



UNITED
FIRE
FIGHTERS
UNION
QUEENSLAND

Friday 24 June 2016

The Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Research Director

Re: Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

I refer to the above bill and the offer by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the LACSC) of the Queensland Parliament to the United Firefighters' Union of Australia, Union of Employees, Queensland (the UFUQ) to provide a submission to inform the LACSC in its consideration of the bill.

I am pleased to be able to attach a submission regarding the bill to the LACSC on behalf of all UFUQ members in Queensland.

Please do not hesitate to contact industrial officer [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] or via telephone on [REDACTED] should you seek any further information with regard to the bill or our submission.

Regards

John Oliver
State Secretary

United Firefighters' Union of Australia, Union of Employees, Queensland

**Public Safety Business Agency and
Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**

SUBMISSION

24 June 2016

Contact:

**John Oliver
State Secretary**



1. Request to publish this submission

The UFUQ requests permission from the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the committee) to publish this submission, particularly for the information of our members, interstate firefighter unions, and Queensland unions affiliated with the Queensland Council of Unions (the QCU).

We authorise the publication of this submission by the committee.

2. United Firefighters' Union Australia, Union of Employees Queensland (UFUQ)

The UFUQ is an industrial organisation of employees registered under the *Industrial Relations Act 1999* (the IR Act), providing representation and coverage to urban firefighters (both professional firefighters and auxiliary firefighters) employed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and also to scientific officers and fire communication officers, along with firefighters employed by private providers outside of QFES.

UFUQ members, due to their roles in preventing, suppressing, and assisting in recovery from emergency situations, are among the most highly regarded people in their communities.

The services provided by our firefighter, scientific officer and communication officer members during emergency and other situations across Queensland, and Australia, (and overseas as required), requires them to have an appropriately organised and effective administrative and organisational support structure that allows them to properly focus on providing emergency response capabilities across Queensland.

3. Consultation about the bill

UFUQ is pleased to be able to provide this brief submission about the bill and would request the opportunity to appear before the committee at any scheduled public hearing.

We are satisfied that the timetable for consultation about this bill provides adequate time to consider and provide submissions to the committee.

4. Policy objectives

The explanatory notes to the bill set out the policy objectives, and the UFUQ position is that, in particular '*Recommendation 4*', sets out the principle matters to which this submission relates –

In line with recommendation 1, approve the following services and functions as the responsibility of the respective operational agencies:

- a) Operational functions;*
- b) Strategy;*

- c) *Recruitment;*
- d) *Education and training;*
- e) *Local workplace health and safety;*
- f) *Ethical standards;*
- g) *Media services;*
- h) *Legal services;*
- i) *Right to information;*
- j) *Ministerial services; and*
- k) *Cabinet legislation liaison.*

UFUQ submits that in general, the policy objectives of the bill are sound and in the public interest.

5. History of UFUQ position on the PSBA

Prior to the creation of the Public Service Business Agency (the PSBA), the UFUQ dealt with matters listed in '*Recommendation 4*', as set out at (4), above, through direct consultation and negotiation with the then Department of Community Safety (DCS) and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS).

The UFUQ was frequently involved in dealing with the then QFRS and DCS on all functions listed at '*Recommendation 4*' as set out at (4) above, but it was matters pertaining to items (a, c, d & e) that the UFUQ felt were most impacted by the creation of the PSBA.

When the former Queensland parliament caused the Police and Community Safety Review (the Keelty review) to examine the Queensland Police Service and the DCS, the UFUQ made a submission to that review.

A copy of the UFUQ submission to the Keelty review is attached at 'Attachment A'.

We do not consider the findings of the Keelty review to have in any way taken into consideration any of the content of our submissions.

The resultant Keelty Report was, as is well known, the catalyst for the transparently political manoeuvre to create the PSBA.

Following the rushed and problematic implementation by the previous state government of the PSBA, along with other decisions of the previous state government that had direct negative effects on our members, the UFUQ sought and obtained a guarantee from the Australian Labor Party, in opposition government in Queensland at the time.

The guarantee included that on return to government, the PSBA, along with other significant structural changes made to the then QFRS, such as the reshaping of the entire organisation to form the QFES, would be reviewed with the goal of correcting, reversing or otherwise amending as necessary matters that were negatively impacting on the ability of UFUQ members to safely and effectively perform their roles within QFES.

We have provided a copy of the then opposition government correspondence at 'Attachment B'.

Upon return to government, the ALP followed through on the correspondence and caused a review of the PSBA. The UFUQ made a submission to that review.

We have provided a copy of our submission to the PSBA review at 'Attachment C'.

The PSC review of the PSBA provided a report in November 2015, which included many findings that mirror the UFUQ submissions to the PSBA review, indicating that our position that the PSBA ought never have come into being was correct.

Findings within the report are directly correlated with the long-standing UFUQ position regarding the PSBA, in particular –

- the lack of clarity of the role of the PSBA as identified in 1.3; and
- the identification of the problem with 'fire officers' working in a support agency as identified in 3.1; and
- the poor and uncoordinated approach to implementation of the PSBA as identified in 4.1; and
- implementation of the PSBA occurring during a period of significant downsizing of the then DCS and QFRS by the previous state government, as identified in 4.1; and
- procurement and other administrative decisions not suiting the needs of the operational functions of QFES, as identified in 4.3.3

Specifically, the UFUQ submission to the PSBA review stated at page 1 –

- '*...the (PSBA / QFES) structure complicates the work of the fire service for no objective benefit.*'; and
- '*The...rationale for implementing PSBA...was a policy of outsourcing.*'; and
- '*The added complexity confuses communications and decision making and clouds accountability...*'; and
- '*...decision making for the fire service should be...at agency level.*'

Within our submission to the PSBA Review, we also set out in detail, our position on specific functions of the PSBA that we considered ought to be returned to QFES, specifically –

- Recruitment and Selection, and Training (see pages 1, 2 and 3); and
- Equipment and Procurement (see pages 3 and 4); and

Our submissions to the PSBA Review concluded (at page 4) with the statement –

"The implementation of PSBA was based upon policy objectives which are no longer relevant.

The practical result has been unnecessary and remote layers of bureaucracy for no net benefit.

UFUQ believes that PSBA should not be retained..."

6. UFUQ support for the bill

Our position remains as stated in our concluding submission to the PSBA Review and we

**Submission by the UFUQ to the LACSC on the
'Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016'**

are now pleased to be making this submission to the LACSC on the return of the functions of the PSBA as listed at '*Recommendation 4*' as set out at (4) above to QFES.

