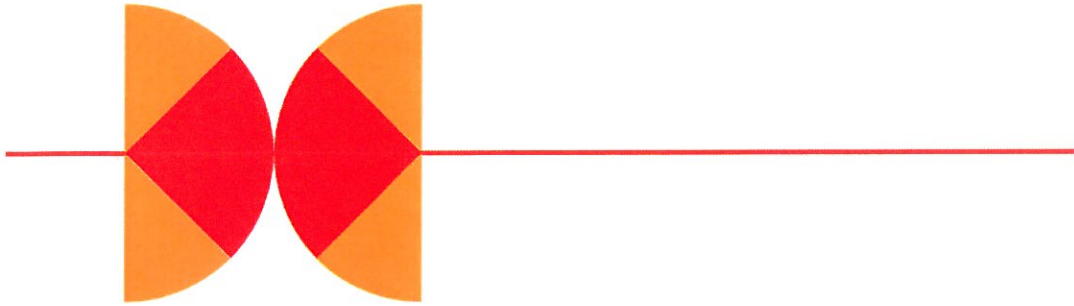


14 January 2013



**DRAFT REPORT FOR UNITED FIREFIGHTERS
UNION AUSTRALIA**

**ON THE MERIT OF A NATIONAL REGISTRATION
BOARD FOR FIREFIGHTING**

14 JANUARY 2013

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Firefighters Union – Victorian Branch.

Research on the Merit of a National Registration Board for Firefighting

Shea Consulting and BSV were contracted by the United Firefighters Union Australia – Victorian Branch (UFU – Victorian Branch) to explore the merit of a national registration board for firefighting. The purpose of a registration board would be to set professional development standards for firefighters, to raise Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) standards and to raise the professionalism of the industry.

This is an interim submission requested due to the current timeframes of a Senate Inquiry. The authors are happy to further expand and would like the opportunity to further expand on the matters contained within.

A truly national and genuinely rigorous trend analysis of fire management strategies and bushfire outcomes in Australia in recent years would seem overdue. As we head into a less certain world climate-wise, we need to ensure that we have appropriate national policies, regulatory boards and strategies for the management of our large, and largely fire-prone land. The overriding aim is to raise the bar for firefighting with the introduction of an independent body that stipulates and monitors set training for firefighters.

Factors taken into account include the following:

- ensuring that Australian firefighting skills incorporate climate change issues,
- applying standards for uniformity of firefighting practice throughout Australia to enhance national coordination,
- raising the professional image of firefighters,
- creating a platform that sets guidelines for minimum training standards for firefighters,
- ensuring safety standards for firefighters are adhered to, and
- outlining standards for firefighting training that facilitates interoperability of services to promote community safety.

Some of the above mentioned had already been identified by the UFU. internal needs analysis processes as 'issues' that required addressing.

Climate Change

The Climate Institute commissioned the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC), the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research to undertake an assessment of the impact of climate change on bushfire weather in Australia. The researchers reported a general trend towards more fire weather over the last 30 years with the majority of the most intense fire weather seasons having occurred since the late 1990s, for example, in Melbourne the most severe fire weather (summer) seasons on record were (starting with the severest) in 2009, 2007, 1997 and 2003.¹

¹ Concise Report to inform UFU Staffing Claim for MFB and CFA Paid Firefighters, 2009 Workplace Research Centre of Sydney, page 6

Total fire weather is measured using the daily Forest Fire Danger Index – FFDI – with values accumulated from July to June each year. Lucas et al (2007) found that total fire weather jumped significantly since the late 1990s. Increases of 15-40% between 1998-2000 and 2001-2007 are evident in the records (Briefing: Bushfire Weather in Victoria, September 2007:1).²

Lucas et al suggest that recent observed rises in fire danger may be due to a mix of natural variability and human-induced climate change. They state that they do not know the relative importance of these two factors at this time. The primary source of data for this study is the standard observations made by the BOM.

The patterns were scaled for the years 2020 and 2050 using Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) estimates of global warming for those years. Two scenarios were modelled for both 2020 and 2050 – low global warming (0.4°C) and high global warming (1°C) (Lucas, et al, 2007:2).³

Across the 5 relevant selected observing stations, the percent of annual total fire weather is projected to increase from 0-10% by 2020 and 2-31% by 2050. Across all simulations the largest changes are in the interior of NSW and northern Victoria (Lucas, et al, 2007:27). Lucas et al suggest that climate change can act in two ways to affect fire weather scenarios. First, it might exacerbate the fire-weather risk on any given day, leading to increased frequency or intensity of extreme fire weather days. Second, an increase in the accumulated fire risk over a year might represent a longer fire season and a reduction in the number of days suitable for controlled burning (Lucas, et al, 2007:26).⁴

