief Officer, Fire Commissioner or a combination thereof).

Removal of existing ‘agency specific’ reporting layers might further enable a ‘single line of control’ to operate. This could be achieved by Regional Controllers having a reporting relationship directly to the State Controller (e.g. under the existing arrangements in the case of fire this would be to the Fire Services Commissioner) as outlined in the VFBV proposed concept model outlined above.

It needs to be recognised that for the large part of the sectors activities and for the majority of time, Local and Agency arrangements will apply and operate as ‘business as usual’ without any reference to Regional and/or State arrangements. However, the overall command and control framework must cater for the escalation of incidents, major incidents and preparedness for high risk periods. The system of ‘single line of control’ also heavily relies upon common training and accreditation systems, aligned to the framework, which are universally recognised across agencies and practiced by regular and meaningful exercising. This was an area of significant feedback from volunteers.

The following diagram outlines the interrelationships, escalation, underpinning ‘enablers’ and the reality between day to day control versus the need for Regional or State arrangements to be activated supporting the ‘single line of control’ approach:

Figure 8 – Key interrelationships preceding and supporting a Single Line of Control approach



To complement the existing arrangements the Green Paper proposes to ‘extend the remit of the Fire Services Commissioner to encompass response to all major natural hazards’.⁴³ Volunteers support this proposal but recognise the existing revised control arrangements that emanated out of the Royal Commission and the implementation of the Fire Services Commissioner role remain untested in a major emergency.

On this basis and consistent with its governance concepts outlined above volunteers do not support the proposals outlined within the Green Paper to include an operations function within any form of overarching body.⁴⁴ As further outlined within its governance concepts, a key component of any successful line of command and line of control arrangement is the true integration of the Agency Chief Officers as those who would be responsible for the majority of service delivery and as key input along with the Fire and Rescue Commissioner to the development of and promulgation of sector-wide standards, capability and procedural arrangements. Agencies need to be able to operate effectively in their own right and be able to come together as one when the need arises.

The Green Paper also proposes the elimination of specific coordination roles from Victoria’s emergency management arrangements, making coordination the responsibility of the relevant control agency.⁴⁵

Removal of overarching coordination functions and placing this responsibility back within individual agencies appears consistent with the introduction of a ‘*single line of control*’ through the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor). Of vital importance to volunteers is whatever arrangements exist, locally based incident controllers are empowered to make relevant decisions and acquire the necessary support to combat an incident without unnecessary delay or layers of bureaucracy. Any unnecessary delay not only potentially compounds the damage to life, property and the environment but also extends the duration of an incident and the impact on volunteer’s time and consequential affects on employers and family.

Case Study

A recent petroleum tanker roll-over at a major intersection on a major highway required the attendance of numerous volunteer brigades, Police and Environment Protection Authority. To combat the incident an urgent need was identified by the Incident Controller on scene that there was a requirement for specialist decanting equipment.

The Incident Controller ascertained where such equipment was available, which was within relatively close proximity and travel time to the incident scene. The request for such equipment was discussed with District on-scene Police and it was agreed that the police would request such equipment. When the request was made to the private provider the immediate question that arose was who was paying the bill for the out-of-hours response and utilisation of such equipment. The resolution of this in order to provide a response to the supplier took several hours, as the response coordinator for the owner of the tanker had to be located for approval. Eventually after approximately 5 hours the necessary support arrived on-scene. By this time the entire product had escaped from the tanker, and decanting equipment was no longer required.

This case study supports the principle of empowering local incident controllers and how the coordination functions can be more easily fulfilled by incorporation of these functions within the ‘control agency’. The incident was the responsibility of Victoria Police, yet the CFA was the combating agency. These can also transition into the Emergency Management Team (EMT) structures at Incident, Region and State levels, which already have the ‘control agency’ Incident Controller, Region and State Controller as the Chair of these committees.

⁴³ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.25,49

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.25, 49

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.26,49

VFBV appreciate from discussions with CFA that their position may vary from CFA's in this regard who are concerned with the ability to fulfil this function concurrent with control agency activities. However, there is common ground between CFA and VFBV with respect to how these differences could be facilitated through the EMT concept.

9. REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Inherent in all aspects of the Green Paper and throughout this submission, the issue of regional arrangements requires consideration. The Green Paper proposes an option to *'undertake planning at the sub-regional level where municipal councils do not have the capacity to maintain appropriate emergency planning'*⁴⁶ and VFBV's submission regarding planning also raises issues around regional arrangements.

