



United Firefighters Union of South Australia Inc (UFUSA) SUPPLEMENTARY Submission to the Independent Review into South Australia's 2019/2020 Bushfire Season

141. The following submission is further and in addition to the written submission filed by the UFUSA on 21 April 2020 (**the written submission**) and oral submissions made on 27 April 2020 (**the oral submissions**) to the Independent Review into South Australia's 2019/2020 Bushfire Season (**the Independent Review**).

CFS and MFS

142. Our members overwhelmingly remarked on the good working relationship they enjoyed with and the professionalism of their fellow CFS firefighters and officers during the 2019-20 bushfire season.¹

143. In the 2019-20 bushfire season MFS and CFS crews were deployed in strike teams to the fireground where they worked alongside each other,² they co-crewed appliances and incident management units,³ and they undertook joint bushfire training.⁴

144. In addition to MFS embedding a liaison officer in the State IMT,⁵ the CFS also successfully embedded a liaison officer in the MFS Communications Centre (**Comcen**) during the Cudlee Creek bushfires.

145. The CFS liaison officer was able to enhance the quality and timeliness of information flow to MFS Comcen, including assisting Comcen to respond to the CFS request for approximately 12 hours of lost call data following the switching off a pager in CFS Region One Headquarters in Mt Barker during the Cudlee Creek bushfires.

146. There remains room for improved coordination between MFS and CFS. For example, during the Cudlee Creek fire the CFS requested all MFS strike teams be withdrawn from the fireground on the afternoon of 21 December despite our members reporting they were fighting active fires and were not replaced by CFS crews.

147. Improved off-road capability of MFS appliances,⁶ enhanced communications technology⁷ and increased training in fighting bushfires⁸ will also ensure that the MFS can continue to meet CFS requests for their assistance in responding to bushfires.

¹ See, further, paragraph 29 of UFUSA written submission.

² See, further, paragraph 26 of UFUSA written submission.

³ See, further, paragraphs 23-4, 27, 121 & 131 of UFUSA written submission.

⁴ See, further, paragraph 117 of UFUSA written submission.

⁵ See, further, paragraphs 80-2 of UFUSA written submission.

⁶ See, further, paragraphs 56-8 of UFUSA written submission.

⁷ See, further, paragraphs 72-9 of UFUSA written submission.

⁸ See, further, paragraphs 98-135 of UFUSA written submission.

Fatigue

148. Although industrial instruments limit inter-state deployments to 12 hours per day and require a 36 hour “stand-down” period following deployment,⁹ no other guidance is provided to members as to how to manage fatigue on deployment.
149. Our members are generally required to self-manage fatigue whilst on deployment, including having to make their own arrangements for food and water on the fire ground.¹⁰
150. For example, during the course of the 2019-20 bushfire season many members were on shift for 12 hours and longer without food or water provided to them, in temperatures greater than 45° C, and without functioning air-conditioning to provide respite from extreme heat.
151. The UFUSA reiterates that the MFS must better plan for and implement better logistical support during deployments, including, eg, by provision of ration packs, and allowing for the installation and/or repairs to appliance air-conditioning units.
152. As a matter of priority the MFS must develop a fatigue management policy that deals with deployments to bushfires and other fires to ensure the health and safety of our members.

Deployment planning and record keeping

153. Although on the whole deployments both inter- and intra-state ran smoothly, there is room for improved planning and record keeping which would enhance efficiencies, personnel health and safety and welfare.
154. Ahead of multi-day deployments, members reported uncertainty about deployment arrangements, including uncertainty about departure/arrival dates and times, as well as what, if any, equipment they were required to bring.
155. On the fireground, members reported confusion about who was in command and about which crew were in which strike team, as well as uncertainty about the location of strike teams and whether strike teams were even on the fire ground.
156. In addition to training, good communication and planning is essential to ensure our members are deployed as safely, strategically and efficiently as possible, and enhance member welfare.
157. MFS must develop, in consultation with UFUSA members and the CFS, a deployment policy to ensure improved communication and planning with members and the CFS in

⁹ See SAMFS Enterprise Agreement 2017, cl 24.12.2.

¹⁰ See, further, paragraphs 92-7 of UFUSA written submission.

the event of bushfires, and resources made available to ensure the policies are implemented.

158. MFS must also invest in automatic vehicle location (AVL) technology as well as record-keeping to ensure knowledge of the location of crews on the fire ground, and the health, safety and welfare of our members.

SAFECOM

159. At the 27 April 2020 hearing Mr Keelty enquired as to the “value add” of the South Australia Fire and Emergency Commission (**SAFECOM**).
160. The UFUSA reiterates its oral submission that SAFECOM is a “needless bureaucracy” that adds limited value to the administration and management of fire services in South Australia, particularly in respect of bushfires.
161. SAFECOM had no involvement in the deployments during the 2019-20 bushfire season, with deployment arrangements managed through the agencies responsible for administration and management of fire response under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*, the MFS and CFS.
162. In his September 2019 document titled Analysis of South Australia's Fire and Emergency Services (**the report**), the Chief Executive of SAFECOM sets out a number of findings and recommendations that point toward SAFECOM taking an enlarged role in the administration and management of the sector.
163. The UFUSA has significant concerns with Mr Lane’s findings and recommendations, as well as other concerns about governance of SAFECOM, which we set out in the UFUSA response to the report dated 12 June 2020, which will be forwarded to you for your consideration as part of the Independent Review.

22 June 2020