Recent trends of extreme weather events correspond with these findings. Data analysed on this week by the government Bureau of Meteorology indicated that national heat records had again been set. The average temperature across the country on Tuesday the 8th of January (2013) was the highest since statistics began being kept in 1911, at 40 degrees Celsius, exceeding a mark set only the day before. Meteorologists have had to add two new colour bands to their forecast maps.⁵

David Jones, government scientist and Head of Climate Monitoring Prediction at the Bureau of Meteorology noted that “From this national perspective, one might say this is the largest heat event in the country’s recorded history,” Firefighters were struggling to contain huge bushfires in New South Wales, which have scorched around 500 square miles of forest and farmland since Tuesday. Fires in Tasmania have destroyed more than 300 square miles since Friday.⁶ “Those of us who spend our days trawling — and contributing to — the scientific literature on climate change are becoming increasingly gloomy about the future of human civilization,”

² Lucas, C., K. Hennessy, G. Mills and J. Bathols, 2007: *Bushfire weather in southeast Australia: Recent trends and projected climate change impacts* Consultancy report for The Climate Institute of Australia. Bushfire CRC and CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research, 79 pp

³ Lucas 2007:1 in Concise Report to inform UFU Staffing Claim for MFB and CFA Paid Firefighters, 2009 Workplace Research Centre of Sydney, page 6

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2013/jan/08/australia-bush-fires-heatwave-temperature-scale>

⁶ The Age 9th January 2013

Elizabeth Hanna, a researcher at the Australian National University in Canberra, told The Sydney Morning Herald. "We are well past the time of niceties, of avoiding the dire nature of what is unfolding, and politely trying not to scare the public."⁷ Dr. Jones echoed that opinion.

"This event is turning out to be hotter, more spatially expansive and the duration is quite remarkable," he said in an interview. "And that suggests climate change."⁸

At least 141 separate fires were burning in New South Wales on Wednesday, 31 of them out of control. The deputy commissioner of the state's Rural Fire Service, Rob Rogers, told reporters that it was a bad sign that the fires could not be contained during the brief drop in temperatures.⁹

National coordination

We need to ensure that Australia's multi-layered urban planning system does not create the foundations for future catastrophes in the rural-urban interface zone. Similarly, it is increasingly unthinkable that public policy in areas from water and biodiversity conservation, to urban planning, carbon sequestration, and the maintenance of key aspects of indigenous culture, could be developed or reviewed without first critically analysing landscape scale fire management issues.¹⁰

A national registration board would impose national standards¹¹ that would be based on the highest level of service. Presently, there are great differences in State/Territory and MFB/CFA practices, equipment and resource requirements:

- Some states have policies on fatigue management, others do not
- The policy on support to firefighters on long shifts varies and is not always offered (i.e. in an 8 hour shift fire fighters often do not have food)
- There is varying quality of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in every State/Territory
- There are variations in the State/Territory required response times
- There are variations in State/Territory rank structures and qualification/competency requirements.
- Interoperability of equipment, resources and standardisation of procedures
- Removal of parochial barriers to maximise the usage of public funded resources i.e. suitable qualified personnel and equipment

⁷ Sydney morning herald 9th January 2013

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Fire management and the bush – from an ad hoc seasonal pre-occupation to 'policy centre-stage' Gary Morgan¹, Tony Bartlett² and Mike Leonard, 2008 pages 15 to 16

¹¹ standards that have already been endorsed by industry

Professionalism

In the wake of the large and devastating bushfires in south-eastern Australia over the past four years, and the issues identified during the various reviews of these fires that have been undertaken at national and State level. The need for urgent and fundamental change in Australia's approach to forest fire management is apparent. The occurrence and impact of devastating *mega-fires*, with their increasing costs to humans and the environment, can be reduced with sound, year round land management,¹² effective firefighting training and effective management of existing services.

A firefighting registration board would set eligibility requirements and minimum standards of practice for the levels of firefighting activity and specify suitable professional development standards. The board would also set Codes of Conduct. There could be various categories of memberships including categories for non-practicing members.

Benefits of a National Firefighting Registration Board:

- Consistency of competency throughout Australia
- Improved interoperability through consistency of training and qualifications
- National coordination to ensure uniformity of standards and monitoring processes
- National coordination to ensure maximum use of resources between States and Territories
- National accreditation
- Governance of national standards
- Ability to pursue international accreditation
- Ability to coordinate mutual aid agreements with qualified personnel within Australia and internationally.

Practicing firefighters will be able to register with the Firefighters Registration Board, provided they meet the eligibility requirements, maintain the minimum standards of practice, adhere to the Code of Conduct and undertake annual professional development. The benefits of firefighter registration would be:

- Public confidence
- Higher focus on safety
- Interoperability of the firefighter profession with standardisation of qualifications underpinned by a professional board
- Recognition of experience and expertise and professional development level
- Mutual recognition of skills between Australian States and Territories
- Recognition of expertise
- Meeting national standards
- National maintenance of qualifications and competency levels.