The Royal Commission raised the issue of alignment of regional boundaries across the sector. The Green Paper also proposes this concept within Option 18.⁴⁷ Whilst this may appear on the surface to be a logical and simple issue to manage, the transition to date has raised concern amongst some volunteers and remains a concern in some parts of the State. This is evidenced by the comments of the Hon. David Jones who says *'boundary realignment was consistently raised at consultations and in submission. It has clearly been a source of concern and frustration'*.⁴⁸ The basic thrust of the volunteer's position on this issue includes:

- The need for volunteers to be consulted in any determination on the arrangements that affect them;
- The selection of common boundaries should be posited purely on public safety drivers commensurate with risk which may span across other existing boundaries, with all other government and departmental day-to-day management requirements following behind this selection.
- Volunteers support the adoption of common regional boundaries that support emergency management coordination and planning. However, this should not automatically extend to adoption of these boundaries for day-to-day management if these will not support enhanced support for volunteers or erode the support, services, proximity and flexibility they currently enjoy;

Therefore having regard for the broad range of issues outlined above so much hinges on effective regional arrangements and these all need to be factored into any proposed arrangements that emanate from the Green Paper, with particular focus on all interrelationships that exist at this level. It is not just simply align boundaries and this will solve these problems. If boundaries are important to emergency management coordination then it follows that the boundaries should be meaningful and driven by factors (e.g. geography, risk, community relationships and potential emergency footprints) aimed at improving emergency management not simply by Government administration convenience.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.37,50

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.33,50

⁴⁸ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011, p.17

As/if regional structures and regional alignment evolve as key emergency management sector decision points there will be a need to ensure appropriate formal mechanisms for exist to consult with and engage emergency service volunteers.

Having regard for the desired shift towards an all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment an extension to some form of overarching emergency service volunteers structure which cascades from local to region to state level is another consideration when resolving future regional arrangements. VFBV would propose that it would be of significant benefit to all parties if Government was to support the establishment of a network of volunteer association field officers to ensure volunteers are appropriately represented, engaged and listened in a new all-hazard/all-agency context at the Regional and State levels. This would facilitate the active involvement of emergency service volunteers in key decision making at all levels in support of the intended objectives and initiatives outlined within the Green Paper.

This is consistent with the issue of independence and appropriate resourcing of volunteer representation as outlined in the *Jones Report* which clearly recognises that:

- ‘There is a also a need for the VFBV to be a strong and independent organisation’⁴⁹
- ‘to discharge its role effectively, VFBV needs to be adequately resourced’⁵⁰
- ‘adequate resourcing of the VFBV is necessary if it is to effectively perform its role under the Charter and the CFA Act in adequately representing volunteers in consultations’⁵¹

10. THE NEED TO FOCUS ON A COMMON OPERATING PLATFORM TO ENABLE INTER-OPERABILITY

Fundamental to achieving the objectives of the Green Paper, identifying and realising any efficiencies between agencies and a true all-hazards/all-agencies operating environment is the development of a common operating platform. This should not be interpreted as removing the autonomy of individual agencies to determine their individual requirements commensurate with risk and their operating environment, but simply adopting a more global state-wide approach to capability. The approach must be about ensuring individual agencies can work seamlessly together when needed.

The objective of the developing a common operating platform is to establish, plan and maintain an appropriate level of capability to manage state-wide risk in line with the principles of community resilience, shared responsibility and joined-up planning.

The state, through the proposed *Operations Coordinating Council* will be in a position to determine the priorities for and best approach to achieving a common operating platform to enable interoperability.

⁴⁹ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011, p.29

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.226

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.228

Recognising the resources available to agencies will always be finite, whether the task is preparing for operations or fulfilling operational commitments, the State's sector-wide operational management framework needs to provide a mechanism that balance competing demands of generating capability for near-term tasks from a *capability baseline*⁵² (preparedness) and developing *future capability* (modernisation). Balance is required between both because decisions to invest in one area will generally result in fewer resources for the other. This is another role that can be easily facilitated through the proposed *Operations Coordinating Council*.

If this exercise is conducted properly there is also opportunity to nominate '*functional responsibility*' to an individual agency or position to manage an area of capability for the State, regardless of agency (e.g. DSE may be the lead agency on aircraft whilst SES may be the lead agency for logistics management etc...).

This will also support the standardisation and sharing of resources where appropriate which has been consistently raised in volunteer feedback to these issues.

Volunteer feedback supports the immediate focus on achieving this common operating platform, regardless of any other change/s which may eventuate, and is seen as fundamental and an absolute requirement to achieving inter-operability which not only achieves the desired increased levels of coordination and collaboration within and between agencies but is the key catalyst a joined-up approach to get the best collective effort of agencies to support the community in times of need. Volunteer's expectation on a common operating platform includes the introduction of common:

- Community centred leadership, tenure blind and all hazards emergency management planning
- Communications network and systems
- IT and information systems – including single volunteer whole of life database
- Doctrine and Standard Operating Procedures
- Joint training and exercising
- IMT and other accreditation/endorsement processes
- Induction packages
- Personal protective clothing/equipment
- Vehicles/equipment
- Intelligence systems
- Warning systems
- Community education/engagement programs
- Compliance regimes – including structural fire safety
- Incident Management Centres and supporting infrastructure and systems

⁵² *Capability Baseline* refers to the core capabilities and skills (both individual and collective) required by agencies to perform operational tasks.

11. THE BALANCE BETWEEN COMMON STANDARDS, SHARED SERVICES, CENTRAL PROCUREMENT AND COMMUNITY INPUT

Inherent in delivering services within the emergency management environment is the development of appropriate standards that maximise the effective and efficient use of the finite resources to deliver public safety outcomes. An important component of this is recognition of the ‘*shared responsibility*’ philosophy that underpins the concept of community resilience and the management of risk. Whether this is a local land owner or public land manager within rural Victoria or a major hazard facility within metropolitan Melbourne, the same principles apply.