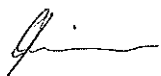
We agree with the return of these functions to QFES.

We also support the remainder of the findings of the PSBA Review Report, and we further provide our support to the bill in its current state being adopted by the parliament.

7. Verbal submissions to the LACSC

UFUQ thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on this Bill and looks forward to the opportunity to provide verbal submissions as required.

If the LACSC seeks verbal submissions from the UFUQ, we can provide specific examples of negative impacts on our members that will support our position that the functions within '*Recommendation 4*' at (4) above ought to be returned to QFES and that the contents of the bill ought to be adopted by the parliament, if that would assist the committee.



**John Oliver
State Secretary**

United Firefighters' Union Australia, Union of Employees, Queensland

24 June 2016

Attachment A

UFUQ submission to the Keelty review

www.ufuq.com.au

CODE 2



THE OFFICIAL
NEWSLETTER OF THE
UNITED FIREFIGHTERS
UNION OF AUSTRALIA,
UNION OF EMPLOYEES,
QUEENSLAND.

Volume 27 Number 12

11 March 2013

Keelty Review Submission

As I have previously reported, Mr Mick Keelty, former Australian Federal Police Commissioner is heading up a state government instituted 'Review' into police, corrective and emergency services.

(Refer to Code 2 Volume 26 Number 81 dated 29/11/2012 and Code 2 Volume 27 Number 6 dated 8/2/2013 for example).

Your union has provided a written submission to the Keelty review.

Please see the UFUQ submission attached.

We anticipate that Mr Keelty will release an interim report so we anticipate providing further comment after having considered the interim report and any recommendations.

John Oliver
State Secretary



United Firefighters Union of Australia

Union of Employees Queensland

Police and Emergency Services Review Submission by the United Firefighters Union of
Australia

3/1/2013

Police and Emergency Services Review Submission

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Introduction

1. The United Firefighters' Union of Australia Queensland (hereafter, UFUQ or the Union) is the representative body for career and auxiliary firefighters in Queensland and represents the vast majority of career and part time firefighters as well as scientific officers and communication officers. We are a small union, but a highly atypical one, where our members are subject to intense training, and their role requires high levels of discipline, tight team work, and a formal command process necessary to respond to emergency events.¹ A firefighters' role is a combination of the repetitive and routine, and the highly unpredictable and dangerous.
2. While the UFUQ provides industrial representation to our members in common with other unions, due to the unique nature of the work performed by our members, such representation extends further than the usual industrial relations concerns of wages and working conditions. The Union is acutely concerned with staffing levels, safety equipment and training, not just on behalf of our members, but also on behalf of the general public.
3. Collectively, the Union and our members have an unparalleled insight into the nature of emergency events in Queensland. Well in excess of 95% of career firefighters and a significant proportion of auxiliary firefighters employed by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) are members of the UFUQ. This means that the UFUQ has a very substantial accumulation of first-hand experience of not only fighting fires but also all aspects of technical rescue, including swift water rescues, but also significant experience in safety requirements and organisation of firefighting and rescue in Australia.
4. Additional to being able to draw on the resources of our members and our history in responding to this review, the Queensland Union is affiliated to the United Firefighters Union of Australia and through that body to the international organisations of firefighters. These national and international networks give us access to a broad depth of knowledge on the industrial and safety environment in which firefighters and emergency workers have to operate.

¹ (Bowden, 2008)

5. It is the Union's experience over many decades of operation that the industrial and safety interests of career and auxiliary firefighters overlap to a high degree. Similarly, the safety interests of firefighters and the community as a whole are unified. Our ability to respond to the needs of the public depends on the operational ability and safety of our members.
6. The UFUQ however does acknowledge that the successful response to a fire and other emergencies relies on an effective blend of personnel, resources and processes,² and we applaud any attempt by the government to genuinely improve operational response. Furthermore, it is the UFUQ's opinion that operational response in Queensland *can* be improved.
7. At this stage, the UFUQ has responded *only* to the first three terms of reference of the Review, on the alignment of the portfolio priorities with those of the Queensland Government, the efficacy of current operational structures, and the efficiency and effectiveness of capital infrastructure procurement and associated resourcing.
8. The UFUQ anticipates that it will seek to respond to the interim Police and Emergency Services Review upon its release. We have meanwhile read the submission of the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland (RFABQ) to the recently released Malone Review, and could find nothing in the submission which we believe objectively supports the rural service being severed from the rest of the state fire and rescue service. The Union's view is that the services ought to remain integrated.

²(Teague, McLeod, & Pascoe, 2010)

TOR: The alignment of the portfolio priorities with those of the Qld Government

1. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) is fundamental to preservation of public and private infrastructure of Queensland, and thus we warmly support the Queensland government's stated desire to improve access to emergency services³. As well as firefighting, QFRS plays a central role in non-fire rescues (for example, vehicular accident rescue, swift water rescue, and confined space rescue), and community education programs.⁴ The Queensland Government portfolio priorities include "building infrastructure that makes a difference to both our economy and our lives". The Union agrees that building infrastructure to meet population requirements is essential in servicing the needs of the population, and that rapid increases in the Queensland population have placed additional strain on emergency services. Services on the periphery of urban centres are not adequately resourced to enable response times that the Union feels represent world's best practice, or indeed, the best interests of the Queensland population. Our members are required to deal with the risks and consequences when there is a shortfall between resources and the challenge of emergency events.

2. In the last 25 years the population of Queensland has not just increased been transformed. While from 1984 to 2004 the population of Queensland grew by 1,358,100 people with an average annual increase of 2.13 per cent—exceeding thereby the growth rate of all other states and territories, and almost doubling that of the national increase⁵—this growth has been asymmetrical. While the Union supports the government's plan to "build better roads, social infrastructure, and deliver floodplain security to regional communities in resource areas"⁶, the government needs to acknowledge that the pressures posed by extreme events are going to fall disproportionately in relatively highly populated areas.