¹² Fire management and the bush – from an ad hoc seasonal pre-occupation to 'policy centre-stage' Gary Morgan¹, Tony Bartlett² and Mike Leonard, 2008 pages 15 to 16

Proposed eligibility requirements for registration:

- completion of a relevant recognised Australian qualification (or overseas equivalent) for the relevant registration category, and
- practical experience at the level required.

Registration period:

During the period of registration the registration board would stipulate that a member must:

- maintain the minimum standards of experience,
- practice and expertise,
- adhere to the Code of Conduct, and
- undertake annual professional development
- maintain accreditation for interoperability

Training standards

The proposed firefighting registration board would propose minimum levels of training and assessment, utilising the recognised standards for Australian firefighting from the nationally endorsed Public Safety Training Package qualifications as the standard. *See page 9 for detail.*

Proposed Registration categories

Trainee Firefighter	Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting & Emergency Operations) Plus a minimum of 12 months practice as a trainee firefighter covering the mandatory competencies and practice skills.
Firefighter	Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting & Emergency Operations) Plus a minimum of 3 years continuous practice as a firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Officer-in-charge	Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision) Plus a minimum of 6 years continuous practice as a firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Firefighting Management	Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Plus a minimum of 8 years of continuous practice as a senior firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Senior Firefighting Management	Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Plus a minimum of 10 years of continuous practice in a management firefighter role in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Executive	Relevant graduate and post-graduate qualifications Plus a minimum of 15 years of continuous practice in an executive role in a recognised fire service.

14 January 2013

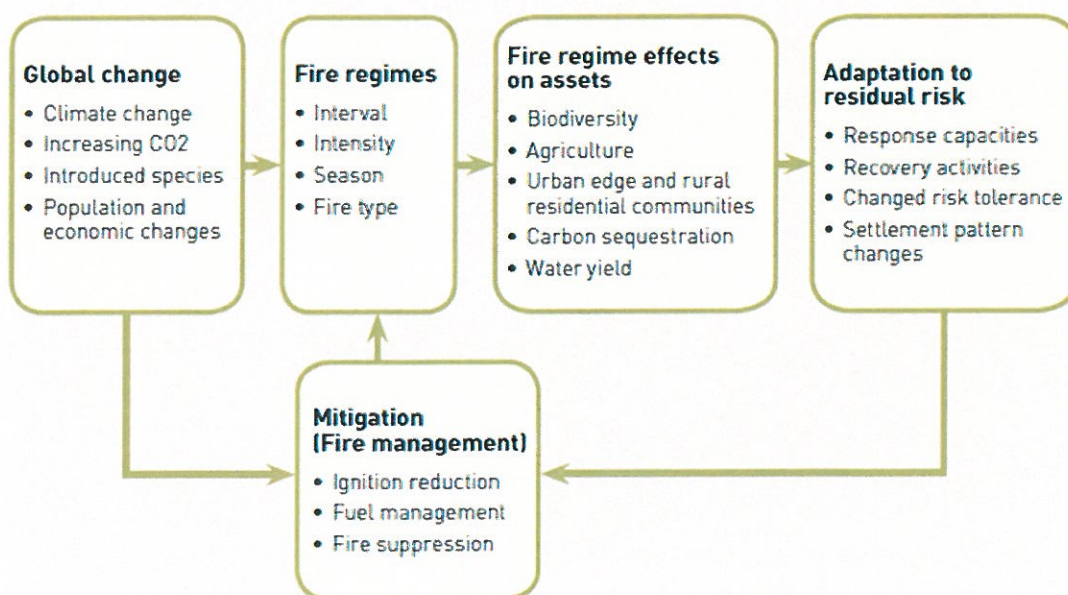
The proposed firefighting registration board would be an independent body that could also provide policy advice to government and other fire emergency services. Therefore, the requirement for national standards would be a resource for other services' skill level proficiency requirements. This, in turn would strengthen industry capability.

Community safety

The proposed national firefighting board would administer the registration of firefighting proficiency and safe and effective firefighting services is integral to the protection of the community. The firefighting registration board would act as a further risk reduction and mitigation body for effective, targeted strategies to engage and communicate with at-risk communities about the risks posed by bushfire and the actions people can take to prepare and respond to the bushfire threat. Firefighting board activities could be broadened and strengthened in time to include firefighting equipment. This would further enhance national interoperability.

