UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA

STRENGTH IN UNITY

AVIATION BRANCH

Inquiry into the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services at Australian airports.

RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

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1. Introduction:

The United Firefighters Union Aviation Branch thanks the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport legislation committee for providing the opportunity to comment on the performance of Airservices ARFFS Safety. Our submission will deal specifically on the operational effects and impacts to frontline operational and maintenance services, and reduction in safe levels of ARFFS protection including staffing reduction, equipment, procedures, regulatory exemptions, training and insufficient vehicles.

2. About the UFUA Aviation Branch

The United Firefighters Union of Australia Aviation Branch is a Union representing the industrial and health and safety interests of around 850 professional firefighters in the Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting Service [ARFFS] provided by Airservices.

Our members are stationed at 26 soon to be 27 major airports around Australia including Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Hamilton Island, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Maroochydore, Brisbane, Coolangatta, Coffs Harbour, Ballina, Sydney, Melbourne, Avalon, Hobart, Launceston, Adelaide, Perth, Port Hedland, Karratha, Broome, Newman, Darwin, Yulara, Alice Springs, Canberra, and eventually Proserpine which met ARFFS establishment triggers back 2017/18 but won't open now till 2020.

The Aviation branch is a part of the National United Firefighters Union of Australia which represents more than 13,000 professional firefighters across Australia with affiliations to New Zealand, USA, Canada and the UK.

3. Terms of Reference:

The provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency response at Australian airports, with particular reference to:

(a) the current standards applicable to the provision of aerodrome rescue and firefighting services relating to community safety and the emergency personnel safety;

(b) the standards for the provision of emergency response at Australian airports, including emergency medical response and response to structure fires and other incidents;

(c) the comparison of safe systems of emergency response standards and systems of work for firefighting and rescue operations for structure fires, aircraft rescue, emergency medical response and other emergency incidents;

(d) the consideration of best practice, including relevant international standards;

(e) the mechanisms and criteria for the review of the provisions of safety standards for the provision of rescue and firefighting services, if any;

(f) a review of Airservices Australia policy and administration of aviation rescue and firefighting services;

(g) the effectiveness and independence of the regulator, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), to uphold aviation rescue and firefighting safety standards;

(h) the impact on Australia's national and international reputation and aviation safety record as a result of any lowering of aviation rescue and firefighting services; and

(i) any other related matters.

4. Operational Concerns:

Distress Signal Units (DSU's) Also known as Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS)

What the CASR 139H Manual of Standards States: CHAPTER 13: ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT

CASR References: Sub regulations 139.795 (4) and (5), regulations 139.800, 139.805 and 139.810

Section 13.1: General

13.1.1 Standard: Ancillary Equipment 13.1.1.1 Ancillary equipment must conform to Australian Standards (AS), or in the lack of AS, acceptable International Standards **must apply**.

There is no Australian Standard for the DSU/PASS.

The Internationally accepted standard is the NFPA 1982 (2013) current edition.

CASA has clearly failed here as the regulator as they have no valid safety argument to exempt Airservices from this regulation, this exemption simply increases the risk to the lives and safety of firefighters entering a hostile and life-threatening environment. The latest DSU's have significantly improved technology and performance, based on solid research data of actual incidents and failures by the NFPA.

CASA's decision has allowed Airservices to avoid compliance with the current International Standard through the use of semantics. It is rare, but noteworthy in the current instance, that an Organisation like Airservices would actively seek out loopholes to avoid compliance with a current safety standard. Especially a safety standard that has been revised exclusively due to known faults and limitations of the safety equipment. Due diligence would normally be required in the face of foreseeable and preventable risk.

What is a DSU? A DSU or PASS is used to ensure the safety of firefighters working in environments that are immediately dangerous to life and health. They emit a visual and loud audible alarm when the device remains motionless for 30 seconds. The Firefighter can also operate it manually if they are in distress, eg lost, trapped or injured. As one of the last lines of defence they are extremely important, and firefighter's lives may depend on them.

Why are we concerned? "….for firefighting, the principal work activity is hazard engagement, which is usually further complicated by extreme time pressure. The customary safety strategy in many high hazard work situations is to implement multiple safety measures, or what is sometimes referred to as **'defences in depth'** (Kunadharaju, Smith and Lejoy 2011 on US firefighting)

1. The Superpass 2 DSU does not hold NFPA certification is no longer sold to fire services in the US it is a design from 1998. (21-year-old technology)
2. The Superpass 2 DSU lost its 1998 NFPA compliance certification in 2007 (12 years ago). As a direct result of advice received from the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), due to limitations and faults with PASS devices compliant with the 1998 standard, subsequently the 5th edition of NFPA NFC 1982 was published in 2007 and a further standards update was delivered in 2013.
3. The NFPA Safety Alert 9 Feb 2007 provides a clear example of how the improvements made to the NFPA standards come from actual failures in the field and performance issues not from sales people like Airservices have claimed. To stick with a 1998 design because it is cheaper is an insult to the safety of all aviation firefighters and the sacrifices and risks, they are willing to make to save others' lives.
4. It is a local area only alarm which automatically activates when a firefighter is motionless for a period of time or it can be manually activated by a firefighter in distress. (two functions only)
5. The alert is audible and visual only and you must be within hearing distance of the alerting sounds for anyone to know you are trapped or injured or lost. Sound penetration degrades significantly in heat and there are many instances of search teams not being able to hear members in distress even with the audible alert active.
6. It is currently 3 Generations, and 5 Superpass models behind the current DSU and DSU-RF technology of the SP3, TP3, SP4 & three versions of SP & TP5.
7. The new Generation DSU/PASS have many functions including high heat alarms, heat loading alarms, RF back to base signals so that the OIC knows immediately one of their crew is in distress, this feature is also a two way function and the OIC can activate the alarms to immediately notify crews to withdraw if the incident becomes too unsafe (slightly better technology than the tin whistle currently in use with ARFFS), data logging for investigation purposes, interface with electronic control boards and even tracking to provide a last known location for crews lost.
8. It was previously noted as a safety issue by CASA, however the current CASA inspector has now back flipped on the previous ruling based on very flimsy advice from Airservices.

Grace Industries are the Manufacturer of this equipment their website supports the UFUAs concerns see link: http://graceindustries.com/gracetest/SuperPASS2/

Grace Industries Acknowledges on their website above **that the SP2 is no longer compliant and not to be used for Firefighting**.

1. Product Life: approx. 3 to 5 years depending upon frequency of use.

A product should be retired from service **after five years of use** or earlier when severely damaged. Although the Grace sales representative states that this is not a hard figure it is in the manual for the Manual DSU and is also written in the Grace Industries recent Service Advice where they clearly state they will not service any SP2 with a manufacture date more than 5 years old. Airservices MEX has a 7-year life span entered for DSU's.

Also based on advice from a sales representative Airservices has also removed the replacement life span on these already highly suspect devices. They are now replaced only on failure? If that failure occurs in a hostile environment during a life-threatening incident, too bad.

Airservices:

1. This life span requirement means that no SP2 DSU's purchased under the old NFPA standard should still even be in service. Airservices sought an exemption from CASA to compliance with the standard.

2. This also means that in breech of the CASA Exemption Airservices has been deliberately buying new replacement DSU's that do not comply with the MOS 139H or NFPA as the relevant International Standard simply based on price not the life safety of the crews wearing them or any bogus compatibility issues with State services they have raised.

3. Unlike what Airservices has claimed, the technology of the DSU has no impact on the CABA procedures or control boards in place. It is only the tally key that fits any board that needs to be compatible so nothing would change at all on the old outdated manual tally boards Airservices still use.

4. Outdated 21-year-old technology DSU's that do not have the modern improved safety features that would better protect the lives of our members in dangerous environments, are still being purchased new, even though they are not suitable or compliant for sale to firefighters.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the current ARFF Specialist at CASA has given any consideration to the improved safety benefits of the new DSU technology. What is the point of this ARFFS specialist role if they are not in a position, or are unwilling to support the regulations and standards that are written and exist to protect our firefighter's safety?

Where did the requirement for DSU's in ARFF come from? In Feb 1994 two Queensland Firefighters Herbert Fennell and Noel Watson died battling a fire at the Honda Dealers in Southport. This was the catalyst for many improvements in firefighting PPE, Accountability systems, DSU's and firefighting techniques and improved understanding of fire gases flammability and explosibility. The fact that neither Airservices management, their Risk Specialist or the CASA ARFF Specialist appear to have any idea of the safety risks they are taking is extremely disturbing to the UFUA. Considering our Queensland branch members paid such a heavy price to provide us with these learnings.

The 18/5/1995 QLD Coroner Davies report recommended:

- Both firefighters were separated from their hose due to a Rapid-Fire Progression (RFP) event Fennel was likely rendered unconscious from the pain of his burns and suffocated where he lay, while Watson ran out of air and suffocated trying to find his way out.

- Detailed Information, improved understanding and strict adherence to CABA Control Board Procedures.