³ (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2012) "We will revitalise front-line services by delivering better access to emergency and specialist health care for Queensland families"

⁴ (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2012)

⁵ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004)

⁶ (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2012)

3. Urban centres have grown, particularly in the outer suburbs, at the expense of rural growth. This growth, in particular the growth in the tourist centres of the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, while strategically aligned with the interests of the current and previous governments, has not been aligned with a satisfactory response in terms of the infrastructure and staffing of emergency response. The government's policy priorities include a doubling of tourist expenditure in Queensland by 2020, a goal that will, hopefully, see a further strengthening of both rural and coastal tourist attractions, however, if this growth in expenditure (and tourists) is not matched by at least a commensurate increase in resourcing of emergency response operations, then this growth will literally spell disaster for individuals and the industry itself. Scholars working in the field of public perception of risk have repeatedly identified that risk is disproportionately impacted by out-of-the-ordinary disasters, rather than regular, small-scale events, independent of sensationalised media reporting⁷. Attempts to increase the appeal of Queensland as a tourist destination is threatened by inadequate response to catastrophic events.
4. The Gold-Coast/Tweed region, for example has been growing at an annual rate of 3.56 per cent and the Sunshine Coast area is now growing at a rate of 3.59 per cent⁸. Beyond sheer population growth, these new arrivals are often individuals less accustomed to uniquely Queensland conditions, including torrential rain and driving conditions. In rural areas, auxiliary firefighter numbers tend to be sensitive to year-by-year fluctuations in fire conditions and emergencies, while in urban areas, numbers are dependent on government funding and priorities. Taking a longer term view, in Queensland there has been a steady increase in permanent firefighter and emergency services worker numbers, however, these increases have not kept pace with the general population increases in the state⁹.
5. While it is a stated priority of the government to ensure "better value for taxpayers' money"¹⁰ the UFUQ is not convinced that cost cutting represents value for money for taxpayers, carrying with it significant operational and organisational risk. Cost cutting is one means often employed to create better value for stakeholders.

⁷ (Eiser, 2004)

⁸ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004)

⁹ (Franken, 2012)

¹⁰ (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2012)

6. UFUQ does not concede that cost cutting of any kind within QFRS can be achieved while simultaneously ensuring better value for taxpayers.
7. It is not unlikely that employee numbers will be reduced in an attempt to achieve this goal, in particular, cuts to senior and middle management resulting in a flatter management structure. A flatter management structure is fraught with risk, with the potential to limit career advancement and hence decrease employee morale.
8. Fire services throughout Australia have different training structures for career firefighters. While there is a national qualification and competency framework that all state bodies conform with, the application of that framework to specific ranks within the fire service varies. The QFRS is divided into seven regions, with Regional Assistant Commissioners holding overall operational and financial responsibility for their region. Each region is divided into a number of geographical areas each headed up by an Area Director, who is responsible for the operational and financial management of the fire stations in that area. These regions and areas vary in size and frequency of emergencies, and the government may well be considering examining optimal size and structures in pursuit of savings, and introducing a flatter management matrix. The UFUQ opposes such a move.
9. The international scholarly literature on the efficacy of such reforms sounds a warning that needs to be heeded. Firefighters move through the ranks upon completion of service, training and qualifications and meeting required competencies¹¹ Currently, there are limited opportunities for advancement within the QFRS, and a flatter management matrix in the service will further limit opportunity for promotion and career advancement for career firefighters. Advancement currently heavily depends on retirement in senior positions. The government should appreciate the risks inherent in losing its best officers due to lack of opportunity for advancement. Studies from the US and Europe suggest that lack of opportunity for advancement ranks high in the risk of stressors in professions in general¹² and in firefighters in particular. This has implications on staff morale, which in turn impacts on performance variables critical in emergencies. However, importantly, lack of

¹¹ (United Firefighters Union of Australia, 2013)

¹² (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Hughes, 2012; Naude & Rothmann, 2007; Turnage & Spielberger, 1991)

opportunity for advancement has also been identified in studies as one of the leading causes of intention to leave, or voluntary turnover¹³. In Australia, the issue arose repeatedly in a study conducted by LaTrobe University of voluntary fire fighters in the Tasmanian Fire Service. "There was a widespread perception that volunteers were not being given the opportunity for leadership above the level of brigade chief" the report notes,¹⁴ The report suggests that brigades may have trouble recruiting new members, particularly those with the leadership potential essential for the effective operation of emergency response units, in the absence of a career path with adequate opportunities for advancement. Effective leadership has operational implications beyond merely effective response during a crisis, however. There is evidence that leadership practices of senior fire officers also determines and the commitment of more junior staff to the organisation¹⁵

10. Introducing a flatter management structure may also have more direct operational consequences. An issue raised by the Union at the Queensland Flood Inquiry was the difficulty experienced by fire service officers at ground level in convincing more senior officers of the need for the early recall of officers for additional crewing. The early recall of off-duty officers would, the Union feels, have been expedited, had it been possible to place more senior officers, with jurisdiction to recall off-duty officers, on the ground and close to the events at a much earlier stage rather than making decisions from remote locations without proper situational awareness. A reduction in hierarchy in the QRFS may make this recommendation difficult in extreme weather events. A shorter command chain may have theoretical benefits in term of improved communication, but it does not account for the need to have a fully-informed command chain.

¹³ (DiSilverio, 2003; Hughes, 2012; Jo, 2008).

¹⁴ (Birch & McLennan, 2010, p. 11)

¹⁵ (Lowe & Barnes, 2000).

TOR: The efficacy of current operational structures including cross agency coordination and prioritisation of operational, training and corporate service delivery

1. In line with the QFRS, the Union warmly endorses the collaborative relationship its members share with other emergency services groups, particularly the employees of the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Police Service. The nature of the work of our members means that we work closely with police and ambulance officers on a daily basis. Professional police and firefighting bodies have had overlapping roles since their very early antecedents in Ancient Rome¹⁶. However, modern times have seen the two roles gain a very distinct character, each with their own defined skillsets, and in the case of firefighters attending a crisis, a response that requires a high level of infrastructure and equipment. Attempts to integrate or streamline emergency services emergency communication centres, for example, will fail for that reason, as indeed have previous attempts in Queensland to deploy a single emergency communication centre in line with the American model. Fire and rescue emergency communication centre staff would not be able to cope with the additional load of ambulance service calls. The codes and requirements of each system are complex and distinct. For example, ambulance calls are dealt with according to an international coding system, referring to a myriad of medical emergencies of considerable complexity. Similarly, ambulance service call centres could not cope with their responsibilities and additionally respond appropriately to fire calls, by allocating appropriate equipment and staff to emergencies. Ambulance officers are not trained to estimate the scale of a fire, for example, let alone the equipment required to deal with a fire emergency, just as firefighters and our communication centres are not the best people to respond to a caller who is faced with complex medical trauma.
2. It is illustrative, in this regard, to remind ourselves of a particularly pivotal moment in the history of Queensland emergency services. The evening of 1st December 1995 had its typical Queensland elements: wet and slippery conditions on the roads caused by rain following on from a period of intense heat and dry. Conditions on Ipswich Road, west of Brisbane, were treacherous, and a Brisbane-bound articulated vehicle lost control breasting a small hill near Riverview. Despite separate carriageways, the vehicle ploughed into oncoming traffic, killing the driver of a sedan. As they stood, dripping in the rain, emergency service personnel, including police, ambulance