A paper by Cary et al (2011) on future scenarios for Australian bushfires noted that fire management objectives should involve protection and enhancement of natural and constructed assets. Global change will affect fire regimes that will influence assets directly, as well as indirectly, via fire management efforts. More broadly, adaptation may involve changes to management, planning and legislation. Management and planning processes would benefit from the introduction of a national firefighting board, which would assist with the 'Adaptation to residual risk', including response capability and recovery activities.¹³ The firefighting board could be a valuable national coordination resource for the management of emergency services. See diagram below.

Conceptual framework for exploring future bushfire scenarios.



Source: Geoffrey J. Cary, Eddy Collett, A. Malcolm Gill, Helena Clayton, Stephen Dovers, The Fenner School of Environment and Society Report on a Bushfire CRC workshop 1

¹³ Geoffrey J. Cary, Eddy Collett, A. Malcolm Gill, Helena Clayton, Stephen Dovers, The Fenner School of Environment and Society Report on a Bushfire CRC workshop1
<http://www.em.gov.au/Publications/Australianjournalofemergencymanagement/Currentissue/Pages/AJEMvolume27%20no%203/FuturescenariosforAustralianbushfiresReportonaBushfireCRCworkshop.aspx>

Registration Categories	Required Practice Skills in the Workplace	Required Work Experience and Qualification
Trainee Firefighter	Trainee practice skills under supervision in: - Operating a pump - Operating breathing apparatus - Participating in Committee safety activity - Identifying hazardous materials - Attending fire calls - Applying firefighting techniques - Applying first aid	Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting & Emergency Operations) Comprising core competencies in: - Prevent injury - Respond to urban fire - Operate breathing apparatus open circuit - Prepare, maintain and test response equipment - Operate communications systems and equipment - Work in a team - Provide basic emergency life support - Participate in a rescue operation <i>Plus three additional relevant competencies</i> Plus a minimum of 12 months practice as a trainee firefighter covering the mandatory competencies and practice skills. Practice skills approved by supervisor.
Firefighter	Under limited supervision, responsible for self and other. Continuous practice in: - Operating specialist equipment - Attending fire calls - Participating in rescue operations - Applying advanced first aid or pre-hospital treatment (stabilising for transportation) - Working under limited supervision - Being responsible for self and the safety of others	Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting & Emergency Operations) Comprising core competencies in: - Suppress urban fire - Employ personal protection at a hazardous materials incident - Operate pumps - Render hazardous materials incidents safe - Maintain safety at an incident - Drive vehicles under operational conditions - Apply first aid - Apply advanced resuscitation techniques <i>Plus four additional relevant competencies</i> Plus a minimum of 3 years continuous practice as a firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.

Officer in Charge	Responsible for supervising response. Continuous practice in: Mentoring firefighters and trainee firefighters Being responsible for managing incident Supervising team Coordinating workplace activities Conducting training of firefighters and trainee firefighters Liaising with community and other relevant bodies and associations	Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision) Comprising core competencies in: Conduct briefings and debriefings Control a Level 1 incident Lead, manage and develop teams <i>Plus eight additional relevant competencies</i> Plus a minimum of 6 years continuous practice as a firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Firefighting Management	Responsible for managing response. Continuous practice in: Managing teams Implementing policy Administering budget Contributing to incident control strategies Managing risks Coordinating projects Commanding personnel for complex incidents Implementing continuous professional development	Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Comprising core competencies in: Liaise with other organisations Develop incident control strategies Implement prevention strategies Implement and monitor the organisation's occupational health and safety policies, procedures and programs Manage a multi-team sector Manage operations at a Level 2 incident Promote a learning environment in the workplace <i>Plus six additional relevant competencies</i> Plus a minimum of 8 years of continuous practice as a senior firefighter in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Senior Firefighting Management	Responsible for controlling emergency situations. Continuous practice in: Managing personnel Administering budgets Coordinating projects Managing risk (projects, fire) Developing incident control strategies	Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Comprising core competencies in: Promote the organisation's mission and services Manage the organisation's public safety responsibilities Manage human resources Manage financial resources Plus seven additional relevant competencies

	Controlling multi-agency incidents Managing up and down Managing resources Planning continuous professional development	Plus a minimum of 10 years of continuous practice in a management firefighter role in a recognised fire service covering the mandatory competencies.
Executive	Responsible for managing a Fire Service Directorate. Continuous practice in: Managing policies Managing Directorate's personnel, budgets and performance Managing external agency partnerships Managing organisational public safety strategies Managing the control of multi-agency complex incidents	Relevant graduate and post-graduate qualifications An accredited Australian graduate and/or post-graduate qualifications including: - Degree - Graduate Certificate - Graduate Diploma - Master's degree Or A qualification that in the Registration Board's opinion is substantially equivalent. Plus a minimum of 15 years of continuous practice in an executive role in a recognised fire service.