- Dedicated Entry Control Officer (ECO) appointed ASAP tasked solely with monitoring the safety and location of all CABA crews.

- Firefighters to have their names emblazoned across their tunics for easy identification of firefighters on the fireground. (eg help to identify who is missing)

- All firefighters to have DSU's with the features recommended by the coroner.
- DSU's moved from the shoulder strap location to avoid being muffled if the firefighter falls on top of the unit.
- DSU's upgraded from simple two function alarms (movement & distress) to back to base alarms so that the OIC is immediately alerted that firefighter is down.
- Hands free CABA communications.
- Minimum of one radio for each CABA team.

Airservices still today don't comply with many of these recommendations from an incident that occurred 25 years ago.

What is the overall Holistic Safety Impact?

- Airservices have opted to continue buying 21-year-old technology DSU's.
- They are known to be deficient and do not comply with the internationally accepted standards having now been superseded twice for serious safety flaws identified by OSHA.
- The DSU SP2 has two only functions and has been proven to fail to provide adequate warning or assist in locating the stricken firefighters on numerous occasions due to heat impact on sound and muffling from the firefighter and PPE laying on top of the DSU.
- Airservices have ineffective CABA communications that have been disused on most stations due to its lack of reliability and poor operational performance. Airservices has refused to replace these sets.
- Airservices have dumped their Government Radio Network (GRN) radio replacement project. They have sought an exemption from upgrading their radios to the new standard required for all other emergency services in Australia.
- No GRN upgrade means limited or no intra-operability with other emergency services and Police at major incidents.
- No Radio Upgrade means ARFFS stuck with one frequency that gets overloaded rapidly with radio traffic at any major incident.
- No radio upgrades mean firefighters do a work around instead, by using UHF frequencies illegally (out of area) or doing a work around using VHF and emergency freq 131.0 despite known poor penetration into structures.
- Cross crewing the Domestic crew into the aviation crew and removing three ARFFS staff from the fireground at 2 of our highest-risk airports. This means staff that may have been available to form Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT) and dedicated Entry Control Officers are no longer available to rescue firefighters that become trapped or injured.

- As you can see the DSU's is just another breakdown in a series of very dangerous operational safety downgrades (cost cutting measures) that when combined put our member's lives at significant risk.
- Do more firefighters need to die before Airservices managers learn how firefighting works and begins to prioritize operational Safety?

Rescue Saw

Operational Bulletin, OB-18-006 pertaining to the Husqvarna 970 Rescue Saw was issued on 13/09/2018 with immediate effect and signalled its removal from operational service. The reason for removal was given as concerns over 'suitability and safety'. The ARFFS review for this piece of equipment has now extended beyond 143 days. No specific reasons have been given for its removal. It was stated there are safety concerns' which have never been detailed to staff or the union. No replacement has yet been forth coming, a working group was only established after it was raised in Senate Estimates. There has so far been no consultation at all with the UFUA regarding identifying a suitable replacement or the impact on operations since it has been removed from service. Although the UFUA has recently been informed (After last Estimates) that a working group will be established.

MOS 139H, Chapter 13 Ancillary Equipment states:

13.1.1.3 Operational equipment required for operational use must include the following (i) power saws.

Airservices have so far failed to produce a CASA exemption from this requirement and as a result it is believed ARFFS have been non-compliant for almost 6 months.

Unlike the evidence provided by the CFO of ARFFS to Senate Estimates, the ARFFS Rescue Saws are not obsolete and are only around 2-3 years old. They are state of the art 14inch Husqvarna Rescue Saws the type recommended by Boeing in their training documentation and training videos. ARFFS modified the Saws to allow a 16inch blade which can cut through the full fuselage thickness of an A380 aircraft in one cut but still be as light as possible.

The UFUA is unaware of any safety incidents occurring with the new saw or the previous Stihl 12inch saw that it replaced. There was an incident of an untrained recruit that nearly lost control of the saw. However, the watching instructor took control of the saw which is the correct procedure for safety events in training and the recruit was unharmed. The underlying cause is also thought to have been lack of upper body strength which should have been picked up during the ARFFS physical testing before this recruit was accepted. This is an area that many of our members conducting physical aptitude testing have reported feeling pressured into passing unsuitable candidates because of diversity targets.

Also, unlike the ARFFS CFO's evidence to the Senate Committee, without the saw ARFFS have no ability to rapidly cut in to an aircraft, or structures for access or egress in order to perform rescues or to create ventilation holes or drainage. Loss of the saw is severely impacting our ability to safely do our job. The actions of the CFO are clearly contradictory with the CASA 139H MOS and current industry standards. The jaws of life (cutter, spreader, ram) he referred to was also misleading as these rescue tools cannot be used to rapidly cut a hole in the side of an aircraft in order to affect a rescue or create

ventilation holes or drainage holes. Every professional fire vehicle in Australia carries a motorised rescue saw. They are used for opening up roller doors during factory fires, taking security gates and window bars out, dropping fences and a host of other uses. ARFFS saws have been used to gain access into many locations when sheds and hangers have caught fire and there are other examples of it being used at emergencies.

Electronic Rescue Unit (ERU) – Glass management, sharp edge protection

Original ARFFS documentation, training guide and 105/106 for Weber ERU (battery powered jaws of life) stated the requirement for glass management and sharps protection when using the ERU. The original Weber sets purchased included a full suite of rescue accessories, in vehicle charging and lighting package that ensured all ARFFS stations had comparable rescue equipment to that carried on the ARFFS Domestic Vehicles at the four large stations. ARFFS then went and changed to Lukas product for a new ERU but did not include the requirements for all the rescue accessories including crucial safety equipment like glass management or sharp edge protection, lighting etc. These were earlier identified by ARFFS as being a safety critical requirement, they are an industry standard for both casualty and firefighter protection. No risk assessment was completed or consultation with the union prior to making this decision not to provide operational staff with proper comprehensive rescue equipment.

Ladders

Operational Bulletin, OB-18-010 that was issued on the 5th of December 2018, banning all training over two metres effective immediately. This is meant to be an interim measure whilst an ARFFS working group conducted a review. 90 days have now passed since this bulletin has been issued.

ARFFS 90-day E103 compliance and Core Competency Reviews require physical, demonstration of competent use of the ladder that include actions that are now banned; application of agent from heights, taking hose aloft bandolier fashion, taking equipment aloft, performing leg locks, and stepping off at the head of the ladder. All operational ladders have a far greater working height than 2 metres. The CFO's assertion to the senate committee that training was not affected is demonstrably wrong and this decision has opened the ARFFS to ridicule across the nation and internationally.

All required core competency tasks cannot be completed, but rather than allow firemanship 3 (ladder work) to expire our members are being coerced into signing off firefighters as competent or renewing their ratings via a core competency review when they are not allowed to perform some of the required tasks. To sign this off would be indicating that competent use of operational ladders under simulated conditions (at height) was observed, when this would not be the case. It would also pose an issue on any officer who signed off an employee as competent that later suffered a fall when using them during an operational incident. If adequate training is abandoned but there is still an expectation that fire fighters will utilise ladders in gaining access and conducting rescue during a real emergency this only increases the risk to the firefighters.

Performance of Solberg RF6

Testing was completed by an independent lab in Europe, all samples of RF6 provided by ARFFS failed performance testing. Airservices now claims they have independent tests conducted by the CAA in the UK that confirms the product meets ICAO-B standards. The UFUA accepts and agrees that a transition from the fluorine containing foams is required to protect the environment and the health of our members using it.

But the UFUA also maintains that there is significant evidence available from a variety of sources that creates concern as to the real operational effectiveness of the primary firefighting agent in use for ARFFS in this country. Because of this the union believes it is very irresponsible for ARFFS to provide only minimal quantities of this agent. The worst example is category 9 airports where an A340-600 aircraft operating, ARFFS are required by ICAO to carry a minimum of 26,587 litres of agent. ARFFS Stations in Australia operating at Cat 9 carry just 26,700 litres barely making regulatory compliance with the absolute minimum required levels of agent by 113 litres.

Lack of credible and realistic foam behaviour training

Airservices 30-million-dollar Aircraft Training Aid built in Melbourne was originally designed to be able to replicate realistic, full scale aviation incidents. It was designed to have an interceptor and processing plant capable of safely processing ARFFS operational foam (Solberg RF6) so that ARFFS firefighters have exposure to using operational foam so that if/when they are required to use it in operations they are better equipped to do so. This training capability was never fully realised. Liquid Fuel pits at the Aircraft training Aid have never been used, the Training Aid uses gas fires to simulate an aircraft on fire. These fires are not extinguished by the foam but are simply turned off at the instructor's discretion when they believe the fire has been sufficiently doused. The foam being used is a training foam. The concentrate used is Solberg DoD3155 which they deliberately use at 30% lower concentration than manufacturers recommendation. This means foam produced for training is basically frothy water and does not provide the ARFFS trainees with a true indication of how to lay a real foam blanket and extinguish real liquid fuel fires.