¹⁶The original fire brigades of ancient Rome, the *Vigiles*, were privately owned and operated, with Rome having effectively extortionists running a successful fire fighting racket, which doubled as a police services (Baillie Reynolds, 1966).

officers and firefighters no doubt reflected on the tragic loss of life, however one firefighter, Bruce Barnes had recently been in New Zealand where the government had introduced a road accident awareness program involving the delivery of safe driving techniques to high school students. Barnes' work, in collaboration with Constable Irene Darlington, who had been recently posted to the Redbank Plains High School not far from where the tragic accident occurred, gave rise to the Road Awareness and Accident Prevention (RAAP) program. Barnes went on to win the Australia Day Medallion in 1988, for his work in implementing the idea, and, significantly, the then Emergency Services Minister Neil Roberts noted that 200,000 year 12 students in the state had been through the program.¹⁷ The program was a great example of the willingness of emergency service workers—not just members of our Union—to engage in the process of *prevention of* as well as response to tragedies.

3. It is thus of the utmost concern to the Union that the government has exercised cuts to educational programs such as RAAP, the Fight Fire Fascination, and the Juvenile Arson Offender program. The current state government has withdrawn the QFRS Road Awareness and Accident Prevention program which was delivered by firefighters to over 30,000 high school students annually. In Queensland, young drivers are considered at fault in approximately 75% of car accidents¹⁸. Savings to the government in the case of the Road Awareness and Accident Prevention Program equal \$150,000, which needs to be contrasted with the fact that car accidents cost Australia an estimated \$27 billion dollars annually¹⁹.
4. The internationally recognised Fight Fire Fascination program has also been cut to save an estimated \$120,000. The program which reports a 90% success rate²⁰ in eliminating recidivism (in this case, repeated fire lighting behaviours) is aimed at youths with fire-setting tendencies, who are more likely to become serial arsonists²¹. The program encourages family participation and, similarly to the Juvenile Arson Offender program, considers the social, behavioural and psychological elements of

¹⁷ (Bowden, 2008, pp. 105-106)

¹⁸ (Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2013)

¹⁹ (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2013)

²⁰ (Solomons & Ironside, 2013)

²¹ (Franklin et al., 2002; Murray)

fire lighting²². The consequences of failing to address the source of fires in this manner can be catastrophic. The source of four of the Black Saturday fires in Victoria were found to have been almost certainly the work of arsonists. These fires contributed to the estimated 4.4 billion dollar cost to the Australian people and the multiple loss of life²³. The Keelty review of the Perth Hills bushfires²⁴ acknowledge the role of preventative programs, by recommending that the state Department of Education oversee the provision of bushfire awareness programs in schools in bushfire-prone districts. The UFUQ in that state fully concurred with this recommendation, but, in a response that is particularly apt in the Queensland case, recommended further that the program be made more broadly available. The Union noted that in the Victorian case, one of the key groups impacted by the fire emergencies were visitors and tourists, and that it was important to take a whole-of-community approach to tackling community response to emergencies.

5. While the public response is of course key in managing and mitigating response in an emergency, training of the professionals called upon to deal with these emergencies is equally critical. The final report of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission noted that “invariably” the Incident Management Teams which were “well prepared, staffed by people with the appropriate training and experience, and well-practised”²⁵ produced the best outcomes in terms of managing difficult fires. The finding matches that of more theoretical research into the impact of training on firefighters²⁶. At an applied, fire-station level, the Union is acutely aware of the importance of training—not just in terms of the quantity, but also ensuring that the training delivered is fit-to-purpose.²⁷ This means ensuring that firefighters, for example, are training on equipment that is as closely equivalent to the equipment deployed in the field as possible—something that has not always been the case in the Queensland fire services.

²² (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2009)

²³ (Teague, et al., 2010)

²⁴ (Keelty, 2011)

²⁵ (Teague, et al., 2010, p. 8) To emphasise the point, the Commission also stated “Those IMTs that were poorly prepared or did not have access to fully qualified staff also often had the greatest difficulty managing information flows, which are crucial to the issuing of public warnings and informing firefighters of changing conditions and potential danger. In the light of the evidence, it is plain to the Commission that effective training is essential.”

²⁶ (Thevenaz & Resodihardjo, 2010)

²⁷ (J. Flynn, 2009)

6. The Queensland flood crises have underlined the fact that auxiliary firefighters and volunteer firefighters may or may not receive awareness training, and generally are not trained to the lowest level, that is, Level One, in swift water rescue, with potentially dangerous consequences. Currently all urban firefighters (full time officers) are trained to Level One in swift water rescue. It has been reported that due to a shortage of appropriately-trained personnel, auxiliary and rural officers were performing tasks and undertaking roles beyond their skill level and training. It was reported to the Queensland flood inquiry that in one instance a Regional Operational Communication Centre was staffed by rural officers who most likely were not trained to deal with swift water or flood events.²⁸ Asking untrained officers to respond in circumstances that require specialist knowledge is unconscionable, and likely to eventually lead to a fatality. The instinct of emergency workers, trained or untrained, is to respond to help those in need, however, they may be putting themselves and those in distress at risk if they are inadequately trained. In rural areas and increasingly in highly-populated urban fringe areas of Queensland,²⁹ there is a reliance on volunteer firefighters. The scale of this voluntary effort is substantial. The Productivity Commission reported that in 2010-2011 17,545 full-time-equivalent paid personnel were employed by fire service organizations and 13,229 were paid firefighters³⁰. However an ageing population and economic pressures and other social issues such as education levels, the increasing prevalence of English as a second language and employment requirements are all issues negatively impacting the rate of volunteering in Australia.³¹

7. The focus of the current Inquiry on cross-agency co-ordination touches on an additional aspect of the imperative for co-ordinated training. It is important—

²⁸ (United Firefighters Union of Australia Union of Employees Queensland, 2011)

²⁹ The Samford region has gone from a rural community to a significant urban concentration, but changes in the fire service for the region have not reflected this transformation. Officers from stations that are staffed by full-time staff are often on the scene of fire emergencies of regions such as this *before* the on-call staff of these 'rural' stations are able to arrive. This is a reflection not of the dedication of those staffing the rural stations, but more an illustration of a mismatch between the needs of a community and the current models of response.

