



13 November 2023

[REDACTED]
National Resilience Taskforce
Department of Home Affairs
National Emergency Management Agency
Commonwealth Government of Australia
Canberra 2600
Email: NationalResilience.Consultation@homeaffairs.gov.au

Re: National Resilience Taskforce Unions Roundtable 2 November 2023 and Preliminary Submission.

The United Firefighters Union of Australia (**UFUA**) refers to a National Resilience Taskforce (**NRF**) Unions Roundtable; Virtual Microsoft Teams meeting on 2 November. The UFUA also refers to an Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper dated August 2023 (**ACCCR**).

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide a UFUA Preliminary Response to ACCCR. The response is consistent with the position presented at the Unions Roundtable.

The UFUA Preliminary Response is based on The Opportunity for Reform dot point questions at pages 10 and 11 of ACCC. For ease of reference, we have numbered the dot points and have consolidated them to present our Preliminary Response.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED

Questions 1 – 5(b) and (d), and 5(f) to 7.

The answers to these questions can be consolidated and separated into two parts:

- (1) Commonwealth Investment.
- (2) A model that has State and Territory Fire and Rescue Services as the Lead Agency (**Model**).

(1) Commonwealth Investment.

Regarding the Capability for Crisis Response (**Crises Response**) the Commonwealth must recognize that State and Territory Fire and Rescue Services (**Fire and Rescue Response**) provide both a Fire and Rescue Response. It follows that for all forms of crises require either a Fire and/or a Rescue Response. A Fire response is self-explanatory. In circumstances where there is either a natural or human disaster there is a requirement for a Fire and Rescue Response due to the inherent skills and

competencies professional career firefighters have in attending and resolving incidents of Rescue. These include Road Accident, Hazmat, Trench, High Angle, Emergency Medical and Water.

An alternative model as discussed below will require investment from the Commonwealth to increase resourcing and infrastructure for Fire and Rescue Response to become the lead agency for Crises Response.

(2) Model.

In any Crises Response the lead agency must be Fire and Rescue (**Lead Agency**). The Lead Agency in a Commonwealth Crisis Response (**CCR**) would be oversighted by the National Emergency Management Agency (**NEMA**).

The Lead Agency in all CCR would have Command and Control Responsibility. Although Volunteers in both Fire and State Emergency Services (**SES**) for Rescue are a necessary and required resource, nonetheless it is imperative that the Lead Agency have CCR. The Lead Agency has at their disposal firefighters who have all the requisite skills and competencies to attend and resolve all forms of Crises Response.

Currently in Fire and Rescue Response, there are circumstances where volunteers may have Command and Control Responsibility (**Command and Control**). NEMA, as a policy position, must restructure Command and Control to shift the responsibility to the Lead Agency.

The NEMA changed policy position would recognise that volunteers provide a necessary role and are without question resourced by committed and dedicated people from within local communities.

Question 5(e) and 8.

There are two (2) forms of post Crises Response, Long and Immediate Term.

The only role the private sector can have responsibility for is the long-term post Crises Response. This is a role that currently the Australia Defence Force (**ADF**) has responsibility for. Private sector involvement may be a way forward in the consideration of a domestic disaster recovery agency (**domestic agency**) to allow the ADF to provide the Commonwealth with its core function. Nonetheless the Lead Agency must maintain a role during this phase, particularly from a Command-and-Control perspective.

In the Immediate Term of post Crises Response, NEMA should continue to oversee the Lead Agency in continuing with the Command-and-Control responsibility. This should be a core function of the Lead Agency and should not be privatized nor funding be sought from the Private Sector. Instead, Commonwealth investment should be directed to funding and better resourcing the Lead Agency. Additional funding should also be provided for training in supporting the Immediate Term Crises Response.

Consideration must be given to allow the Lead Agency to use the ADF as a resource as there could be circumstances that demand ADF resources. A real-life example was the Mallecoota 2019/2020 summer bushfire season, deployment of the Australian Navy, who provided a dramatic and unprecedented rescue by sea.

Question 5(c)

The UFUA does not have a position on this question. The UFUA is currently in consultation with its stakeholders on this question.

Further the UFUA refers to the comments of UFU (Vic) Branch Secretary Mr Peter Marshall regarding the extensive work carried out at a historic Interoperability Inquiry. The UFUA will provide more information on this inquiry in its final submission to NEMA.

The UFUA confirms that NRF will be further consulting with stakeholders to road test measures that it intends to recommend. We further confirm that you will come back to the parties under groups regarding that consultation. It follows that we look forward to that further consultation.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me on mobile: [REDACTED]

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P J Marshall', written in a cursive style.

Peter Marshall
Branch Secretary (Vic) on behalf of UFUA.