So not only do current ARFFS firefighters have zero experience in applying foam to a large liquid fuel fire they don't even get to train with real foam produced through the ARFFS vehicles monitors. This lack of experience is leading to an ever-widening capability gap for ARFFS firefighters with an ever-increasing percentage never having used RF6 foam on a fuel fire from a fire vehicle monitor.

In order to address this obvious operational vulnerability CASA have enabled Airservices to arrange firefighters to apply RF6 foam from a handline with a foam branch onto a small patch of liquid fuel fire once a year. Our members see this tick the box exercise as a complete waste of time and effort. The union recently conducted a poll for its operational firefighters and the overwhelming response (95%) is that current ARFFS foam training is a joke, albeit a very dangerous joke on our members.

Safe systems of work CABA

Current ARFFS CABA procedures are out of date and unsafe and have been for many years. ARFFS commissioned a review of CABA procedures in line with industry standards and best practices and began the 'roadshow' process of the new 'safe systems of work'. As this training rolled out across the country questions from operational staff and local managers began to indicate several shortcomings in the new 'safe systems' – mainly that ARFFS did not have sufficient staff on smaller fire station to actually implement the new 'safe' procedures proposed at stations CAT 8 and below.

Implementation of the new CABA procedures has now been delayed. ARFFS has stated several times it is still going ahead but the rollout stopped over 3 months ago. NIL details have been forthcoming to operational staff or the union as to whether it is proceeding or whether they are trying to covertly change it to overcome the dangerous staffing shortages identified by it.

Interoperability of ARFFS with state Fire Services

Airservices ARFFS doctrine and seemingly the reason given every time management make a decision that negatively impacts manning and equipment levels is that 'we just wait for the urban fire brigades to arrive and back us up'. This was also used when the UFUA highlighted the unsafe staffing proposed in Adelaide during the curfew. The ARFFS CFO stated our crew could wait outside the terminal until SAMFS arrived. The Union just looks at statements like this with dismay and disbelief.

The problem with relying on State Services to fix all ARFFS staff shortage issues, is that it's an assumption. ARFFS don't have guarantees from any state fire service that a specific number or even what resources will arrive at any specific time. State and Territory brigades are also constrained by austerity measures and can only assure us that they will send what they have available at the time as soon as they have it. In the event an aviation incident occurs at the same time as a large incident in the surrounding area (bush fire, complex multi trauma RCR, natural weather events or industrial incident) then the reality is ARFFS may be the only resources able to extinguish any fires and effect rescue for quite some time. For this reason, ARFFS should have the capability to manage the incident for far longer than is currently the practice in order to allow a realistic time frame for the arrival of the other services.

During recent discussions with a senior fire officer of a state fire brigade in relation to task resource analysis (TRA) his opinion is Airservices underestimate the number of resources required to manage a CAT 10 incident and overestimate the number and capability of resources that the state service would be able to provide in the initial stages of the incident. The ARFFS are planning their response around a best case, linear response with no failures or operational hardships encountered, when in fact they should be planning to respond to a worst case and initially an uncontrolled rapidly evolving emergency event.

The concerns don't stop on arrival however, we don't train at this level with our state brigades. We have different procedures, different radios (without GRN ARFFS are unable to communicate with other services), differing operational terminology, state brigades don't possess the specialised equipment required for aviation firefighting, state brigades don't conduct familiarisation on airport terminals or on large aircraft often, there are significant questions regarding how the incident

management structure would function between different fire services, CABA teams operating in the same area without the ability to communicate with each other, ARFFS just downgraded their ICS structure to only Diploma level. There are no MOU's regarding state brigade firefighters operating under the direction of an ARFFS Station Officer or Fire Commander. Most state fire brigades have openly stated that this would never occur, for safety reasons they would always maintain control of their own teams. These are very complex operational concerns that should not be left to be tested out at an actual incident.

Access to secure airside areas is also a major factor in any aircraft incident at an airport. Local emergency services and Police are not able to safely enter and operate on active airfields without escort. This is a function of the airfield safety officers to escort emergency services in to the crash site. However, on a lot of airports the availability of Safety officers is limited. It is known that at some regional airports the Safety Officers have finished their shifts and left for the day before the last RPT flight arrives or departs. CASA should have oversight of this, and it should be reviewed as a matter of urgency. AEP exercises are usually pre-planned and all services ARFFS included bring in extra staff to ensure the exercise is successful. However this also skews the results by having operational positions filled by normally non-existent staff.

Radio Comms

ARFFS current UHF radios are obsolete and have been for many years now. They are no longer being manufactured resulting in difficulty obtaining spare parts to keep them operational. They are on the wrong frequency for Government Radio Networks. They do not have interoperability with State services or police which was a large factor in the National GRN proposal. The ARFFS radios have one frequency and at a major incident that gets over loaded very quickly.

Airservices ARFFS radio replacement project has been shelved for over four years now with no clear reason given to staff or the unions.

Currently ARFFS have no plans for replacement radio systems. A work around using bridging technology is in place at a few ARFFS stations (4) which allows ARFFS to talk to State Fire Services only.

ARFFS is the only emergency service not on GRN and again they had to get exemption from the radio network regulator to stay on the current frequency and not comply with the changes.

ARFFS still don't have proper Breathing Apparatus (CABA) radio comms. The sets purchased did not work and have been left in the store rooms at most stations as they are more dangerous to have on the sets than to have them off, given their failure to provide clear communication during real responses and training. Despite knowing it is a serious safety failure nothing has been done to replace these headsets.

Lack of ongoing Emergency Vehicle driver training (under response conditions)

On the morning of the 7 August 2011 a Mk 8 Fire Vehicle belonging to Airservices was involved in a fatal accident that led to the deaths of three people. There was a Coroners Inquest conducted on the

20-24th of May 2013 with the report delivered in June 2013. Subsequently COMCARE on the 22 April 2016 announced that Airservices Australia has been fined $160,000 for breaching federal work health and safety laws over a fatal crash involving an airport firefighting truck.

Justice White found Airservices breached the federal Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991 by failing to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect the health and safety of its workers and members of the public. The 30-tonne fire truck, with emergency lights and sirens on, went through a red light in suburban Darwin on 7 August 2011 and hit a Mitsubishi Triton, killing architects Greg McNamara, Lena Yali and Kevin Taylor. The three firefighters in the truck were not injured.

Justice White found Airservices failed to train its staff appropriately in driving under emergency conditions on a public road and failed to conduct an appropriate risk assessment for such a scenario.

Airservices admitted it overlooked the risks associated with driving under emergency conditions on public roads, particularly in relation to breaching red lights. Comcare Chief Executive Officer Jennifer Taylor acknowledged Airservices' significant efforts to improve its work health and safety systems since the accident. "However, all of the necessary measures did not exist at the time of the collision," Ms Taylor said.

Airservices put in place and advanced emergency vehicle driver training course at Mt Cotton for all firefighters to attend. They also introduced Emergency Vehicle Instructors at each station which were firefighters with a higher level of driver training that were to assist in maintaining the new driver skills.

Unfortunately, Airservices is proving once again they have learned nothing from this horrific incident. The Advanced Driver training and EVI training introduced for all firefighters was conducted once only in the 7.5-year period since the fatal accident. EVI's have continued to conduct training on station but have never been re-trained or upskilled in the 7.5-year period either. Airservices has now abandoned this training in favour of a course being conducted only for new recruits and held at the Avalon Airport.

Besides the obvious concerns that these people now getting an advanced emergency vehicle driving course are actually still recruits with mostly no ARFFS heavy vehicle driver experience. It is being run at an airport site using ad-hoc facilities instead of the state-of-the-art training grounds at Mt Cotton. Airservices claim that Mt Cotton was costing them over $14000 per candidate and Avalon will cost a few hundred per recruit. The Union seriously doubts these figures are anywhere near accurate, but it still gives a comparative value assessment. Obviously, like anything you pay for what you get.

This Union has serious concerns with Airservices apparent disregard for real operational safety. Despite this union making our concerns about the very different handling characteristics of the Mk7 vehicles to the new Mk 8's very clear, the potential safety issues around bringing the old Mills Tui Mk7 Stryker vehicles back online were ignored. In a short time one of these old ARFFS vehicles rolled over during a training exercise in Brisbane. These vehicles had already been identified as having serious mechanical flaws that contributed to another roll over shortly after their introduction into service in Melbourne. Some of these flaws were never fixed during their previous operational life despite being highlighted in the original accident report. Firefighters at those stations assigned the old vehicles were then instructed to conduct their emergency vehicle driver training in a ute (GUV) as the Mk7 vehicles were deemed to dangerous to take off the airport.

Another shining example of profit over safety, practice driving a 30-tonne fire truck under response conditions in a ute.