The Green Paper seeks to capture this issue in a number of ways which are in part supported by VFBV but in other parts not supported. For instance the Green Paper seems to assume that ‘*A central procurement model could also standardise what equipment and software is used, which will allow for greater inter-operability between agencies and make skills more transferable across agencies when required*’.⁵³ VFBV is of the view that this proposition is more a standards development issue than shared or central procurement issue (i.e. standards to facilitate business needs drive procurement not the need to fit the manner in which business is conducted to fit procurement requirements or cost cutting objectives).

Further whilst volunteers strongly support the establishment of a common operating platform that delivers inter-operability (as outlined earlier), this does not extend to a mandated adoption of universal standards across all aspects of the sector. Volunteers believe agencies through their Chief Officer should still be able to develop service approaches/solutions relevant to their risk and operating environment albeit consistent with the agreed overall standards and the objective of working toward a common operating platform (e.g. the different types of water tankers that operate within MFB and CFA should not automatically be transitioned into a single standard without a proper and considered assessment against the risk and operating environment).

Whilst the ultimate responsibility and powers to make standards needs to reside within a position and for fire service standards this is currently the Fire Services Commissioner⁵⁴, the active engagement with the community in developing the standards that affect them is absolutely critical. Volunteers believe this engagement can be achieved as part of the proposed community-centred planning process. This approach is totally consistent and complementary with the principles of *shared responsibility* and provides a clear mechanism to balancing, amongst other things:

- Community need, expectations and priorities;
- Risk;
- Resources and the competing demands for these resources;
- Environment and cultural considerations.

This proposed approach is consistent with the legislative provisions applicable to Road Management⁵⁵ and the processes of how standards regarding road maintenance are developed and

⁵³ Ibid. p.33

⁵⁴ s.19 Fire Service Commissioners Act 2010

⁵⁵ Road Management Act 2004

applied which are outlined within the supporting Code of Practice.⁵⁶ This proposed approach will recognise that whilst an area may be of similar nature after applying the above criteria, the Commissioner may in fact determine different standards across similar areas. These standards will then drive agency/sector plans, resourcing and service delivery models and will also underpin the audit program.

In this manner local priorities and standards for emergency management should be set by local communities within a broader state-wide framework. VFBV's broader proposals outlined within this submission support this concept and facilitate the broader objectives of the Green Paper.

Whatever standards development process applies, VFBV maintain their previously articulated position⁵⁷ that there needs to be a separation between those that make standards and those that audit compliance against them. Therefore, VFBV support the responsibility and power to make standards residing within the Fire & Rescue Commissioner (recognising the increased remit of this position across all natural hazards as proposed within the Green Paper⁵⁸), the implementation of these standards by the individual agencies and the auditing of these by the proposed Emergency Management Inspectorate. In this manner VFBV's previously submitted proposition that 'standards in relation to the standard of fire cover should be transparent, measurable and consistent'⁵⁹ continues to apply.

⁵⁶ Code of Practice for Road Management Plans 2004

⁵⁷ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 25 May 2010, p.6

⁵⁸ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.25,49

⁵⁹ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 25 May 2010, p.10

12. SECTOR-WIDE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

12.1 Structure

Regardless of any changes which may occur as a consequence of the Green Paper process, VFBV, in partnership with the other volunteer representative bodies is committed to progress the implementation of an overarching arrangement to support all emergency service volunteers. This could be achieved without necessarily needing to change existing agency volunteer representative bodies and internal agency structures. The principles of independence of volunteer representation via a well resourced volunteer association and the need for more transparent and effective engagement and consultation with volunteers is consistent with the findings of the *Jones Report*. Just as Jones recognised the important role VFBV plays as a partner with CFA, there is also logic in evolving this arrangement to work in a broader all-hazards/all-agency operating environment. In this context VFBV support and is prepared to lead further work to explore how the existing arrangements could be evolved to:

- Provide a united voice, representation and advocacy for Emergency Service (Fire & Rescue) Volunteers in a joined-up and coordinated manner;
- Provide a mechanism to support Government and CFA to fulfil their legislative obligations to consult with and engage volunteers;
- Act as the trusted voice of emergency service volunteers manage a whole-of-sector:
 - Emergency services volunteerism framework and supporting recruitment, retention, recognition and engagement programs;
 - Issues identification, escalation and resolution process;
 - Safety, wellbeing and welfare process.
- Promote and actively market emergency service volunteerism to the broader community.
- Support Government and the agencies with the development of appropriate systems, processes and initiatives to encourage, maintain and strengthen volunteerism across the State.
- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Emergency Service (Fire & Rescue) Volunteers, which includes:
 - Research and Development associated with emergency service volunteerism;
 - Volunteer leadership institute;
 - Monitoring and reporting on the ongoing health and sustainability of emergency service volunteerism, programs and resources.