³⁰ (United Firefighters Union of Australia, 2013)

³¹ (United Firefighters Union of Australia, 2013) In an increasingly competitive economy, it is understandable that employers are reluctant to release staff for volunteer fire fighting duties, and the conflict between the commercial interests of employers and the community interest of firefighters is not a conflict that is likely to reduce in the current environment.

particularly with emergency workers increasingly being called on to work interstate on crises of national impact—that services are built around standardised models. In order to have a fully interoperable response, the standardisation of training, qualifications, methods of operation and resources is essential. Other professions, and in particular those that provide specific services to the community and public, have qualifications and requirements of practice governed through professional organisations—for example registration boards for nurses and doctors. These organisations play a significant role in a range of functions including governance, setting and monitoring standards, not just for the interests of the majority of their members, but also in the public interest. Similarly, firefighting is a profession which requires significant training, qualifications, skills and experience, as well as unusually high levels of discipline. These variables can make the difference between life and death for both firefighters and the community they protect.

8. Not only the technology of fire fighting is changing, but the science of best practice, and factors such as understanding of meteorological impacts are also evolving. Training afforded to firefighters needs to take these factors into account. Specialist knowledge such as weather forecasting, fire behaviour analysis and familiarity with predictive mapping is essential to ensure optimal response to fire emergencies.

9. The Bushfires Royal Commission of 2009 declared that the fighting of extreme fire events is “highly dependent”³² on cross-agency co-ordination, and we fully acknowledge the value of such integration. An integrated inter-agency response, where firefighters, ambulance and police officers are involved in this process is ideal. The UFU submission to the Black Saturday inquiry in Victoria³³ underlined the Union’s support for community education in general. We believe that any policy approach needs to recognise the underlying principle of shared responsibility. We acknowledge that key actors—not just the various emergency services, but also the state, municipal councils, individuals, household members and the broader community—must accept greater responsibility for bushfire safety in the future and that many of these responsibilities are in fact shared.

³² (Teague, et al., 2010, p. 9)

³³ (Teague, et al., 2010)

10. The QFRS is the lead agency for the rescue service as per the Department of Emergency Services' State Rescue Policy,³⁴ and thus plays a key role in major crises in Queensland—crises that likely to occur with greater frequency as a result of climate change³⁵ However, the Service, and the Union, faces impediments in acting on that responsibility. There is no standard incident management system throughout Australia. This results in a patchwork of protocols in relation to major issues such as equipment, resources and training, and relatively minor idiosyncrasies such as radio incident code calls. This lack of consistency can cause serious consequences when timing is critical. The Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission identified that lack of consistency between even intra-state fire services was a contributing factor in failures during response during the Black Saturday Victorian Bushfires. The issue of call signs may be 'minor', and indeed relatively superficial, but the ability to communicate adequately between fire services was also highlighted in the Commission's findings. These problems are amplified in major emergencies where a national response to a state event is required. The lack of a nationally-coordinated firefighting profession means that firefighters deployed interstate are working alongside firefighters that may be trained to different command and control structures and operations. The effectiveness of firefighting is very much a function of effective team work. A firefighter must be able to rely on the experience and decision-making of the other firefighters at the scene. Simply hoping that interoperability and consistency in practice can be achieved through legislation or other expressions of the desirability of integration is unrealistic.

11. By way of illustration, in the view of the Royal Commission into the Black Saturday disaster, the Commissioner conceded that catastrophic events inevitably place extreme pressure on organisational processes and structures, however, "serious deficiencies" in the upper echelons of leadership resulted in divided responsibilities which in turn hindered effective operational response. While individual shortfalls in response could be corrected, case-by-case, by tinkering with agency relationships, the Commissioner argued, the Black Saturday disaster exposed systematic failings that required systemic

³⁴ (United Firefighters Union of Australia Union of Employees Queensland, 2011)

³⁵ There is an extensive and rapidly-growing literature in this field. See for example Easterling (Easterling et al., 2000). As Field et al (Field et al., 2012) note very recently, extreme weather events are trending upwards at the same time as population increases, disproportionately impacting on the amplitude of the crises.

organisational change. These changes could not, the Commissioner argued, be “overcome simply by doing more of the same, even if it is done better”.³⁶

12. There needs to be a national co-ordination of standards and requirements, accompanied by nationally-integrated training and other practices. There are undoubtedly economic benefits in achieving a national system of skills and qualifications, and asking that emergency services conform to a single professional framework, with the foremost of those economic benefits being the reduction of impact of extreme weather events requiring a national response. The human benefits of a sensible, integrated approach are incalculable.

13. In attending to emergency situations, firefighters are acutely aware of the critical importance of response times. Response times have been something of a political and media football at certain times but they are a rubric with real meaning and consequences in an emergency situation, and deserve focus in this Inquiry. Currently there is no requirement for any service to adhere to any national or international standard of response, although informal and *ad hoc* standards operate. In Europe and the US response times are also highly variable and even vary by region³⁷ Informally, a common standard applied in Queensland is that firefighters should attend to emergencies within 14 minutes of callout, a standard that was established, paradoxically, through a historic anomaly: that is, the 14 minute mark was related to the area in which stations fire levies were extracted. The Union does not think this is an adequate standard, and seeks in all cases to exceed this standard, and believes that resources should be increased to allow this standard to be exceeded. In the US, for example, the National Fire Protection Association recommends that turnout time for fire incidents should take 80 seconds and response time to an incident, by the initial arriving company should be 4 minutes or less³⁸. While this may not always be realistic in the Queensland context, we believe the average response time that the Service is able to achieve with current models is not adequate. In fire incidents, suppression capability is an outcome of how much fire-fighting resources can be deployed in case of fire—including the amount of apparatus, water and personnel

³⁶ (Teague, et al., 2010)

³⁷ (Scandella, 2012)

³⁸ (J. Flynn, 2009; J. D. Flynn, 2009)

available, and a function of the time needed to get those resources, training and strategy.³⁹