ARFFS provision of WRS/DTO

ICAO and CASR Regs & MOS are quite clear that difficult terrain around the airports needs to be assessed and a suitable means of access to any crashed aircraft needs to be provided. The provision of difficult terrain or water rescue is location specific and the equipment provided should closely match the local risk assessment. Airservices has again spent significant time and resources trying to avoid compliance with the rules that exist to ensure that commercial vessels are fit for purpose and are operated by persons trained to an appropriate standard.

Airservices have applied to AMSA for an exemption (AMSA Exemption 24) on the training qualifications for an ARFFS firefighter operating a rescue launch. Our members are only qualified to operate a recreational vessel under the State Recreational Boat Licence. The vessels in Sydney were originally built to comply with the survey requirements however this has also now also been exempted to survey for only inland waters. This restricts the large seaworthy ARFFS vessels in Sydney from legally going out through the heads at Botany Bay even to perform a rescue.

ARFFS vessels in some locations are not fit for purpose evidenced by emails and CIRRIS reports. Airservices WRS procurement officer is in the unions opinion not qualified to make operational decisions regarding what vessels are and are not suitable for the locations they are utilised.

Hobart – Neither vessel fit for purpose. Approx. 7 years ago Hobart began the process of replacing its aging WRS fleet (2 x vessels). Hobart is referred to in ARFFS documentation as a 'surf' location. That is, it has a surf beach at the southern end of the runway (WRS) and infrastructure is in place to enable ARFFS launching off that beach. The swift marine 4.6m RIB was purchased as ARFFS dedicated 'surf' response vessel. This is despite the vessel not being designed for use in the surf zone of beaches and it was never 'sea tested' prior to purchase – it was bought, sight unseen and shipped to Hobart.

Other ARFFS dedicated surf locations utilise the Thundercat, which is a vessel designed for this type of operations. The reason ARFFS used to justify the Swift marine RIB was that its heavy, rigid aluminium hull would provide protection for the vessel when operating amongst the oyster leases which are found within the legislated response zone at the northern end of the Runway. The inclusion of the heavy, rigid hull has made this vessel patently unsafe to operate in surf zones. This is due to weight affecting the performance – it's too heavy/underpowered and in the event of a capsize in surf the vessel becomes deadly to those persons who end up in the water.

During ARFFS surf training the vessel did capsize and due to its weight, it was impossible for the stranded crew members to right the vessel. This meant the crew had no way of getting out of the water and remained in the water so quite some time until it eventually washed ashore. Since that incident, ARFFS surf training/launching in this vessel was banned which has the potential to negatively impact ARFFS service delivery and response times.

ARFFS WRS public safety modules requires all WRS crew members, to operate the Hobart 4.6m RIB vessel in surf conditions. After the ARFFS training officers refused to sign any persons off as competent to operate this vessel in surf as it was banned. ARFFS side stepped this requirement by contracting surf lifesaving Tasmania to conduct surf training in their purpose designed surf rescue vessels. So now we have firefighters being signed off as competent operators of a surf rescue vessel that they don't operate to qualify them to use an ARFFS vessel that cannot safely operate inside the surf zone.

The other vessel is an aluminium 5.8m Extreme half-cab which is essentially a family/fishing vessel. Again, the UFUA requested that the vessel be 'sea tested' to assess its fitness for purpose but this was

refused by station management. This vessel has had performance issues from the beginning, it is dangerous to drive in many sea conditions and a number of CIRRIS hazard reports and emails have been raised. When the vessel was delivered it was powered by a 150hp Yamaha outboard engine but the vessels engineering compliance plate stated MAX horsepower allowable was 115hp. This resulted in a firefighter querying the legality of an overpowered/overweight vessel with management via email. The firefighters query was brushed off by ARFFS and a couple of weeks later a new compliance plate was issued via the boat dealer stating MAX hp was 150. During this time NIL changes or modifications were made to the vessel to allow for this sudden increase in weight and power. With a crew of 3 and all operational equipment aboard the vessel it is already sitting on its maximum allowable load weight. Should ARFFS rescue just one person and remove them to the safety of the vessel it would be overloaded.

During a recent WRS familiarisation/topography visit to the operator of the oyster farm located within the response zone for Hobart ARFFS (with whom Airservices has a MOU with regarding access to high water mark and equipment) revealed that nobody from ARFFS had inspected the site prior to the signing of the MOU. He stated that in his experience both vessels were unfit for operations within the area of the oyster leases and that the only vessel type suitable for rescue were jet powered vessels.

Interestingly, Airservices engaged a SME consultant in the early days of the vessel procurement process. The consultant analysed the complex nature of the areas ARFFS were required to respond and recommended large jet skis fitted with sleds were the ideal type. This recommendation was rejected and a later a senior manager stated this was due to the fact firefighters would likely 'showboat' on them.

Senators should note that this unsuitability of vessels and reliance on fishing boats to fill the role of rescue launches is common throughout the ARFFS service.

ARFFS vehicles ULFV Mk8 disposition

- Mk 8&9 vehicles are still restricted from being turned out lights and sirens to any emergencies except for Aircraft Crashes.
- Mk8&9 vehicle emergency lighting and Hi Viz package was not completed as stated by the CFO in the last senate estimates. 3 Mk8 vehicles are still red, one Mk9 is still in the corporate decals. Several Mk8s in Darwin, Sydney, Alice Springs, Melbourne etc do not currently have functional lighting packages operating.
- The new lighting package has known faults that have caused safety issues by failing during operational responses to emergencies. Multiple CIRRIS reports raised at several locations.
- Age of vehicles- vehicle were originally planned for replacement at 15 years due to the issues with the 30-year-old Mk5&6 fleet that lingered in service for far too long.
- Life span for the Mk8&9 vehicles has now been pushed out to 25 years with a supposed half-life refit. However, with the redundancy of a large proportion of our EVT's this is unlikely to be possible unless outsourced.
- Fire Vehicle Replacement programme 5 was supposed to start 2015 then stopped, new FVRP is still an unknown time line.
- Manufactures' production time is now 3 years from all reports. Now ARFFS have not enough vehicles in a rapidly growing industry. This is causing category drops already in locations with shared spares.

- Now that area spares are being shared because FVR5 was not completed the CFO has directed our members to respond to an incident in a GUV (ute) with rescue equipment thrown loose in the ute bed, if there are Mk8's off line for repairs or servicing.
- ULFV Mk8 Ergonomic and internal lighting upgrades were put off for well over 5 years- (Locker standardisation project)
- Domestic Response Vehicles in Melbourne and Sydney are past used their use by date.
- Ladder appliances (Morita) passed used their major service dates, compliance plates changed by Airservices. Vehicle is not suited for aviation accidents and has no off-road capability.
- Members in Sydney report they do not hold EWP licences anymore and the number of staff maintaining their ratings to operate the Morita is well under the ARFFS standard of 75% of staff trained before vehicles are introduced.
- No Internal access vehicle even being looked at for cat 9, 8, 7, 6 stations.
- The one Airstairs vehicle purchased was allocated to Melbourne despite Sydney being a much busier and higher risk airport. There are no current plans to purchase more Airstairs in the near future.
- While preparing this submission the Union downloaded over 19 CASA Exemptions that applied to ARFFS. This was reviewed by CASA on their website on the 5/3/2019 (this week) and now there are just three?

Operational fire hoses- not tested to Australian standards

As this Union alerted the Senators to during estimates and provided evidence in the form of a signed and dated copy of an ARFFS Operational Dispensation from the ARFFS CFO stating ARFFS was exempted from testing fire hose to the Australian Standards. Despite assertions that it was never published the dispensation was signed by the Local Operations Manager of Alice Springs ARFFS on the 7/11/2018. It was endorsed on the 8/11/2018 by the Regional Operations Manager (West). It was approved by the ARFFS Chief Fire Officer on the 9/11/2018, with the notations approved and CASA approval marked not required. This document was provided to all ARFFS staff as an approved document. A station officer in Brisbane then wrote to the LOM Brisbane expressing his concerns with this document on the 18/01/2019. The LOM Brisbane replied to these concerns on the 21/01/2019 it states in part:

Prior to releasing this directive, I did give it consideration and sought clarification from the Chief's office. I also contacted a number of other locations (16) in total regarding the current status of hose testing at their location to see if they were continuing with the new contractor testing or deferring to the dispensation. All stations contacted who have not completed their hose testing are completing hose testing as per the dispensation.

The current dispensation is a national issue **and has been directed by the CFO**.

I can see no argument that differs Brisbane from the rest of Australia.

As Senators can see far from being an unpublished document as claimed this was a directive for all members not comply with Aust Standards for critical safety equipment, clearly approved by the ARFFS CFO contrary to the Regs and marked not sent to CASA for approval.

To highlight the seriousness of this issue the union has evidence that when Brisbane ARFFS tested their hoses to Australian Standards just this week 7/3/2019 out 34 hoses, 11 were condemned and 7 failed requiring repairs. More than a 50% failure rate of frontline safety critical firefighting equipment is unacceptable and puts our firefighters at risk when they depend their fire hoses to keep them safe at a fire.