VFBV has held preliminary discussion about this concept with the Victorian Emergency Services Association (representative body for SES volunteers) Board and Coast Guard National Commodore and all parties support exploring the evolution of the existing volunteer representation and engagement arrangements. This is seen as fundamental to the pursuit of the sector-wide changes proposed within the Green Paper, timely and necessary in the changing emergency services landscape within which emergency service volunteers currently operate.

The principles outlined above have been subject to independent consideration and recommendations within the *Jones Report* whereby he clearly recognises that:

- ‘There is a also a need for the VFBV to be a strong and independent organisation’⁶⁰
- ‘to discharge its role effectively, VFBV needs to be adequately resourced’⁶¹
- ‘adequate resourcing of the VFBV is necessary if it is to effectively perform its role under the Charter and the CFA Act in adequately representing volunteers in consultations’⁶²

Just as Government have recognised within the Green Paper that volunteers are vital to Victoria’s emergency management arrangements, it is critical that the future sector arrangements are informed by active volunteer input to decision making about how those arrangements will be structured and post implementation (of any new arrangements) how those arrangements are impacting on the welfare and efficiency of volunteers on an ongoing basis.

Regardless of a future model the following outstanding objectives (along with some recent improvements) being pursued and subject to ongoing dialogue between VFBV, CFA and Government have broader application beyond CFA volunteers:

- Implementation of the recommendations of the *Jones Inquiry* with applicability to the broader emergency services volunteers sector.
- Commitment to volunteer service unit support principles along a continuum of support that encourages, maintains and strengthens the capacity of volunteerism as the cornerstone to community resilience and the delivery of agency services in a fully integrated model of operation.
- Adequate resources for volunteer associations to represent volunteers and facilitate genuine engagement of volunteers in decision making on matters that affect the welfare and efficiency of volunteers and volunteerism.
- Establishment of a high level welfare and efficiency monitoring process reporting to Premier (involving VFBV, CFA, Victorian Fire Commissioner and relevant Minister/s as partners in the monitoring and issues resolution process.
- The establishment and resourcing of a taskforce reporting to the Premier/Minister (driven by volunteers, utilising processes available through VFBV and other associations) empowered to:
 - Analyse factors promoting and hindering the recruitment, sustainment, equipping, training, utilisation, welfare and efficiency of volunteers and generally impacting on emergency services volunteerism;
 - Providing the Premier/Minister with a blueprint of action required to ensure the ongoing viability of the emergency sector volunteer based resource model and leading to implementation of improvements to address identified issues; and
 - To monitor and generally supervise agreed actions.
- Public and formal commitment by Government and agencies to a program of proactive and deliberate action to maintain and strengthen volunteer capacity; volunteer utilisation; and volunteer motivation.
 - Formal commitment by Government and Agencies to a set of principles to underpin decision making so that the volunteer asset is maintained and strengthened;

⁶⁰ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011, p.29

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.226

⁶² *Ibid.* p.228

- Commitment to ensure the agencies day-to-day administration, organisation focus and approach is conducive to optimal volunteer development, volunteer capacity building and utilisation of volunteer expertise;
- An culture development project within agencies to establish an environment conducive to the future success of a volunteer based and fully integrated approach; and
- A targeted volunteer capacity building project commencing with high growth, high service or high exposure communities.
- Establish a formal volunteer impact analysis process to be undertaken prior to the approval of Government Policy (including Agency level) and legislative change to ensure that changes support and not erode volunteer capacity and volunteerism in general.
- Volunteer associations be funded to conduct a state-wide community education campaign to substantially increase public awareness on the role, capacity, professionalism and value of emergency sector volunteers and the integrated model of operation.
- Government to work with volunteers to consider feasibility of a Volunteer Development Centre of Excellence, examine options to ensure volunteers are empowered to manage and administer this centre.

These objectives have immediate application and if implemented would assist the capability and capacity of volunteer associations to work together along with Agencies/Government to shape the best possible community and volunteer based emergency management arrangements for Victoria.

12.2 Volunteer Ombudsman

In addition to the above, the resolution of disputes that affect volunteers was a significant area raised within the *Jones Inquiry*.⁶³ An appropriate mechanism to address these concerns, which if untreated will adversely impact on volunteer retention and sustainability, might be the introduction of an ‘*independent umpire*’ (e.g. *Volunteer Ombudsman*) to resolve disputes when existing processes require independent direction. An ombudsman function is seen by VFBV as being complimentary to the broader thrust of encouraging, maintaining and strengthening the capacity of volunteerism across the sector. This concept is referred to in the *Jones Inquiry*⁶⁴ and was also promoted to the inquiry by the Fire Services Commissioner to:

- Deal with complaints from CFA volunteers about harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace environment;
- Assist in the resolution of disputes that are unresolved and are impacting on the efficiency of CFA service delivery;
- Provide an independent oversight top the fairness, respect and integrity of CFA volunteers; and
- Promote and uphold the human rights of CFA volunteers.

The concept of a *Volunteer Ombudsman* is supported by VFBV and notwithstanding agreement to the above issues, the full extent, scope and function of this role needs further examination.

⁶³ Ibid. pp.214-217

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.217

The key attributes of the individuals that may fulfil this role must include an extensive volunteering background (preferably within the emergency services environment) coupled with a thorough understanding and appreciation of human resource management, leadership, advocacy, conciliation/mediation, investigative techniques and an overriding ability to be impartial and independent.

