

Supplementary Submission for the Senate Inquiry into ARFF.

Key matters and my concerns.

Communication with Airservices Management has taken place through staff information sessions and direct emails expressing our concerns and issues at their request. However, the responses that we received demonstrate little attention and vague promises that all is well. Airservices Management maintain that their safety systems aren't failing operational staff. Practice at station level continue to show this is incorrect and the frustration for staff remains. Evidence supplied has consistently shown that safety critical issues are ignored or aren't being fixed in appropriate time frames. This seriously impedes operations and is a WHS issue for staff. Why are management denying the obvious? Surely, they know there is a substantial paper trail that supports our position. Management need to be accountable and transparent if they are to regain our trust.

Safety critical issues remain unresolved. There is substantial evidence of concerns being raised through email and Airservices own data recording systems. Management is failing at every level and promises that fixes are coming. The current processes demonstrate poor results and late or no delivery. An example of this is that Engineering asked in 2013 to follow a process (Operational Project Proposal) that would track and deliver better results, particularly better time frames to fixing problems. Results have meant more cogs in the wheel and operational staff are still waiting for results. Cabin issues and locker standardization of our MK8 Ultra Large Firefighting Vehicle are incomplete and these vehicles are nearing their end of life. Breathing Apparatus and procedures remain unchanged although in both equipment and operation Airservices is behind the state and territory brigades. An unnecessary added safety risk to staff. Management are aware of the list of issues that haven't been addressed,

The Senate Inquiry has prompted some movement in this area; however, an inquiry should not be necessary if Airservices processes and systems provided what is required for positive and timely fixes. The Darwin vehicle accident and the comcare issues are an example of the time taken to address a serious safety breach.

New station design and upgrades continue to be of concern for CAPEX program. The lack of previous action on modernising stations for today and the future is just another issue that Management should accept and work through. Station design for all category levels should have been completed by a working group including operational staff. Airports tend to grow so fire stations need to be designed with expansion in mind.

Airservices "Accelerate" program was supposed to deliver the two operational pillars new change from support groups. Initially there were massive staff losses which changed the state of the financial books. Knowledge and experience went out the door only to be later replaced by more bureaucrats.

Brisbane's new station for NPR and its correct siting needs to be addressed as a priority. Brisbane staff would accept temporary arrangements. Any time delay could be accommodated if Airservices

created a “future proof” facility that is positioned correctly and can deliver the safest outcome for the flying public.

Rockhampton station is another facility that has needed upgrading for over a decade now. Rockhampton would not meet current standards for a fire station and FCC facilities.

Proserpine and Badgerys Creek are an opportunity to deliver best practice regards station design and vehicle fleet. At Badgerys Creek, CASA, ARFF and the airport owners working together could create better water access for runway and future planning regarding infrastructure. A concern is that Airservices is not yet engaged in this. Brisbane staff tried being proactive in delivering a fit for purpose new NPR station design, created by a staff member using a paint program on work computer. This was ignored although it addressed the issues of Brisbane’s current upgraded station.

A result of not future proofing fire stations has impacted future vehicles. The engine bays in most current stations were identified as an issue. Therefore, the MK8 vehicles purchased by Airservices were shortened. This added cost and reduced capacity. No “off the shelf” vehicles could be purchased with a maximum length of 10.5 metres. By Airservices rationale the latest fire vehicles available would need modification again to fit in the outdated infrastructure.

Issues around future proofing the vehicle fleet were identified through FVR 5 (fire vehicle replacement program) and in fire vehicle Asset Management Plan (2011-2021). These documents all identified the need for action between (2014-2020).

Stage one was starting purchase of vehicles for greater vehicle capacity for Category 9 and 10 stations this would free up remaining MK8 vehicles for new stations opening.

The second stage was to start the replacement program for the current MK8 fleet.

The current MK8 vehicle services Category airports below Category 9 very well with a tank capacity of 8900l as the previous vehicle was around 6000l an increase was achieved.