Fire station age and condition

An independent assessor should be appointed from outside Airservices to assess the following Fire stations that are in a very impoverished state and provide significant risks to our members with asbestos and non-compliant and unsafe conditions that have been raised repeatedly by our members and ignored by Airservices.

Townsville

Avalon

Hobart

Launceston

Alice Springs

Rockhampton

Mackay

All these stations are old riddled with asbestos, over crowded and way over due for replacement.

Exemption from Advanced Diploma for Fire Station Managers

On the 18/10/2018 this Union contacted CASA to relay its concern that Airservices was openly advertising for Local Operations Managers (Manger in Charge of the Fire Stations) in breech of the regulations which require these persons to hold an Advanced Diploma in Public Safety.

On the 23/10/2018 CASA replied:

Thank you for your email below about the use of Diploma Rating for long term replacement staff.

CASA has determined that the arrangements by Airservices Australia in relation to the Local Operations Manager (LOM) are acceptable and have no direct impact on the safe delivery of an Aviation Rescue and Firefighting (ARFFS) response. The LOM is an organisational arrangement that is independent of the regulatory roles and response required by the local ARFFS unit.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Hutton
Branch Manager
Government and International Relations

MOS 139H States:

12.1.2 Licence to Operate

12.1.2.1 ARFFS staff must have a current AFC and local competencies for the operating positions that they hold.

12.1.2.3 ARFFS staff must hold a current/valid CASA Certificate of Competency (Licence) for their operating position.

Section 18.1: General

18.1.1 Standard: Competency Levels for Fire Fighting Staff

18.1.1.1 All operational firefighting staff must hold the appropriate competencies, which is commensurate with the functional position to be occupied.

18.1.1.5 All operational ARFFS staff must comply with CASA standards that require a current qualification and Certificate of Competency commensurate with the functional role at a specific location. (Refer to paragraph 12.1.2.3.)

18.1.1.7 All operational staff must hold a current competency in Aviation Fire Fighting Operations for the skill qualifications required for the operating position in accordance with CASA requirements of the AFC Training Modules.

18.1.1.8 An officer in Charge of ARFFS operations at Level 1 aerodromes **must be a person** who holds the following qualification:

(a) **for aerodromes categorised, category 6 and above**, a minimum of an ARFFS AFC **Advanced Diploma;** UFUA (Aviation Branch)

Section 20.1: General

20.1.1 Standard: Staff Qualifications

20.1.1.1 Officers in charge of ARFFS operations at Level 1 aerodromes must be a person who holds the following qualification:

(a) **for aerodromes categorised, category 6 and above**, a minimum of an ARFFS AFC Advanced Diploma;

20.1.2.5 When formulating staff numbers, consideration must be given to the type of aircraft using the aerodrome and the need for personnel for vehicle operation, to use handlines, ladders, and other rescue and firefighting operations **including command and control of fire ground as the combatant authority.**

CASR's States:

139.773 Officer in charge

(1) An ARFFS provider **must appoint,** as officer in charge of ARFFS operations for an aerodrome, a person who is based at the aerodrome and who holds:

(a) for an aerodrome categorised as Category 6 or above—**an AFC Advanced Diploma** that meets the standards in the Manual of Standards; or

(b) for an aerodrome categorised as Category 5 or below—an AFC Diploma that meets the standards in the Manual of Standards.

(2) In paragraphs (1)(a) and (b):

AFC means Australian Fire Competencies.

139.765 Knowledge, equipment and expertise to deal with aviation hazards

An ARFFS provider must have the knowledge, equipment and expertise to deal with any hazard likely to arise during an aviation accident or incident, including any hazard mentioned in the Manual of Standards.

As you can see CASA has again accepted Airservices flimsy safety argument that appointing the Fire Commander (FC's) as the OIC of an incident is a valid operational step. Rather than provide a dedicated ICS structure like all other fire services, they have simply added another substantial role to one of the busiest positions (Operations Officer) on an already dangerously understaffed fireground. Overload of the OIC has been one of the biggest contributing factors in firefighter fatalities. ARFFS OIC's are currently expected to manage the incident as an OIC, liaise with other services while still being the Entry Control Officer and the Incident Safety Officer.

In fact, at our category 6 airports there is only one ARFFS Officer. if that Fire Commander leaves the fireground to report to the Forward Command Post there is no other ARFFS officer left controlling operations or safety on the fireground. This is also an area where Airservices decision not to proceed with the Government Radio Network upgrade has seriously compromised communications for this role. These FC's can't leave the fireground but can't communicate with other services either.

There are now Local Operations Managers being appointed to roles who have never even been Station Officer or Fire Commander levels, but they are now placed in charge of these officers. The role of the Local Operations Manager (LOM) includes ensuring the fire station is operationally prepared and everyone is competently performing their roles. As a long-term operational officer and manager, myself I would state that jumping past the two most important operational ranks straight to fire station manager is fraught with danger.

The real reason for this is that no one wants to take on a contract employment position with Airservices. Several officers were even offered returned to previous rank clauses after two years so they could just walk away from the toxic management culture that has been created. Many of our members have Advanced Diploma's but refuse to apply for these roles. They do not want to take a risk with their careers ending because of being on a contract and losing the protection of an EA/Award and the UFUA. This issue would be resolved immediately if Airservices would simply offer the existing ASA 7&8 levels under the ARFFS EA. Some managers are already on this ASA7&8 but under the Corporate EA which is probably an eligibility issue under FWA.

Fire Control Centres

ARFFS is currently looking into a change to Fire Control Centres in ARFFS. The Union believes that once again this a cost saving measure that Airservices is dressing up as an improvement. Brisbane is getting a new Fire Station to protect the new parallel runway. It is very poorly located due to Airservices lack of foresight in choosing a proper location while the reclamation (sand pumping) of the site was underway. This site has no chance of complying with the ICAO and CASR requirements for an FCC. The use of cameras was explored and rejected as well because of costs.

Airservices now wish to remove the ICAO & CASR requirement for a Firefighter to observe all landings and take-offs. They want to transfer this requirement over to ATC. ATC already have the ability to hit a crash alarm if they observe any incidents on the airport. However this move would reduce safety by taking a dedicate FCC Operator who is tasked to observe all aircraft landings and take offs and add this role to an already busy ATC controller. It should be noted that in most cases of a crash alarm activation it is the FCC Operator that observes and alerts the crew of the incident type and location.

ICAO not only require an FCC but they also recommend that the FCC operator is dedicated to the role and does not form part of the required operational crew.

Newcastle ARFFS

As senators would be aware Newcastle Airport is a booming regional airport with over 1 million passengers annually. Currently ARFFS is being provided by the Department of Defence. It has been brought to the Unions attention by current members that were previously Newcastle based Defence Force Firefighters that the standard for ARFFS provision at this airport is not on par with requirements of 139H and CASA does not have the power to regulate this. This is despite over 1 million civilians per annum relying on the Defence Force ARFFS to protect them. This union believes that as soon as a shared defence/civilian airport receives over 350,000 passengers per annum it should either be regulated under 139H or passed over to Airservices to provide the ARFFS compliant to the National standards.

5. ARFFS Regulatory Policy Reviews

ARFFS Australia, currently barely meets its obligations as a signatory state to the Chicago Convention [Convention on International Civil Aviation]. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development ARFFS Regulatory Policy Review [DIRDC Review] was recently being championed by the current Airservices Senior Leadership Team. If it were implemented it would see the standard of ARFFS in Australia decline to a more dangerous level. Compared to countries like the UK, USA, Canada and New Zealand, Australia already has the **lowest standards** for the provision of ARFFS in the world. A fact highlighted in our last audit by ICAO. The DIRDC review proposed to lower that standard even further by removing some existing regional services and not providing new ARFFS at many significant regional airports around Australia for the foreseeable future.

If the proposals in the DIRDC review were adopted it would have been the rural and regional areas of the country that would have been affected the most with a reduction in ARFFS cover or no ARFFS being provided for the foreseeable future.

The Union faces these regulatory challenges on a regular cycle, with every change of government. ARFFS seems to be an easy target for implementing cuts to service and minimizing capability or threats of privatization. DIRDC, CASA and Airservices have so far proven to very compliant and open to these attacks on safety. Meanwhile Airservices spends gross amounts on their new One Sky project.

Senators in 2006 BITRE data for domestic and international passengers shows 65.48 million passengers passing through our major airports. Now in 2018 the BITRE data shows 103.8 million passengers through these ports. This is an increase of 38.32 million passengers in a little over a decade. So, with nearly 40% more passengers exposed to the risk of an aircraft incident, airline profits at record levels

Airservices, DIRDC and CASA are quite comfortable supporting a regulatory review that would have closed airport fire stations and stopped any new fire station opening for the foreseeable future. This raises serious alarm within the union as to the safety commitment these agencies have to providing dedicated emergency services to the flying public.