Notwithstanding the requirement to review the current '*legislative driven*' disciplinary and human resource management processes to a more contemporary arrangement, also identified within the *Jones Report*⁶⁵, there is a need to ensure the culture, processes and personal attributes of the individuals charged with the responsibility to manage volunteers includes the necessary skills and experience to adequately discharge these responsibilities within a volunteer friendly environment which encourages, maintains and strengthens the capacity of volunteerism across the sector. This requires a significant shift and underpinning training and education from what currently occurs as evidenced through the feedback provided by volunteers to the *Jones Report*⁶⁶.

13. AUDIT AND REVIEW

The concept of the need to ensure an adequate independent third party audit function exists across the sector has previously been submitted by volunteers.⁶⁷ Green Paper also rightfully raises the question of clarifying accountability for the independent audit and review functions across the sector. VFBV would support this being a future role of the OESC but suggest a change in title to *Emergency Management Inspectorate* to better reflect the role and also to avoid the current and ongoing confusion regarding the title and roles of the Fire Services Commissioner and Emergency Services Commissioner.

The proposals for the establishment of the *Emergency Management Inspectorate* are that the role of this body would not only audit standards as set by the newly reshaped Fire & Rescue Commissioner (to take in all natural hazards) but also actively review major incidents that do not necessitate the establishment of a separate judicial inquiry. This proposed approach also addresses Option 27 outlined within the Green Paper.⁶⁸ It is therefore necessary that the Inspectorate requires specific knowledge, expertise and skills that currently do not exist in other oversight bodies and it would be inefficient to try and build these skills into another body. It is anticipated that the audit and review roles of the Inspectorate would occur on a structured and 'own motion' basis. This would allow a rolling audit program against the standards whilst also providing a mechanism for the Inspectorate to respond to additional audits/reviews as required or at the request of the Fire & Rescue Commissioner or others.

The final scope of this oversight role is a matter for Government but VFBV believe it should encompass all aspects and agencies associated with public safety through the PPRR continuum,

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.218

⁶⁶ Hon. David Jones AM *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority*, July 2011

⁶⁷ VFBV Submission to 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission, 25 May 2010, p.6

⁶⁸ Green Paper – *Towards a More Resilient and Safer Victoria* 2011, p.39,50

including the auditing of community centred emergency management plans. This approach also addresses Option 26 outlined within the Green Paper.⁶⁹

Volunteers have previously expressed an interest in the establishment of an '*independent umpire*' to investigate issues and resolve disputes when established processes require independent direction, this function could be independent or could be a part of an *Emergency Management Inspectorate*.

The further examination and establishment of these functions obviously requires careful consideration and active input of volunteer representative bodies on behalf of emergency service volunteers.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.38,50

14. CONCLUSION

Victoria's emergency services volunteers have shown significant interest in the change proposals outlined within the Green Paper. Whilst supporting an objective of improving service delivery to the community and enhancing the collective effort of all agencies, attention needs to be given to ensuring the people delivering the services (volunteers and the paid staff who work with and in support of them) are not fatigued through the level and pace of change which has and is currently occurring.

Moreover, volunteers have expressed a concern that volunteer availability and the willingness of employers to release volunteers to undertake broader roles, particularly those which are not time critical/life threatening, needs to be clearly factored into future thinking around these proposals.

There is a general appetite for an increased and broader role in an all-hazards/all-agency setting at the local level, including fire prevention (regardless of any new arrangements volunteers believe this should be facilitated now). VFBV caution that there is the fine balance between optimally utilising available capacity and tipping the balance beyond a sustainable contribution (i.e. just because the capacity might be apparent today it doesn't necessarily follow that it is wise to use it up. This doesn't mean that services can't be provided by volunteers across a broader range of demand rather it means that it might be necessary to engage additional volunteers rather than stretching the good will of existing. There needs to be careful analysis before binding expectations or irreversible habits are set in train either through a 'capacity driven' process or mandated new arrangements.)

There are mixed views with respect to formalising a shift to all-hazards operating environment but an absolute requirement that any adoption of more/broader roles under all-hazards must be locally driven with any decisions with respect to adopting additional/broader roles being taken by those directly affected at the local level and not a mandated requirement placed on volunteers.

VFBV anticipates there could be specific issues requiring further detailed consideration leading up to the development of the White Paper and remains ready to provide whatever input is required to facilitate volunteer input to matters that might affect them and/or to provide ongoing advice about the deliberations emerging from the Green Paper feedback.

