

Appendix F National emergency service arrangements: an overview

For reference and to place the ACT in context with other jurisdictions, the Inquiry reviewed state and territory emergency service arrangements across Australia. Information was obtained from agency websites and, while efforts were made to confirm accuracy, the Inquiry cannot be held responsible for the correctness of the information provided.

Introduction

The Constitution of Australia states that responsibility for emergency responses lies with each of the states and territories. This includes preparedness for and mitigation of potential emergencies, as well as response and recovery action. The philosophy of emergency management in Australia has been to ensure an immediate response to emergencies. Although this objective is still paramount, greater emphasis is now being placed on preventive action through risk management strategies and community education programs.

The Commonwealth, through Emergency Management Australia, provides assistance to the states and territories to develop their emergency management capabilities. EMA promotes a national approach to emergency management and coordinates Commonwealth physical assistance to states and territories during major disasters. EMA is located within the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

While the administrative arrangements for the management of and response to wildfires and other emergencies differ in each jurisdiction, there is an increased emphasis on inter-agency operational coordination and administrative efficiencies across all emergency service agencies. This has led to the adoption of common professional competencies, the co-location of local emergency services in single facilities, the provision of common administrative support and, in some jurisdictions, common governance arrangements—for example, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority in Western Australia, the Department of Emergency Services in Queensland, the Northern Territory's Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and the ACT Emergency Services Bureau.

Queensland

Queensland has a single Department of Emergency Services that is responsible for emergency services and emergency management. The Department covers all areas concerned with the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from all types of emergencies—the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service, and the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service combines urban and rural firefighters. It employs full-time and part-time (auxiliary) firefighters to staff its more than 240 urban stations. Volunteer firefighters make up the state's 1623 rural fire brigades.

The Counter Disaster and Rescue Service is responsible for Queensland's disaster management arrangements. It is made up of the State Emergency Service, chemical management services and emergency helicopter services. The organisation supports community helicopter providers and manages government support to the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association.

Relevant legislation

Ambulance Service Act 1991

Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990

State Counter Disaster Organisation Act 1975

Western Australia

Emergency management in Western Australia was restructured in 1999. Before then, all emergency service organisations were separate administrative structures with their own responsibilities for emergency response. To effectively rationalise the services, the Bushfire Service, the State Emergency Service and the Urban Fire and Rescue Service were combined under the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia.

The Authority is responsible for the response to bush and structural fires, hazardous material incidents, floods, storms, cyclones and road crash rescues. It has 1100 full-time staff and more than 26 000 volunteers. It has a representative board that reports directly to the Minister. A Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the Authority's overall performance.

Three divisions make up the Authority—Emergency Management Services, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the State Emergency Service. The Fire and Rescue Service has 830 career firefighters and 2500 volunteer firefighters, with urban and rural firefighters incorporated in one division. Both arms are responsible for their own operational matters but they are managed under one structure. There are 144 volunteer bushfire brigades in Western Australia.

Relevant legislation

Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia Act 1998

Fire Brigades Act 1942

Bush Fires Act 1954

Emergency Services Levy Act 2002

Tasmania

Before 1979 fire protection in Tasmania was the responsibility of separate organisations—the Fire Brigade Commission and a multitude of individual fire brigade boards that separately administered the urban and rural brigades. The *Fire Services Act 1979* gives responsibility for fire protection to the Tasmanian Fire Service, under the control of the State Fire Commission.

The State Fire Commission is responsible for and controls the administration of the Tasmanian Fire Service. To this end, it provides advice to the Minister on the administration of the Fire Service Act. The Tasmanian Fire Service is the lead authority for fires, hazardous materials, urban search and rescue, and high-angle and confined-space rescue. Mutual aid is provided on a cooperative basis with other emergency services and specifically to land management agencies (Forestry Tasmania and Parks and Wildlife Tasmania) for wildfire suppression.

The Tasmanian Fire Service has 240 brigades across the state, consisting of four full-time brigades (285 full-time firefighting personnel), in the cities of Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport, and 236 part-time and volunteer brigades located in urban and rural centres around the State. There are 5000 volunteers. The Chief Executive Officer (or Chief Officer) is responsible for controlling and managing the Service's firefighting resources.

Relevant legislation

Fire Service Act 1979

General Fire Regulations 2000

Fire Service (Miscellaneous) Regulations 1996

Fire Service (Finance) Regulations 1996

The Northern Territory

The Northern Territory police, fire and emergency services were formally merged in 1983. The Commissioner of Police exercises Chief Executive Officer authority over the Northern Territory Police Service, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service, the Northern Territory Emergency Service, and administrative support services. The Commissioner reports to the Minister and has a Director (or Chief Fire Officer) appointed to administer the Fire and Rescue Service. The Northern Territory Bushfire Council is an umbrella organisation that has a planning and coordination role in fire management as its primary purpose, rather than acting as a firefighting service.

The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service's primary role is to provide response to and suppression of fires across the Territory. The Service has 141 permanent firefighters, 54 part-time firefighters and 250 volunteers working in Darwin and regional centres.

Relevant legislation

Police Administration Act 2003

Fire and Emergency Act 2001

Disasters Act 2003

The Australian Capital Territory

Emergency services in ACT come under a single administrative umbrella, the Emergency Services Bureau, which is responsible for protecting the community from a range of hazards. The ACT Bushfire Service, the ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Emergency Services and the ACT Fire Brigade are all part of the organisation. ESB is managed by an Executive Director, who reports to the Chief Executive of the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Each operational service has a designated head who is responsible for operations.