While this union with the support of the senate and ministers have prevented this regulation going ahead, the problem we see is that if it keeps coming up regularly, it takes away the focus on improving the ARFFS service to one of just trying to survive. The model of providing a National ARFFS is unique in Australia but it is also extremely effective. Privatisation of the service would see a cottage industry of private fire services barely compliant or token by nature with perhaps only the big four or five airports having services that perform well. The rest just token, no way to maintain training and skills, no career progression, little or no credibility as an emergency service.

The UFUA supports a National ARFFS fire service model that ensures standards are maintained and a reliable effective fire service provided. Airservices, CASA and DIRDC need to support this, not undermine it every time the government changes. This branch of the UFUA supports a fire service inspectorate model either within CASA or within Public Safety for properly assessing operational effectiveness of ARFFS in Australia.

6. Changes to safe crewing concept at Perth and Brisbane Airports

The crewing at Brisbane and Perth ARFFS was reduced by three [3] staff per crew which is a total loss of 12 operational positions or 24 crew members across these two fire stations. A380 movements decreased temporarily at Perth and then recovered. Brisbane A380 movements temporarily halted then re-established with two movements per day. ARFFS has effectively reduced total crew strength for Category 10 coverage at two of the busiest ARFFS locations, risk ranked at number 3 & 4 in Australia from 17 to 14 crew members. By incorporating the domestic response crew into the aviation crew, it seems clear that Airservices has a plan to place profit over safety at even the highest risk airports.

Airservices actions are affecting fire fighter and public aviation safety and clearly demonstrates the importance of having strong prescriptive regulations that are directly tied to International Civil Aviation Organisation [ICAO] Standards and Recommended Practices [SARPS]. Pandering to the profit margins of industry players has seen Airservices increase the amount of risk it is prepared to accept with its decision making. This follows that passengers and firefighters also now bear more risk from these poor decisions.

The ARFFS Chief Fire Officer (CFO) originally attempted to reduce staffing in Perth and Brisbane even further (4 staff per crew) which would have amounted to a total loss of around 32 operational positions across these 2 fire stations. This was written into his confidential draft submission to the ARFFS Branch Executive.[1] This would have been achieved by introducing a totally unsafe concept known as the "remission factor." The use of remission for category 10 operations was soundly rejected by the original ARFFS operations experts with over 250 years of combined operational experience who assessed the A380 operational risks as a B class risk [unacceptable risk] back in 2007.[2] Nothing has changed to make that aircraft any easier for ARFFS firefighters to deal with when it crashes.

[1] ARFF Operational Review, Category 10 Operating Model, Airservices Australia
[2] Airservices Australia – ARFF Category 10

In introducing these changes into Brisbane and Perth this same CFO completely ignored the input of a committee of ARFFS operations experts he requested to participate in a risk assessment. The committee of experts assessing these proposed changes in Brisbane provided over 176 years of ARFFS operations experience. This CFO and ARFFS Risk Specialist effectively excluded their input from the SCARD conducted. In fact, the ARFFS paperwork showed that the staffing model had already been approved by the ARFFS Regional Manager months prior to the safety work even being conducted. When our members on this SCARD (Risk Assessment) committee asked for their names to be withdrawn from the safety work this was also denied. This culminated in the staff of Brisbane taking the unprecedented action of a vote of no confidence in their local manager with a 98% lack of confidence.

The ARFFS Risk Specialist who has no operational experience at all wrote a safety statement instead without any input from operational experts accepting all the risks. This is an example of the flawed safety systems in place within Airservices that start with the end in mind and fabricate a safety story to reach that predetermined conclusion.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation [ICAO] "Remission Factor" is an allowance for ARFFS providers to knowingly operate at a category below the largest aircrafts using that airport. Based on the assumption that if the airport does not meet a minimum of 700 movements of that largest aircraft in the 3 busiest months of operation than it can reduce category based on the reduced exposure risks.

The Union and many of the better ARFFS providers see this practice as completely unsafe. When category is determined for an airport especially here in Australia there is a minimalist approach that sees only the bare minimum of agent and crew provided. To reduce these levels even further by a whole category will simply mean the ARFFS already slim chance of success due to the minimalist approach is negated completely. It is also a breach of the WHS Act which requires Airservices to ensure there is a safe system of work for its staff. If they knowingly give crews less agent than required and top that with less staff than required, how is Airservices meeting its obligated duty to provide employees with safe systems of work? This was raised with both Comcare and CASA and completely ignored.

Remission is currently being practiced here in Australia overtly at three major airports; Darwin, Coolangatta, and Cairns. Airservices only provide Category 8 staffing and these airports regularly cater for Category 9 aircraft movements. ARFFS new hybrid staffing model is simply a covert remission where they use of the DRV crew to make up numbers to supplement the Category 10 requirements. A practice that was declared too risky in their own Risk Assessment process in 2007, and contrary to the risk assessment process that introduced the DRV concept into service.

ICAO Remission was supposed to be completely removed in 2005 however, some ICAO member states resisted this purely on financial grounds. Fortunately, the Union were able to discredit the CFO's assertion in his advice paper to the EGM & SLT that Perth and Brisbane could safely drop to a crew size of 2 Officers and 8 Firefighters with only three vehicles as it was clearly in breach of the ICAO requirements. The CFO then moved on to a slightly less unsafe position of removing the dedicated Domestic Response Crew (DRV) from Brisbane and Perth Airport during periods of Category 10 movements to make up Aviation crew numbers.

ARFFS services are required to respond to domestic firefighting incidents here in Australia under the Australian CASR & Airservices regulations. ICAO Airport Services Manual Part 1 states that any ARFFS that are required to respond to these domestic incidents must have **robust procedures in place to ensure** that aviation responses **are not affected** by those responses. With the introduction of Hybrid

staffing arrangements in Brisbane and Perth, whenever crews respond to a domestic fire incident/alarm they are utilising part of the dedicated core aviation crewing for these Airports. The airport ARFFS then has to drop category. Dropping category means that crew numbers and/or agent is reduced below that required for the size of the aircraft operating. Brisbane and Perth ARFFS currently respond to around 1800 incidents per annum and should drop category whenever they have a domestic response during periods of Category 10 aircraft movements. This has been observed as not happening and in fact reports are being received of local managers encouraging staff not record these category drops.

Airservices will attempt to argue that the 14 dedicated aviation staff on duty is all that was required under the original risk assessment. However that assessment was conducted under the system that has been in place since 2007 and allows for three dedicated domestic response staff being available to supplement the core aviation response unless otherwise engaged. The same system that is still currently in place at Sydney and Melbourne. Regardless of how Airservices wants to spin their hybrid staffing model, the literal result is that there were 17 staff on shift for Category 10 in both Brisbane and Perth and there is now only 14 and if the Union hadn't shown an interest in the matter there would now only be 13. Any reduction in staffing levels should only have been undertaken after a proper Task Risk Analysis (TRA) was conducted, as recommended in the ICAO SARPS since 2013.

The Union raised these concerns with the CASA CEO directly asking why the change was allowed when there had been no Task Resource Analysis completed as is required now by ICAO. A copy of his reply[3] is attached which basically states that they (CASA) and Airservices have no requirement to follow ICAO recommendations. The Union believes that besides the fact that ignoring ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARP's) is blatantly unsafe, as a point of law this is also incorrect and goes directly against the Air Navigation Act of 1920 which states:

> Ch 26 Regulations (1) The Governor-General may make regulations, **not inconsistent with this Act**: (b) for the purpose of **carrying out and giving effect to the Chicago Convention,** as amended by the Protocols referred to in subsection 3A (2), **any Annex to the Convention relating to international standards and recommended practices** (being an Annex adopted in accordance with the Convention) and the Air Transit Agreement;
>
> The Airservices Act 1995 Division 2 Ch 8 Airservices Functions: (i) for the purpose of Australia or another country **giving effect to the Chicago Convention;** or Ch 9 Manner in which AA must perform its functions (3) AA must perform its functions **in a manner that is consistent with Australia's obligations** under: (a) **the Chicago Convention;** and…

The Airservices Act 1995 Division 2 provides a definition of the Chicago Convention:

> (a) the Convention on International Civil Aviation done at Chicago on 7 December 1944, whose English text is set out in Schedule 1 to the *Air Navigation Act 1920*; and (b) the Protocols amending that Convention, being the Protocols referred to in subsection 3A (2) of that Act, whose English texts are set out in Schedules to that Act;

[3] Reply letter to the Union from Shane Carmody Acting CEO CASA 10/11/2016

and (c) the Annexes to that Convention relating to **international standards and recommended practices,** being Annexes adopted in accordance with that Convention.

As Australia is a signatory state to the ICAO Convention, ARFFS is subject to Annexe 14 of the ICAO Chicago Convention. There is currently a very long list of ICAO **recommended practices,** which in the Union's view, are simply being ignored by both Airservices and CASA and their current plan is to ignore more of them, by actively supporting and promoting a reduction in ARFFS capability and to introduce Objective based regulations and Manual of Standards which allow them to further reduce ARFFS effectiveness.