14. Crisis management is a practice that by nature requires organisations to prepare for the unforeseeable⁴⁰, and that makes planning in this sector particularly complex and unpredictable. Recent research has identified organisational resilience as a key variable in an organisation's capacity to respond to crisis, and for an organisation such as the QFRS, where its core business is responding to crisis, this concept needs to be acknowledged. One recent study⁴¹ states that organisational resilience indicates the capacity of organisations to make appropriate decisions and take effective actions to ensure long-term efficacy in responding to crisis. It relates to the capacity of an organisation to 'bounce back' in the wake of a crisis⁴² as well as its ability to respond effectively in the midst of a crisis. Resilience is not simply a characteristic that emerges in a crisis. Rose⁴³ notes that there are two types of resilience, one relating to an organisation's ability to cope with routine change, and the other, adaptive resilience, which relates to its ability to respond to, and recover from, crisis events. Resilience is not a characteristic that can be achieved simply through good leadership or effective training. Most researchers in the field identify a number of antecedents and characteristics of a resilient organisation that incorporates by purely organisational characteristics *and* resourcing. According to Kendra and Wachtendorf⁴⁴, for example, resilience can be measured using four 'rs': robustness, resourcefulness, redundancy and rapidity. Bruneau et al⁴⁵ also sees four interrelated dimensions to the notion of resilience - technical, organisational, social and economic. It is naïve to believe that a high performing emergency response organisation can retain the ability to respond optimally without adequate resourcing.

15. In a review of performance measurement in the fire services in a US context, Jennifer Flynn of the National Fire Protection Association noted:

³⁹ NFPA 17.10 A.5.2.1.1

⁴⁰ (Ley *et al.* 2012).

⁴¹ (McDaniels, Chang, Cole, Mikawoz, & Longstaff, 2008)

⁴² (Parsons, 2010)

⁴³ (Rose, 2004)

⁴⁴ (Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2003)

⁴⁵ (Bruneau et al., 2003)

Communities aren't static; they grow and change over time. Population size and characteristics can change. Building types and construction materials can change. A change in department policy (i.e., personnel levels, inspection frequency) can affect performance. The fire department should take all of these issues into consideration and compare its own community's characteristics and department policy over time⁴⁶

These comments could equally apply to the Queensland situation. Queensland has been undergoing rapid change in population, demographics, and, at a background level, climate, that makes predicting resources for emergency response complex. A report prepared by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR)⁴⁷ indicates that there will be a need for a 28 to 40% increase in operational firefighters in Victoria by 2026, but acknowledged such projections may underestimate actual needs, if downward trends in volunteerism experienced in many communities continue. At a federal government level, the Federal Senate is conducting an inquiry into Recent Trends In and Preparedness For Extreme Weather Events, and the implications of the results of that inquiry should be taken into account by the current Inquiry.

TOR: The efficiency and effectiveness of capital infrastructure procurement and associated resourcing including governance, transparency and sustainability

⁴⁶ (J. Flynn, 2009, p. 7)

⁴⁷ (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2013)

1. The QFRS reportedly receives around 68% of its funding through the Fire Levy Scheme which was introduced in 1985. The Fire Levy is collected on behalf of the State Government through a relatively complex mechanism, by local government. The balance of the cost of funding the Service comes from a mix of State and Commonwealth fees and charges, and the QFRS additionally collects revenue through fees and charges for services. These services include but are not limited to building inspections and hazardous material (HAZMAT) responses.⁴⁸ The Queensland Government Budget Strategy and Outlook for 2012-2013 estimates a revenue of approximately \$350 million⁴⁹. While the current system of funding leaves something to be desired in terms of transparency it is an improvement on past practice, where fire systems were funded by a complex combination of state taxes, local government rates and levies placed upon insurance premiums.⁵⁰

2. The Union is however concerned that the Fire Levy has not increased commensurate to the growing role and services offered by QFRS. The former QFS (Queensland Fire Service) were handed the role of rescuing the victims of road accidents by the Acts of 1989 and 1990, whereas in other states, the responsibility had traditionally rested with the police force or ambulance services⁵¹. In addition, the number of swift-water rescues caused by a spate of floods, hazardous material incidents, and confined spaces rescue has placed a significant additional load on the QFRS. In response to these roles, training and education needs have grown. The Union does not believe that the Fire Levy has increased sufficiently to account for this enlarged role. The funding model, in particular issues relating to the distribution of the Fire Levy lacks transparency. There may be inequities in the ratio between levies distributed and services supplied that require reform, but it is difficult for the Union to comment in the absence of clearer information. The decision making process behind distribution of funding to the QFRS is of particular concern to the Union.

⁴⁸ (Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, 2013)

⁴⁹ (Queensland Treasury and Trade, 2013)

⁵⁰ (Franken, 2012)

⁵¹ (Franken, 2012)

Recommendations

1. The Union recognises that changes in climate will have a significant impact on future fire events, and may already be having significant impacts on other emergencies including major floods. Any attempt to streamline services in Queensland needs to take account of the fact that, in combination with significant and asymmetrical increases in population, there are likely to be more significant emergencies for the QFRS to deal with. **The Union recommends that current provision of resources be reviewed to take into account changes in the population distribution and climate risk. The Union encourages a joint review between UFUQ and QFRS of staffing levels in all existing stations and functional areas with a view to optimising the allocation of all resources of QFRS. This review should be based upon current conditions and predicted growth in population, industrial development and the like. Further, the Union proposes regular meetings between UFUQ and QFRS to discuss relative priorities for changes to existing stations' staffing levels, method of operation, appliance types and related matters.**
2. Transient populations attracted by Queensland's tourism campaigns lack local knowledge of local conditions, and are likely to pose an additional strain on already stretched resources in these tourist regions. Queensland boasts a large tourist population both of an interstate, intrastate and international nature, and efforts to adequately educate the public need to take an ongoing and whole-of-community approach. Failure to do so will damage the state's tourist reputation. **The Union recommends that the government increase expenditure in public education campaigns to mitigate risks posed by, and to, these transient populations. Current staffing models do not factor in the transient population.**
3. The government's stated priorities include investing heavily in tourism, which is likely to attract further concentrations of transient populations to the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, as well as regional centres. In addition, population shifts have seen asymmetrical growth of population into regions currently underserved by professional emergency workers ("tree change" and outer suburban centres). **The Union recommends that the state government review reinforcement services in both the coastal strip and urban peripheries.**

4. More particularly, the increased urbanisation of the Queensland population and a shift of population to the periphery of urban centres has changed the distribution of fire risk in Queensland. While there is close and positive co-operation between Rural Fire Services, auxiliary and professional fire services in the state, chain of command during a crisis can be an area of concern. **The Union recommends that a review be undertaken to ensure a clear and single chain of command system be established to ensure a reduction in conflict and an optimisation of response. We believe there a need for an integration of fire services in the state, in particular the Rural Fire Brigade and the QFRS.**

