

Our File:
Your ref:

Date 11 November 2021

Valerie Callister PSM
Chair
Fire District Review Panel

Dear Chair

RE: FIRE RESCUE VICTORIA FIRE DISTRICT REVIEW SUBMISSIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed review.

Municipal Fire Prevention Officers (MFPO's) from several Councils met to discuss the Fire Rescue Victoria Fire District Review. These Councils include Hume City Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Mitchell Shire Council, Mount Alexander Shire Council and City of Whittlesea. We have identified similar concerns with the current FRV boundaries and are therefore providing a joint submission to the FRV District Review.

Issues identified by the above-mentioned councils that met and reviewed the FRV Boundary Review document include:
Issues.

1. Boundaries Alignment

FRV areas and boundaries should align with natural features, roads and if possible Municipal Boundaries. The absence of this has created confusion with the community and landowners as they are unsure as to which agency they fall under. It's disappointing that the discussion paper hasn't focused on the outline of the boundaries currently set across multiple councils not only in the Northwest Metro Region but across the state. There was no consultation with municipalities around the new FRV boundaries which has had a significant impact on Fire Inspection programs for councils and caused confusion and anger by landowners.

Below is one example of boundary cross-over on properties within Hume City Council which is what has occurred across the other councils not only in NWMR Region but cross the state. When a fire prevention notice is issued to a property where the boundary cuts through the property, then two notices are required to be issued, a CFA Schedule 15 Notice and an FRV Schedule 3 Notice. It is confusing for property owners when they receive two notices for the same property and time consuming for officers issuing the notices.



2. Reports of Incidents

Currently when requesting FRV for data on incidents there is very little, or no data supplied (as per advice from FRV reps that the system doesn't have the capacity to create reports). The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) and the Municipal Fire Management Planning (sub) Committee (MFMP) require this data to identify the root cause of fires, for mitigation and community education. At present it can be hit and miss whether councils are notified of structure and other fires as there is no process or consistency in how these incidents are reported to the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO), and therefore impossible to gain an understanding of fire incidents that FRV respond to.

3. Education

Whilst your report talks about responding to an incident, there is no mention about critical community education for the large CALD communities where English is not the primary language, to assist these residents prepare for fire and mitigate fire risks and hazards.

4. Risk profile

The report describes understanding the risk including climate change and specifically refers to the program Safer Together which has included vegetation management programs. In some areas to the north and west, vegetation types are not specified therefore this information is not available to support the panel to take this into consideration when considering the most appropriate boundary alignment.

On page 12 the schematic diagram VFRR is listed as a risk mitigation. VFRR is a tool that maps hazard across large areas where detailed assessments have not always occurred. Therefore, it would be difficult for the panel to fully understand the risks at each local level based on VFRR alone. Therefore, we question why only suppression only has been considered when setting the FRV areas and boundaries. Other assessment factors could include planning, preparation and mitigation works, supported response and recovery.

5. Other issues identified impacting rural councils for consideration

With the change in boundary alignment that has occurred, the community does not always understand the difference between CFA and FRV. When residents need help, they expect to receive help no matter which agency responds. There is now a loss of confidence around this. To ensure a seamless response is actioned no matter how big an event is, there must be a review of the current response times and resources. The appropriate resources including vehicles and equipment sourced from within fire services in a local area must be taken into account when determining FRV area and boundaries.

This review must also include how response times are measured and allocated taking into account the differences between FRV and CFA resources, operations and response plans.

Conclusion

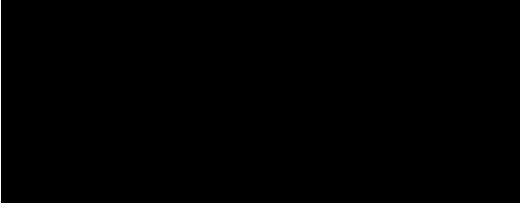
- The issues identified must be discussed in detail and included in the boundary review
- That a meeting to be scheduled with the review panel and the councils in this submission.

Should you have any question regarding our submission feel to contact me [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



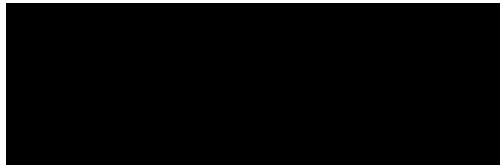
City of Greater Bendigo



Mount Alexander Shire Council



Whittlesea City Council



Mitchell Shire Council