ESB headquarters provides administrative support to each of the four operational services, including communications, staff development and training, regional support services and risk management. There are 55 administrative and 78 operational staff.

The ACT Bushfire Service is primarily responsible for the suppression of bushfires. It maintains two departmental brigades from the land management agencies—ACT Forests and ACT Parks—and nine volunteer brigades across the ACT, at Hall, Gungahlin, Molongolo, Rivers, Tidbinbilla, Southern Districts, Guises Creek, Jerrabomberra and headquarters. The Hall, Gungahlin, Molongolo, Jerrabomberra, Rivers and Guises Creek brigades are joint Bushfire and Emergency Services brigades. The ACT is a single fire-control district, with all brigades available for any fire. The Service has 20 tankers, 29 light units and nine command vehicles.

The ACT Fire Brigade is a full-time professional urban firefighting body consisting of 290 officers and firefighters located at seven fire stations across the ACT (Belconnen, Ainslie, Fyshwick, Phillip, Chisholm, Greenway, and Charnwood), two Joint Emergency Services complexes in Gungahlin and Kambah, and communications and headquarters at ESB in Curtin.

Relevant legislation

Emergency Management Act 1999

Bushfire Act 1936

Fire Brigade Act 1957

Fire Brigade Administration Act 1974

Victoria

Emergency management in Victoria is the responsibility of a number of different organisations—the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and the Ambulance Service Victoria.

To ensure that emergency management and services in the state are coordinated, the Office of the Emergency Service Commissioner was established in 2000. The Commissioner provides independent, objective and strategic policy advice to the Minister.

The Country Fire Authority is a community-based fire service providing fire and emergency services to rural and provincial communities, as well as urban Melbourne communities outside the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board legislative district. The CFA does not have responsibility for publicly owned land managed by the Department of Sustainability and the Environment. The CFA reportedly has 66 000 volunteers and 284 career firefighters, 1218 rural and urban fire brigades, and 800 paid operational and support staff.

The Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade is managed by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board. Its primary role is to provide an effective and rapid fire and emergency response to the community. The organisation has 1511 professional firefighters and is supported by a number of technical and administrative staff. Although it is primarily concerned with emergency response, it also takes an active role in educating the community about fire safety and ensuring that the risk of fires to communities is minimised.

Relevant legislation

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Emergency Management Act 1986

Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958

Victoria State Emergency Service Act 1987

South Australia

Emergency management in South Australia has recently been reviewed, and it has been recommended that the current administrative arrangements be restructured with the forming of a Fire and Rescue Commission, bringing together both urban and rural fire services and incorporating the State Emergency Service. Government has not yet endorsed the recommendations of the South Australian Emergency Services Review.

The current situation in the state is that the Emergency Services Administration Unit, established in 1999, provides administrative support to the emergency service sector. The South Australia Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Country Fire Service operate as distinct organisations each with their own legislative framework. The State Emergency Service is a division within the Administration Unit and reports to the Chief Executive.

The South Australia Metropolitan Fire Brigade is a corporation and is responsible for protecting life, property and the environment from the effects of fire and other dangers. The Chief Officer administers the Brigade and reports directly to the Minister. The Brigade has 770 career employees and 207 retained (part-time) firefighters. They are situated in 35 fire stations located in Adelaide and regional areas.

The Country Fire Service is a statutory authority reporting through a board to the Minister and is responsible for preventing and suppressing fires and responding to other emergencies in rural South Australia. The Service works closely with

Forestry South Australia and the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, which both form brigades that operate as part of the Country Fire Service. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for management and administration of the Country Fire Service; the Chief Officer is responsible for operational matters. The organisation comprises approximately 16 500 volunteers and 71 career employees operating from 431 brigades and six regional offices.

Relevant legislation

South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service Act 1936

Country Fires Act 1989

New South Wales

Emergency management in NSW is the province of a number of government organisations—the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW Fire Brigade, the State Emergency Service, the Ambulance Service of NSW, and the NSW Police Service. Each organisation has a separate administrative structure and reports directly to the responsible Minister.

The NSW Rural Fire Service is responsible for the prevention and suppression of bush and structural fires within its legislative areas, covering over 90 per cent of the State. It is the designated agency for the management, coordination and suppression of all rural fires and achieves this by working closely with the NSW Fire Brigade, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and State Forests. The Rural Fire Service is responsible for the coordination of all agencies in a major bushfire.

The Rural Fire Service is administered by the Commissioner, who is responsible to the Minister for Emergency Services. The Service has 2400 brigades throughout the State. Volunteer membership is listed as approximately 70 000 people and there are 482 permanent staff. The Service has divided the State into four regions—North, South, East and West—and 141 districts reflecting local government boundaries. The ACT is located with the NSW Fire District of Yarrowlunla (based in Queanbeyan) which reports to the Southern Region, based in Batemans Bay.

The Service maintains both permanent (full-time) stations and retained (part-time) stations. Community fire units have been introduced in some urban–bushland interface areas, providing limited equipment and training to local residents.

The NSW Fire Brigade prevents and responds to fires and attends to hazardous material incidents, rescues and other emergency incidents within its legislative area, which comprises the Greater Sydney area and regional centres. It has 3090 full-time and 3198 part-time firefighters at 337 stations across the State. Together with the NSW Rural Fire Service, the Brigade provides significant integrated support to communities in the urban–rural interface.

Relevant legislation

Rural Fire Act 1997

Rural Fires and Environmental Legislation amendment Bill 2002

Rural Fires Regulation 2002

Fire Brigades Act 1989