5. Introduction of simplified or reducing management structures in emergency service provisions carries risks of reduced morale and increased staff turnover within the service with operational implications. Additionally, a flatter management structure would reduce the ability to deploy senior officers to crises to assess needs and enact commands that will see appropriate resourcing deployed. **The Union recommends no restructure of the senior management or organisational characteristics of the QFRS. Restructures are likely to reduce opportunities for advancement, and inhibit frontline access of senior management to emergencies.**

6. Attempts to streamline response services need to acknowledge the complementary but distinct nature of professional fire/emergency, ambulance and police operations. Information gathered at first contact from emergency callers is critical in determining appropriate resourcing in response to an emergency. This is as true for ambulance and police operations as it is for fire and other emergency incidents. **The Union recommends that emergency response communication systems retain the current tripartite nature.**

7. Efforts to make savings in public education to mitigate the occurrence of avoidable incidents such as deliberately or accidentally lit fires or car accidents, represent a false economy. These programs generally have demonstrable and provable impacts on the incidence of avoidable emergencies. **The Union recommends the reinstatement of the Road Accident and Awareness Program, the Fight Fire Fascination, and the Juvenile Arson Offender program.**

8. The national fire and emergency response system is subject to idiosyncratic state and regional variation. This results in inefficiencies, duplication, and confusion particularly in responding to crises with an interstate dimension. **The Union recommends efforts are undertaken to improve national integration of standards, practices and training.**

9. Response times needs to be given greater emphasis, and resourcing required to achieve improved response times be carefully considered. Queensland standards fall behind that of other jurisdictions, and current *ad hoc* response time standards lack solid empirical basis. The issue is of particular concern in urban fringe and rural areas. **The Union recommends that response times be thoroughly reviewed, resource allocation required to improve response times be explored, and formal standards of response be introduced.**

10. There have been national moves to establish inter-agency approaches to major crises, in response to incidents in Victoria and WA. **The Union recommends that legislation where necessary be altered to reflect a more integrated approach, in particular moves towards integration of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 1990 and the Disaster Management Act 2003.**

11. The current system of fire levy collection is an improvement on previous practices in the state but suffers from lack of transparency, particularly in relation to distribution of funds collected. As a consequence, there is a possible disjuncture between funds collected and services offered. **The Union recommends an increase in transparency in the fire levy collection and distribution system.**

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Attachment B
Correspondence to UFUQ from ALP

ANNASTACIA PALASZCZUK MP

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

MEMBER FOR INALA

PO Box 15057, City East QLD 4002

reception@opposition.qld.gov.au (07) 3638 6767



12 December 2013

Mr John Oliver
State Secretary
United Firefighters Union of Australia
Ground Floor, 286 Montague Road
West End Qld 4101

Dear Mr Oliver

Restoring Queensland Fire and Rescue Personnel Rights

The Queensland Labor Opposition is concerned about the unfair legislative, and other changes inflicted on fire and rescue personnel, and other public sector employees, by the Newman LNP Government in its first term of office.

The industrial laws have been changed at least six times and Queensland now has the most spiteful and harsh anti-worker laws in the country. These unfair laws directly attack the capacity of firefighters and related employees to get a fair go at work and threaten their future, take-home pay and job security.

The fire and rescue operations have been subjected to the doubtful Keelty Report, which has cut and pasted various ideological cost-cutting ideas from around the world, all of which have ultimately led to failure.

Your members, including fulltime and auxiliary firefighters, have been weathering an onslaught of attacks on employment rights and conditions whilst the current government has given no thought as to how they might be better protected at work.

International research has conclusively proven that the occupational hazards of professional firefighting cause cancer and related illnesses. Yet the response of the Newman Government is to attack Queensland's Workers Compensation scheme so that injured Queensland workers' legal rights are reduced.

The Opposition reject the attacks in the Queensland Parliament by Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services Jack Dempsey and other Newman LNP MP's on frontline firefighters, attacks on their conditions and attacks on the UFUQ in its role defending the interests of frontline firefighters.

We will be working hard for as long as it takes to remove the Newman Government. Your members need fair laws and a decent employer, and to be treated with respect.

On return to government, we commit to the following –

1. Reviewing all changes implemented by the LNP Government arising from the Keelty Report and rectifying negative consequences of this report, including:
 - a. Implementing an organisational structure for Queensland's fire and emergency services, utilising the experience and knowledge of frontline firefighters and the UFUQ.
 - b. Ensuring that the findings of this review, including those relating to staffing arrangements and management structures, are implemented to ensure professional and safe work standards, which see the QFES recognised as a world's best practice fire service.
2. Ensuring fair and reasonable industrial standards are restored and maintained, including:
 - a. Industrial rights for all firefighters and communication officers based on the right of workers to bargain collectively and to be represented by their union.
 - b. We will also ensure that auxiliary firefighters attain and maintain their own award. The Opposition moved amendments in Parliament to try to ensure the auxiliaries achieved their award immediately, however the LNP voted against this.
3. Introducing presumptive legislation into the Queensland Parliament, in consultation with the UFUQ, to reverse the onus of proof for firefighters who contract scheduled diseases in the workplace, in accordance with best practice legislation.

The Queensland Labor Opposition believes fair industrial legislation can be achieved by working together with the firefighters of Queensland to achieve a world's best fire service, which is recognised both nationally and internationally for its expertise.

Yours sincerely



Annastacia Palaszczuk MP
Leader of the Opposition
Member for Inala



Bill Byrne MP
Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Member for Rockhampton

Attachment C

UFUQ submission to the PSBA review



UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA
UNION OF EMPLOYEES QUEENSLAND

7 August 2015

Robert Setter
Commission Chief Executive (Acting)
PSBA Review
Public Service Commission
PO Box 15190,
City East, Brisbane QLD 4002

Dear Mr. Setter,

Re: UFUQ Submission to the review of the Public Safety Business Association.

Please find attached a submission from the United Firefighters Union Australia, Union of Employees Queensland to the Public Service Commission's review of the PBSA.

If you have any queries please contact me on 07 3844 0366 or by email at johnoliver@ufuq.com.au.

Regards,

John Oliver
State Secretary

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UFUQ Submission

The following is a submission from the United Firefighters Union Queensland to the Public Service Commission for its review of the Public Safety Business Association.