Category 9 and 10 need new vehicles as identified in FVR5 paperwork. Currently ARFF meet agent requirements but future proofing allowing for change in regulations when CASA do rewrite and catch up with new ICAO standards need addressing as international change was recommended around 2015.

The removal of the remission factor it has been long gone years ago internationally. It is clearly a safety issue when you don’t provide correct capacity for aircraft type. The committee need to recommend action.

The Airservices fire training facility has not met expectations. AS stated, that “establishment of a centralised training model. ARFF will have a world class national training facility to support realistic training including the application of foam on a 3 yearly training cycle. The project is scheduled to be completed in mid-2012.”

CASA need to answer for this as they provided the dispensation on training and should have been far more active in this space.

Training is lacklustre at present due to reasons detailed below:

- Lack of station drill grounds due to environmental concerns.
- Lack of vehicles available.
- Increase in aircraft movements throughout the day.
- Melbourne not fulfilling its specifications; that is that once every 3 years staff train as they are unable to at home stations without any restrictions.
- Training could be less frequent, but it needs to be quality.
- Operational staff acknowledge Phase One Workshops, CFBT and Driver Training at Mt Cotton as the last quality training. The common thread would be consistent delivery of subject and by up skilled instructional staff.
- The current phase of workshops is cut back from one week to a couple of days.
- The workshops not using real foam (watered down training foam only) Some courses have been unable to do this and used water only. A generation of firefighters have no understanding of how foam reacts in fire.
- As a service we need to up skill ourselves with new vehicle technology.
- Questions for operational management is how we do this with the proposed new drill ground project and the lack of availability of the Melbourne training facility.
- Any shortcomings are not a reflection on the professional instructor staff.

All operational staff received presentations by instructors at Phase one workshops. Real incidents from around the world were reviewed. The evidence provided showed the amounts of water used in real time versus the amount we carry. Tactics and Strategies discussion followed before Practical drill took place on Large Mock-up. It was demonstrated that we would struggle at a large aviation incident. CASA signed off on this training. Why with this knowledge have they been so slow at upgrading their documentation?

Each workshop participant has been asked to provide “feedback form” and a PIR (post implication review) was conducted after Phase One workshops by operational personnel. The PIR raised issues, yet the final version PIR signed off by a non- operational person conflicts very much with 48 workshops views. WHY?

Summary of key points.

- Safety critical issues are not being addressed through ASA/ARFF systems in a timely manner.
- Good systems once created should only need to be managed and have reviews for continual improvements. Change for change or a new manager needing to meet KPI'S not a good reason.
- Why has FVR5 been delayed when obviously the outcomes and requirements remain necessary for operational future?
- When will work shop training in Melbourne deliver better overall training regards foam and address the challenges we can't do at our home stations?
- Aerial vehicles for access particularly A380 is a subject of concern as we have only one set of air stairs (not currently online) and MOU's for ARRF stations around state/territory fire service providing an aerial vehicle (Bronto). Impractical at best and never tested. ASA/ARFF have purchased aerial vehicles “Not fit for purpose” (Morita) to cover Category 10 airports.

An example of people outside the fire station making decisions which staff must make work.
Have CASA provided another dispensation?

- Concept of operations documentation regarding Brisbane fire station raised many issues that will need to be addressed. Time is running out.
- Legislation required for staffing levels for Aviation and Domestic. Aviation in line with international standards and Domestic needs a separate TRA to run as a standalone service.

The senate inquiry has received a clear message that staffing in Australian Airport Fire Services need to be aligned with international standards. The provider Airservices and its systems cannot be trusted to deliver. Clearly airports are a changing environment for an Airport Fire Service, and acknowledgement of this needs to come through legislation. I hope that recommendations identify the distinction between Aviation and Domestic component with regards to staffing and service. Relevant international standards need implementation to cover Aviation and the Domestic service should go through a separate TRA process. Considering how the airports have changed and continue to grow an overdue look at this service delivery through this process is appropriate.

A site visit should provide the committee with further clarity, as I believe contact with operational staff and looking at facilities will show what we may not have been able to relay in words.

Thanks again for being allowed to provide supplementary submission.

Regards,

John.

LAFF. Brisbane.