15. APPENDICES

Summary of VFBV response to Green Paper Options

15.1 Green Paper Options Analysis

Issues and challenges	Option	VFBV Position	Comments	Related Section of VFBV Submission
Governance Arrangements	1. Assign responsibility for prevention/mitigation planning to a designated role	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers believe decisions regarding prevention and mitigation must be driven at the local level and incorporated as a key component of a community centred, land/agency tenure blind and all hazards planning framework ▪ There should be a single agency or position to be responsible for fire prevention planning across the whole landscape. This agency or position should be impartial and independent from any organisation or individual who owns or manages land. ▪ The protection of life must drive fire prevention and response across land tenure and this should be an explicit obligation governing all fire and emergency service planning, preparation and response ▪ Responsibility for the prevention and mitigation of risks must remain with the land owner/occupier with direction and oversight provided through the planning framework outlined above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
	2. Rationalise emergency management committees so that only three planning committees report to VEMC (or its successor) and give sub-committee clearer accountability and reporting lines	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers want a reduction in the level and layers of bureaucracy that currently operates within the sector ▪ VFBV suggest consideration should be given to the establishment of a specific department responsible for public safety (i.e. to undertake those departmental activities currently undertaken within Department of Justice relating to Police, Fire and Emergency Services) as an option to achieving a reduction in bureaucracy and provide a greater focus and accountability for public safety and the streamlining of structures and decision making (including empowerment to the local level) this should be considered ▪ Volunteers must be included in any committee structure that is making decisions that affect them or volunteerism in general ▪ The Chief Officers of each agency under the direction and leadership of the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor) form an <i>operational council</i> within the new Department to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪

			determine operational standards, priorities and plans that inform agency activities and the delivery of any future shared services and/or central procurement arrangement	
	3. Establish a single emergency services board to oversee all ESO's that reports to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers recognise that there needs to be a stronger arrangement in place to ensure inter-agency coordination, cooperation, interoperability and common purpose and that there is a place an overarching body or position to drive organisational reform amongst the fire agencies ▪ Volunteers do not believe this is necessarily another 'Board' and the objectives may be achieved by other means such as the establishment of a Ministerial coordinating or advisory committee or a new dedicated department focussed on public safety ▪ The introduction of any revised arrangements must maintain the individual agencies independence, reporting relationship with the Minister and refocus individual boards on agency specific governance and compliance regimes ▪ Neither agency boards or any new governance arrangements should have an operational role ▪ The focus of any overarching structure or position must be to enhance and drive inter-operability, standardisation, coordination, oversight, reporting, policy direction and procedural matters from a whole of sector (cross agency) perspective that makes it easy for and empowers volunteers to get the best combined effort from existing resources ▪ Volunteer skills set must be included within the composition of any overarching structure, supporting Ministerial Council or other sub-structures ▪ Clarity around the division of accountability and roles of each part of the overall structure is critical to achieving the necessary reforms ▪ Any new arrangements must avoid creating a remoteness from or between the decision makers and service delivery operatives 	▪
	4. Establish an umbrella body for all ESO's	Not Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers do not believe the establishment of an '<i>umbrella body</i>' in addition to those arrangements outlined above is 	▪

			<p>necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The desire to achieve a more collaborative and joined-up approach across the sector can be achieved another way without imposing an umbrella arrangement which in effect adds ‘another layer’ to the arrangements ▪ The provision of shared services to ‘support’ the agencies can be facilitated without the establishment of an ‘umbrella body’ ▪ Any form of shared services and/or central procurement should be undertaken in accordance with the standards, priorities and plans promulgated by the agency Chief Officers under the direction and leadership of the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor) in the form of the <i>operational council</i> outlined above ▪ If this position is not accepted and an ‘umbrella body’ was to be implemented, volunteers do not support this body having any operational functions as proposed as an option within the Green Paper ▪ The creation of a dedicated public safety department may be a better option to accommodate the desire for improved governance, coordination and shared services support arrangements 	
	5. Assign responsibility for relief and recovery to a specific Ministerial portfolio, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services portfolio	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistent with the principles of single line of control for emergencies this proposal seems to make sense ▪ Given the involvement and role of volunteers within the relief and recovery phase, it is important that volunteers are included in any committee structure that is making decisions that affect them or volunteerism in general 	▪
State-wide capacity to deal with large-scale events	6. Eliminate specific coordination roles from Victoria’s emergency management arrangements, making coordination the responsibility of the relevant control agency	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of overarching coordination functions and placing this responsibility back within individual agencies appears consistent with the introduction of a single line of control through the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor) ▪ Of vital importance to volunteers is whatever arrangements exist, locally based incident controllers are empowered to make relevant decisions and acquire the necessary support to combat an incident without unnecessary delay or layers of 	▪

			bureaucracy	
	7. Extend the remit of the Fire Services Commissioner to encompass response to all major natural hazards	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will assist standardisation, inter-operability and collaboration between agencies operating within the all-hazards environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	8. Include an operations function in an umbrella body led by a Chief Operations Officer, who would assume the role of State Controller for all major emergencies	Not Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This function should continue to occur through the Fire Services Commissioner (or its successor) for the sector and agency Chief Officers for individual agency command and day-to-day control activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	9. Introduce a graded scale of emergency declaration	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional structure around emergency warnings is supported by volunteers but any change must be preceded by increased public education and the introduction of a system that facilitates warnings being issued by the incident controller without the need for layers of approval 	
	10. Introduce common training and exercising programs for large-scale and complex emergency events across all emergency services and emergency management agencies, including local government	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of common training must facilitate volunteer participation, be scalable and not simply focus on ‘major incidents’ but cater for agencies operating in a more collaborative manner across the all-hazards operating environment Needs to be carefully planned and supported by proactive effort to build, encourage and utilise volunteer capacity not only in the roles subject to training but also in instructional roles of 	
	11. Develop a standard model for large-scale relief, recovery and reconstruction	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers recognise the importance of relief, recovery and reconstruction and as community members, in addition to any incident management roles, support any identified improvement to these arrangements 	
Service delivery performance	12. Review legislation and policy frameworks to ensure that the prescribed roles and responsibilities of Victorian Government agencies with emergency	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any expectations and roles of agencies must be commensurate with their ‘actual’ capacity and expectations Of vital importance to volunteers is that any changes to legislation and arrangements that involve volunteers and/or volunteerism in general must include volunteers in the decision making process, continue to empower volunteers 	