Currently this unsafe crewing level is in place at Brisbane and Perth Airports and the current CFO is keen to implement unsafe crew levels into all ARFFS through incomplete and inaccurate task resource analysis modelling. Using assumptions based on incorrect procedures or data will adversely affect the TRA results. This will further reduce the safety of aviation in Australia and the operational safety of our members.

The legal argument noted above is also the same argument contained in a previous submission on your website to the RRAT by DIRDC in relation to Annexe 17[4] and aviation security. So this is not something the Union has made up. It is what the Department with oversight of Airservices and CASA believe is the case, at least for annexe 17. When it comes to annexe 14 ARFFS though they fall in line with CASA and Airservices. The Union is simply asking for this same level of importance to apply in the ICAO ARFFS recommended practices.

7. Changes and proposed changes to Emergency Vehicle Technicians

Aviation Rescue Firefighting services rely very heavily on highly sophisticated vehicle technology in order to be able to fight massive fires in minimum time frames. The ARFFS vehicles possibly more so than any other component of an ARFFS service makes the difference between success and failure on the fireground. During it's nearly 70 year history ARFFS in Australia has been provided with specialised vehicles and specialist Emergency Vehicle Technicians [EVTs] to maintain those vehicles in a state of constant readiness and 100% reliability.

As part of the Accelerate program Airservices has recently made a significant number of these highly specialised EVT's redundant and is market testing the outsourcing of the maintenance of ARFFS vehicle fleet in the future. An enormous amount of corporate and technical knowledge walked out the door with these redundancies. Detailed history of ARFFS vehicles and maintenance systems coupled to a deep understanding of the needs of a safety critical aviation and public safety organisation like ARFFS is critical. There is no option for a contractor that wants the ARFFS to fit into their schedules or that promises far more than they can actually deliver. The ARFFS vehicles and equipment have to be ready and have to be fixed to meet regulatory and aircraft scheduling obligations. Previously most fire stations had an EVT on call 24/7 for emergency breakdowns that effected ARFFS service provision.

The Union believes this decision was a safety and operations disaster waiting to happen, because without our vehicles and without 100% reliability our firefighters simply cannot provide a service. As

[4] SUBMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO THE SENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT REFERENCES COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO AIRPORT AND AVIATION SECURITY, January 2015

part of this minimalist, 'barely compliant is good enough' approach adopted by ARFFS management there is only just the regulated amount of firefighting agent required to be carried at our larger airports. Firefighting agent being water, foam and dry chemical powder used to extinguish aviation fires. For example our Category 9 Airports that have A340-600 aircraft operating are required by ICAO to carry 26,587 litres of agent. ARFFS Stations in Australia operating at Cat 9 carry just 26,700 litres barely making regulatory compliance with the absolute minimum required levels of agent by less than 113 litres. It should also be noted that the NFPA NFC 403[5] requires ARFFS that use Fluorine Free Foams (F3) like ARFFS in Australia does, to carry nearly a 1/3 more agent due to the known drop in operational performance.

In this case if one of the three vehicles online for category 9 fails, because it is not being properly maintained by expert technicians the ARFFS has lost 1/3 of its required agent capacity. It is highly debateable if ARFFS in Australia can achieve its mission with even 100% of the minimum required agent under the regulations. Most modern international airports carry two or three times that amount. The NFPA regulations in the US require significantly more agent based on listening to their ARFFS experts and data from real crash scenes that prove far more agent is required. ARFFS in Australia needs to follow this example if we are going to be sure we can successfully carry out our mission. Barely compliant is not going to ensure that success.

Our Fire Fighters now have to cross their fingers and hope the vehicles will actually work because of minimal maintenance and servicing. Some stations now share spare vehicles so there is no guarantee that another vehicle will even be available while our vehicles are off line. ARFFS are now allowing the servicing of operational vehicles while they are supposed to be online for emergencies. (Broome and Coffs Harbour). Firefighters are also being guided through make shift repairs by phone to get vehicles started (Newman) and vehicles are being left idling all day because they can not be switched off with any certainty that they will start again when required. (Also, Newman). Coffs Harbour has reduced category twice the first time they did not even have the redundancy of a GUV (Ute) to transport staff and equipment to an incident as it was away at another station ferrying staff for training.

Our Firefighters are being coerced into loading spare vehicles onto low loaders in lieu of all the EVT's that were made redundant. They have not been trained to do so it is also not part of their function as firefighters. No consultation with this union was entered into when the decision to remove EVT's was made and this union soundly rejects Airservices passing this role over to our members. Its unsafe and it's not our role.

Senators should also consider the cost of having a broken-down fire vehicle sitting on a major runway in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane or Perth or even in the smaller stations? What will the airline customers say when their aircraft are told to go around, do circuits or worse, divert to an alternate airport while a tow vehicle big enough to move a 32-tonne fire vehicle is found. This then needs to be sent to the airport, the driver and vehicle put through security procedures to go airside, and a Safety Officer escort arranged. If at a station with no emergency vehicle technician then a mechanic with no ASIC, no airside drivers licence, no authority for use airside on their vehicle and with all their tools and diagnostic equipment has to also be cleared through security only to prove that they know very little about the ARFFS vehicles as they try to get them started and or towed off the runway.

The danger of removing expert technicians from ARFFS is blatantly obvious to every operational ARFFS Fire Fighter who relies so heavily on the expertise of our EVT's to keep our fire service operational and

[5] NFPA® 403
Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Fire-Fighting Services at Airports
2014 Edition

minimise down time. High tech ARFFS vehicles and equipment, need highly trained expert technicians to maintain them to their maximum potential and effectiveness.

This system is failing on a regular basis and is already resulting in category drops and the unsafe practice of trying to maintain and service vehicles that supposed to operational and ready to meet 2-3 minute response times.

8. Operational Input into, and coercion of participants at Risk Assessments.

Before any operational changes can be made, Airservices/ARFFS is required to assess the risks inherent in making those changes to the system as a whole. When conducting these risk assessments it is vital that there is a broad operations base of knowledge within the risk assessment committee to properly ascertain the inherent risks of changing a proven system that is in place. The current practice within in ARFFS has been to exclude the Union completely and cherry pick participants that can be bluffed or coerced into agreeing with any changes that the ARFFS SLT want to make.

The Airservices Australia [Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting] Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021 provides:

> ***"15. Consultation on change***
>
> *15.1 The intent of this consultation provision is to ensure employees and any employee representatives are fully informed, consulted and provided with a genuine opportunity to express their views and provide comments and suggestions prior to any final decision being made about changes that are likely to have a significant impact on employees and changes to an employee's regular roster or ordinary hours of work. Airservices will give genuine consideration and respond to matters raised and proposals and options put forward.*
>
> *15.2 These consultation arrangements support Airservices in meeting its legislative and regulatory obligations.*
>
> *15.3 Airservices will consult employees and employee representatives about:*
>
> *(a) the introduction of changes that are likely to have a significant impact on employees covered by this Agreement before a final decision is made to adopt a proposal and implement any change; and."*[6]

The ability to apply quality operational ARFFS experience to proposed changes comes mainly at the Risk Assessment phase. It is here that the Union and experienced ARFFS officers can provide the most benefit in the consultation process and show examples of how real safety threats are being accepted by staff that either do not know any better or are too intimidated by ARFFS management to speak up. In a safety critical business it is essential that a Just Safety Culture is in place that allows experienced staff to speak freely against poorly thought out proposals designed simply to reduce costs. This is no

[6] Airservices Australia [Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting] Enterprise Agreement 2018 - 2021

longer the case in Airservices, it is Group think only, the exact opposite of Cockpit Resource Management (CRM) principles.

Currently Airservices ARFFS Risk Assessments are conducted in reverse. The ARFFS SLT come up with a cost saving measure and this is then provided to the CFO and the ARFFS Operational Risk Specialist. The Union believes they then attempt to create an argument to support the proposal, creating parameters by which the Risk is to be assessed. These parameters are designed to restrict an open and honest assessment of the operational risks by confining the assessment to an artificial set of parameters based on assumptions that are usually not valid operationally and designed to achieve the desired outcome. Either this or they formulate the risk assessment committee out of their own group working for the CFO who will agree to anything they are told to. The Union urges the Senators to recommend an investigator review the ARFFS Risk Assessments and interview staff involved. The Union believes that should an independent operational safety expert look at the Airservices risk work there would be a lot of concerns raised.

9. ARFFS Operations Authority

Any changes within ARFFS must be authorised by the ARFFS Operating Authority. This is currently the CFO or his delegate. Anyone in this position has a very heavy burden of accountability and is the last line of defence within ARFFS to prevent unsafe and operationally deficient practices or policies being introduced. The current CFO and Manager of National Operations (MNO's) current and previous have proven on at least two occasions that they are not fit to hold this position of trust.