Keelty Review

UFUQ is concerned that the "Keelty Review" was a shallow exercise, designed to produce a pre-determined result. The union believes that the recommendations were basically pre-determined policy agendas of the government of the day.

The former government's policy agenda included notions of outsourcing work to the private sector and cost cutting.

The report was also contaminated by irrelevant comments about unrelated industrial matters which had the effect of further diminishing confidence in the report.

For the purposes of this submission, it is relevant to note that the creation of "PSBA" was included in the "Keelty Report".

PSBA

UFUQ does not see any value in continuing with PSBA.

It is our view that the structure complicates the work of the fire service for no objective benefit.

The essential rationale for implementing PSBA in the first place, was a policy of outsourcing.

There are now even more unnecessary layers of communications and decision making than previously. This added complexity confuses communication channels and clouds accountability at all levels of the organisation. Often, the blame for this mismanagement is unfairly placed on lower level employees.

The union believes that the management of matters and decision making for the fire service should be closer to the source at agency level.

In additional consideration of whether PSBA ought to be retained at all, the union has identified a number of particular areas which we believe ought to be returned under the management and control of the fire service as soon as practicable.

Recruitment and selection

UFUQ believe that recruitment and selection of fire service employees should be managed by the fire service.

The Fire Service has had control of its recruitment process for over 100 years.

Since the recruitment and selection processes have relocated to the PSBA, there has emerged a tendency to over-standardise the systems used. Recruitment process and standards that identify key elements of performance required for the basic firefighter role have been removed from the application process. These simple but necessary tests, such as climbing the ladder on an aerial appliance, demonstrate the ability for potential firefighters to deal with working at heights.

The psychometric testing and target group has been set away from team players and tradespeople, and more towards single discipline sporting types such as kayakers, swimmers and triathletes. This is undesirable as fire crews predominately work and train in a team, and respond in a team environment.

These decisions have now placed hundreds of potential but unsuitable applicants in a recruitment pool that is recognised as severely below par.

The public servant approach to developing and operating this process is fundamentally flawed, and comments from the instructors at the academy are very telling.

Training academy

UFUQ believe that all training, education and assessment should be restored to the fire service management and control.

The Queensland School of Fire and Emergency Services Training facilitates a world-class program to ensure that recruit firefighters have the skills and experience to do the job. With a strong focus on occupational preparedness, the program builds practical skills through the use of a live fire campus, technical rescue cells and commercial training facilities. This is designed specifically to create a strong link between operations and training, and to facilitate the smooth entry of recruits into a fast-paced and dangerous workplace.

Under the PSBA, the same office runs both the police academy and the fire academy. Since the two training programs are focussed specifically on occupation-based skills, there is little overlap. For the Fire Academy, all direction on training comes from the QFES, whilst all administrative direction stems from the PSBA.

Essentially, this dual system means that QFES training officers must deal with an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. The PSBA funds their own public servants, as well as the school's running costs, while QFES manages its uniformed staff. This unnecessary overlap results in a practical burden on the organisation, in terms of dealing with separate budgets and management bodies.

It should also be noted that the 2013 Police and Community Safety Review found that the Fire Academy under QFES management was one of the highest performing elements of the organisation. It did not recommend that the education and training departments be moved away from the management of the fire service.

UFUQ's suggestion that the entire school should return to the management of QFES is founded on the basic logic that training of new firefighters should be wholly organised and run by those with the occupational experience to do so.

Finances and budget

UFUQ believes that finances and budgets should be brought back under fire service management and control.

PSBA employees have little to no understanding of QFES, including the industry standards and the relevant awards.

PSBA officers have had issues in understanding and implementing the award rates for meal breaks and Special Flexibility Allowances, and have expressed confusion over the rates of pay for shift workers. UFUQ has also dealt with claims that authorised timesheets have been rejected and sent back for review.

This blatant disregard for the authority of supervising officers has been met with enormous frustration, and a mistrust of PSBA as an office of authority.

UFUQ has also received reports that QFES's relationship with its suppliers has been deteriorating since PSBA took over control of finances. The current system requires orders to be placed through the central agency, and for invoices to be paid at that level.

In some cases, bills for standard orders have not been processed or approved by PSBA officers because the office lacks the technical knowledge to know why equipment is needed, and to sign off accordingly. There are also reports of invoices simply going missing in the course of the approval process, meaning that contractors and suppliers have had to chase up payment.

UFUQ finds the current process to be obstructive and unnecessarily complicated, and asserts that QFES is best placed to manage its own finances.

Equipment and procurement

UFUQ believe that equipment and procurement should be brought back under fire service management and control.

The operating model of QFES requires unique corporate knowledge about the specific needs of the different frontline work groups. Currently, orders are conducted through the PSBA, often by people with no experience in the field and no awareness of specification requirements.

There are several examples where orders that have originated at the service level have been changed by members of the PSBA, meaning that off-specification equipment has been delivered to the stations. In these circumstances, goods must be re-ordered and delivered, resulting in additional expense and delay.

This process also undermines the expertise and experience of employees in these areas, and compromises the operational flexibility within the delegations of regional district commander.

Motor vehicle fleet and workshops

As with most other equipment used by the QFES, the motor vehicles in the fleet are of a specialist and technical design. The maintenance of these trucks has previously been the responsibility of the QFES, whose employees have experience in using the equipment and can easily identify when repairs need to be arranged.

Since 2014, responsibility for the maintenance of the fleet has shifted to PSBA. The management of this section needs to be closer to the source as was previously the case.

Moving this area into PSBA raised potential industrial issues where the relevant employees had been subject to a lengthy arbitration as part of QFES, but were moved into PSBA prior to the arbitration being finalised.

Building and assets

PSBA was also charged with taking control of the QFES's buildings and assets. This structural change seems to do very little other than to frustrate the day-to-day running of the organisation.

This policy betrays the obvious political intention behind the implementation of the PSBA, which was to work toward privatising the QFES. The expressed objective was to increase the 'contestability' of the organisation, by creating more central oversight.

In practice, PSBA operates as a disengaged and uninformed level of unnecessary bureaucracy, frustrating the efficient operation of the QFES.

Summary

The implementation of PSBA was based upon policy objectives which are no longer relevant.

The practical result has been unnecessary and remote layers of bureaucracy for no net benefit.

UFUQ believes that PSBA should not be retained, or in the alternative, that all the above stated functions currently managed by PSBA be returned to the control of the QFES.