	management roles reflect reality, capacity and expectations		<p>who are undertaking roles and also provide the same protections that currently exist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where decisions are being taken on potential broadening of roles, this must occur on an ‘capacity driven’ basis having regard for the decision making considerations outlined within this submission 	
	13. Undertake a review of the current legislation to determine if consolidating all emergency management related legislation and ESO’s under the one Act would reduce ‘silos’ and streamline arrangements	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any modernised or future consolidated legislation must include and maintain the existing recognition of volunteers and the charter and agency obligation to encourage, maintain and strengthen volunteer capacity as currently outlined within the CFA Act but should be broadened to encapsulate all emergency service volunteers Any modernisation or standardisation process needs to ensure volunteers and brigades retain the current legislative powers and protections they currently have and need to perform their roles (both within a fire and potentially broader all-hazards operating environment) Any new consolidated single act of parliament must retain local community ownership and individual agencies identity and recognise their unique and proud history Legislative provisions (both powers and protections) must be delegated to the lowest possible level in order to empower volunteers to perform their roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	14. Introduce a central procurement program to coordinate equipment and services purchases by ESO’s across Victoria	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers support the priority to implement a common operating platform and this may be facilitated through a more centralised procurement process Volunteers are generally supportive of any efficiency that can be achieved through the introduction of central procurement programs but this should not extend to a mandatory requirement to procure the same equipment across the sector as a ‘default position’ as part of this program. Agencies still need the autonomy to procure different equipment for their different operating environments. Any central program must support the decisions and decision making processes of the agencies and their Chief Officer. Obviously where the agency Chief Officer, in consultation with 	

			<p>the other Chief Officers and Fire Services Commissioner (or derivative thereof) determine common standards/equipment, after involvement and consultation with volunteers on issues that affect them or volunteerism in general, then this will facilitate common procurement but should not happen in reverse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers need to be involved in any decisions that affect them or volunteerism in general 	
	15. Where appropriate, co-locate ESO's in the same building	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers support the use of common infrastructure provided it doesn't diminish existing infrastructure available to agencies Collocation of facilities, particularly at the regional and state level (including incident control centres) appears sensible and will facilitate greater cross pollination, collaboration and potential efficiencies between agencies Decisions on collocation of facilities that directly affect volunteers must involve volunteers in the decision making process Volunteers do not support any attempt to collocate brigades/units on the assumption that the existing facilities will suffice, without a proper structured needs analysis and examination, including the extension to facility management models between agencies for the future Volunteers support equity in the provision of facilities for all emergency service workers whether they be paid or volunteer staff Volunteers support the broader use of facilities as a community facility/hub with appropriate arrangements being in place 	
	16. Introduce mechanisms and templates to ensure a common operating picture across government	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is seen as a priority regardless of any other changes that may occur Volunteers believe the implementation of a common operating platform across agencies is the key catalyst to achieving a more joined-up approach across the sector, delivering an all-hazards/all-agency outcome and should be the starting point to achieving these objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	17. Allocate responsibility for	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responsibility for the collation and dissemination of a 	

	the collation and dissemination within Government and emergency services organisations of a common operating picture to a single source		common operating picture to a single source should form part of any revised process and structural arrangements, and can be easily facilitated by the proposal for the establishment of a public safety department outlined within this submission	
	18. Establish common regional boundaries across Victoria for emergency management agencies	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers support the adoption of common regional boundaries to support emergency management coordination and planning. ▪ However, this should not automatically extend to adoption of these boundaries for day-to-day management if these do not support enhanced support for volunteers ▪ The selection of common boundaries should be posited purely on public safety drivers commensurate with risk, with all other government and departmental day-to-day management requirements following behind this selection. 	▪
	19. Replace the current Recovery Coordinator position in DHS with a Recovery Controller position to lead relief and recovery across all levels of government	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is consistent with the single line of control concept applied for operational control and it follows that this concept also extend into the relief and recovery areas as a continuum of emergency management ▪ This will also more easily facilitate the transition from response to recovery being seamless ▪ This will allow the State Controller for operational control (response phase) to collaborate with the Recovery Controller to manage this seamless transition at all levels 	▪
	20. Make relief and recovery the responsibilities of a new umbrella body (see option 4)	Not Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having regard for the lack of support for an ‘umbrella body’ it follows that this option is also not supported and can be achieved by other means under the proposals outlined within this submission ▪ Relief and recovery should not be seen as a shared service arrangement. This is a core service provision that needs to be domiciled consistent with the new Ministerial Portfolio arrangements but not part of an umbrella body as proposed in option 4 	▪
	21. Establish permanently-	Support-in-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers are not in a position to provide a detailed position 	

	staffed dedicated relief and recovery unit within government	principle	<p>on the appropriate resourcing of this unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ However, volunteers are strongly of the view that whoever has a role within emergency management should be adequately resourced to fulfil these obligations, and this capability/capacity question should be a pre-cursor in the decision making process ‘prior’ to them being allocated a role. ▪ If an agency or position cannot demonstrate they have the capability and capacity to fulfil their roles and responsibilities then they should be reviewed and allocated to someone else who can adequately resource and fulfil them. ▪ This capability and capacity assessment should be a rolling and dynamic audit process that is undertaken by the proposed new Emergency Management Inspectorate across all agencies/positions within emergency and crisis management 	
	22. Review and update legislation and staffing models to make emergency management arrangements more in line within municipal councils’ capacities	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council’s capability and capacity is yet another local consideration that should form a key part of a new community centred, land/agency tenure blind and all hazards emergency management planning framework ▪ The same principles apply to this issue as outlined in the response to option 21 above 	▪
	23. Enact legislation for the Victorian Government to step in and support municipal councils where they do not have capacity to meet their emergency management responsibilities	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The same principles apply to this issue as outlined in the response to option 21 above ▪ In circumstances eventuate that require the Victorian Government to step-in and support municipal councils then this appears to be an appropriate action ▪ However the combination of a revised planning regime which involves municipal councils as a key player - like any other agency - and has regard for their capacity and capability at the time of determining their level of involvement/responsibility and the conduct of an appropriate rolling audit regime should prevent this from occurring without forward knowledge 	▪
	24. Undertake planning at sub-regional level where municipal councils do not have the capacity to	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is consistent with the proposal to introduce a more structured community centred emergency management planning framework and will provide support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Landscape based planning that spans individual local 	▪

	maintain appropriate emergency planning		government areas ○ Smaller councils	
	25. Give greater statutory independence to the office of ESC through the establishment of its own legislation	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether or not the proposed new role and functions requires separate legislation is a matter for Government 	▪
	26. Give the ESC authority to review municipal level planning	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is consistent with the revised role as the Emergency Management Inspectorate to perform independent audit and review activities across all aspects of the sector 	▪
	27. Establish a mechanism for reviewing emergency events that are not routine, but do not warrant independent judicial inquiries	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is a further but consistent function for the proposed Emergency Management Inspectorate 	▪
Government working with communities to build resilience	28. Align ESO's priorities and funding with an assessment of risk, including consideration of potential consequences	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This approach must be global across the sector having regard for a whole-of-government capability model, reducing duplication and making better use of the collective resources of the sector rather than individual agency specific consideration ▪ Determination of funding and resources should not be strictly assessed against risk to the detriment of an agencies obligation to encourage, maintain and strengthen volunteer capacity 	▪
	29. Update terminology in legislation and governance arrangements with a greater focus on disaster resilience	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers support the focus on building community resilience as a core principle but believe any changed 'branding' must reflect a broader culture change program to change community behaviours and not seen as the sole panacea for this but one part of a broader strategy 	▪
	30. Adopt the NZ model of community information where the government delivers realistic messages about the limits of assistance available and the likely period of time	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteers do not have sufficient knowledge of the NZ model to specifically support this proposal but do support any initiative to provide the community with additional and timely information in order for them to make informed decisions and be active participants in the emergency management arrangements 	▪

	that most individuals will need to be self-reliant during an emergency			
	31. Publish a Victorian risk register to encourage people to think about their vulnerabilities, consider the risks they face and whether they need to take steps to prepare themselves to deal with potential consequences of an emergency	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The risk register should be the compilation of risks identified as part of the new community centred, tenure blind and all hazards emergency management planning framework driven from the local level up ▪ This needs to be appropriately resourced and support local participation and should not be administered and/or undertaken by systems and persons remote to and not known to local communities 	▪
	32. Consider new ways of building community resilience that would see communities drive their own priorities and make connections with governments, businesses and the not-for-profit sector	Support-in-principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must be integrated and if done right will be an automatic outcome of a new community centred, tenure blind and all hazards emergency management planning framework 	▪

16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VFBV Board would like to acknowledge the significant effort made by State and District Delegates and the staff support team to inform volunteers across the State about the Green Paper proposals and facilitate their active input to informing the development of our advice to Government via this submission.

CFA volunteers, Brigades, Groups and District Councils and the many volunteers from other agencies who took the time to analyse the issues and provide valuable feedback via the VFBV processes are to be congratulated. The level of volunteer interest and active participation, having regard for the complexity of the issue and tight timeframes for feedback, is reflective of the ongoing commitment and dedication of emergency service volunteers to supporting the Victorian community. It also a demonstration of the value VFBV (through our members) brings to supporting and representing volunteers from across the State.