The first example is the Fire Vehicle Replacement 5 Concept of Operations[7] and Strategy[8] both of these documents were approved and signed off by the current CFO and the previous MNO countersigned approval of the documents as well. Both of these documents and the consultative committees of which the Union was a part clearly demonstrated the lack of firefighting agent and the high level of risk that ARFFS was carrying in its current state. It clearly mentions the facts that most other International Airports carry two to three times the agent carried by Australian ARFFS. It clearly showed the shortfall of the current service to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) National Fire Codes (NFC) 403 and went as far as to state that the NFPA standard was 'Operationally realistic' although still less than actual water usage recorded at modern aircraft incidents. The NFPA is a global non-profit organization, established in 1896, devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. These widely acclaimed and respected standards are the basis of good decision making within the fire industry.

This is the same CFO and MNO who fully supported the introduction of the remission factor into both Perth and Brisbane airports. So from acknowledging at the committee and in writing that even in our current configuration of Category 10 with four trucks online that we are seriously under resourced with agent, he supported the SLT's introduction of full remission into two major Australian airports. It was only the hard work done by the Union discrediting his advice paper to the EGM ARFFS that stopped this dangerous practice being implemented. Both papers and minutes of the committee are available for the RRAT committee as evidence.

The second example of the CFO's performance in the critical safety role of Operations Authority is evidenced by his position on the use of a Task Resource Analysis (TRA). The TRA is an accepted

[7] Fire Vehicle Replacement 5 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS
[8] Fire Vehicle Replacement 5 [FVR5] Strategy Paper

methodology endorsed by the ICAO Annexe 14, described in detail in the ICAO Airport Services Manual Part 1 and also in the NFPA National Fire Codes 403.

The TRA concept was introduced by ICAO in 2013 and Airservices was advised of this via a state's letter from ICAO. The CFO discussed this requirement in detail with the ARFFS Regional Manager group. The Regional Manager (Western) was assigned to do more work on the TRA and its impact on the ARFFS. It was openly acknowledged by the CFO that it was going to mean that ARFFS crew sizes would have to increase in line with those of other major airports. For example Heathrow has 22 firefighters and officers on duty, San Francisco has 23 firefighters and officers on duty.

The then Regional Manager (Western) was even sent to New Zealand by Airservices to observe Auckland Airport conduct their TRA. The current CFO delivered a presentation to the CEO Airservices on the TRA at an ARFFS Operational and Capability Advisory Committee (OCAC)[9] meeting in September 2013[10]. From that meeting onward all talk of conducting a TRA ceased and the CFO openly acknowledged that it had been shut down by the CEO at the time and would not be completed.

The same CFO who is obviously well aware of the operational shortfall in ARFFS staffing and the lack of compliance with the ICAO recommended TRA process then approved the draft proposal for Perth and Brisbane to reduce crewing to only 2 officers and 8 firefighters using the remission factor to cover Category 10 aircraft movements. The Union was successful in stopping the draft proposal but it serves to show that, in the Union's view, this CFO cannot be trusted with such an accountable position as the Operations Authority for ARFFS. It also shows that far from safety being the main focus of Airservices as directed by the minister, public safety and the safety of Fire Fighters is taking a back seat to cost reduction strategies.

10. Bullying and Harassment

As part of the Accelerate program Airservices has made a concerted effort to intimidate its workforce by threats of Code of Conduct charges for even the most trivial issues. The Union believes this is a management strategy designed to frighten our members into blindly accepting any change Airservices wishes to implement irrespective of the consequences. This is also evident in their recent reinterpretation of EA clauses that have stood the test of time for the past three EA's. All of a sudden, these conditions are being reinterpreted in Airservices favour and the only option left for the Union is to take these to FWA for determination. Again, the Union believes that these actions are a management strategy to show Airservices management flexing their Industrial Relations muscles and trying to intimidate our members and tying the Union up in unnecessary litigation to retain employment conditions the Union and its members had agreed to in good faith.

The Union urges this Committee to appoint an independent investigator to investigate bullying and harassment of employees. As stated several times already, in a safety critical environment such as aviation you cannot have frontline operational staff too frightened of being sacked or sanctioned for speaking out on any safety issues or even to propose alternate solutions.

The Accelerate program has seen the removal of most of the ARFFS Regional Administration staff. This administration workload will now all fall back onto the operational Fire Officers. Besides not being

[9] Item 4 - Staff Level Review (CFO) - 10 Sep 13.pdf
[10] ARFF OCAC - Agenda - Mtg 4 Fri 13 Sep 13 (FINAL DRAFTv4).pdf

part of their role and job function, as well as a poor use of a professional fire officer's time, they will have no choice but to comply or they will be threatened with dismissal or demotion. This is just another example of how our members are being forced into compliance and accepting more and more unrelated workloads to make up for the drastic cuts in support staff.

This Union has so far investigated four Local Operations Managers under the FWA right of entry provisions. Two of these managers were removed from their positions and now work under the CFO without loss of pay or penalty for their actions. A third decided to leave his station voluntarily and now works at the training school. The fourth is still in charge at his fire station. Although Airservices was fully aware of this behaviour being inflicted on our members from numerous complaints lodged, they condoned it until the Union investigated. They then tried to deny the union entry for investigation, refused to provide their own report into the bullying even though obligated to under the Fair Work Act. They then protected the perpetrators by moving them into other senior roles. There has never been an apology or an admission of wrongdoing by Airservices for their behaviour.

11. Restructuring of the Operations Workshops

The ARFFS staff have a requirement to attend firefighting workshops over a four year cycle. This is a regulatory requirement audited by CASA. Part of this concept is for staff to produce firefighting foam from the vehicle monitors and to maintain their expertise in the application of firefighting foam onto large aircraft fires. These four yearly workshops have been reduced from a full week of intense training including a full category 10 exercise on the large aircraft simulator to just three days. It should also be noted that some of those three days is spent almost entirely in the classroom.

The Operations Training Manager [Deputy Chief Fire Officer] who was a very well qualified an experienced ARFFS operations and training officer, was made redundant. This Deputy Chief Fire Officer was supported by a group of highly experienced ARFFS officers (Inspectors) that had been Fire Commanders at major airports and been in charge of hundreds of ARFFS incidents as well as being very experienced fire training officers. These officers have all been removed from their positions and given the options of going back to the fire stations.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer with 30+ years' experience was replaced by a Training Manager who has no operational ARFFS experience or knowledge.

Where is the quality assurance, and safety first always in that concept? Where is the standardisation and value in getting an officer with no extra or in most cases less training or experience, than the people he is delivering a training course to? Quality realistic training based on operational experience and knowledge is the most vital requirement of any ARFFS. Like a peacetime army the ARFFS is not called into a major battle on a regular basis so it needs experienced ARFFS officers to examine crashes from around the world to develop and apply new operations and safety procedures in order to be assured that ARFFS is a successful and effective service. Those people need to be credible and be able to discuss in depth the why parts and provide the full learning and understanding required of any lesson being delivered.

12. Restructuring of the Check & Standards Function

The ARFFS have a requirement to conduct Check & Standards (C&S) assessment on every ARFFS station and check the proficiency of most crews on a regular cycle. This is a quality assurance role and obviously, you would require highly trained and experienced ARFFS officers to conduct this valuable safety function of practically checking to see if ARFFS staff can do their jobs properly.

The Operations Training Manager (Deputy Chief) mentioned in the last section of this submission was also the C&S manager. Again, because he was acknowledged as a highly qualified and experienced ARFFS operations and training officer, his role as C&S manager was highly respected. He was able to influence the whole ARFFS for the better and ensure a high standard of competence was maintained at every fire station. This Deputy Chief Fire Officer now redundant, was again supported by a group of highly experienced ARFFS officers (Inspectors). These C&S Inspectors have all been removed from their positions and given the options of going back to the fire stations.

The initial concept of replacing the C&S Inspectors was to have an operational fire officer conduct the Check and Standards assessments. The Union believes that ARFFS may have recognised the flaws in this strategy and have now created a position to replace one of the Inspectors. If the safety and risk work required for dismantling all the ARFFS operational training and checking apparatus was done properly, how can it then just change mid implementation into something else? Why would the first plan fail if it was actually assessed by quality operations and training staff in the first place?

What we do know is that the Union has never seen any of the risk work for any of the changes that the Accelerate programme has bought in and we seriously doubt it even exists. The union believes that our training and checking functions have both been seriously compromised by the restructure.

13. Airservices Corporate Plan

1. Our primary effort is invested in delivering Service Excellence to our customers. This means doing what we do now, well; to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers. It means always working to enhance the safety, agility and efficiency with which we deliver our core air navigation and aviation rescue firefighting services

3. We demonstrate Industry Leadership by proactively shaping and influencing policy that supports the aviation industry to grow safely. This includes contributing on industry-wide issues such as airspace and environmental management.

Airservices obviously believe that ARFFS should be actively reducing lifesaving services to the Australian public mainly to regional Australians and our International guests that fly into Australia's airports. They are proactively promoting policy risks to aviation unheard of in other countries that are signatories to the Chicago Convention.

Australia has already without a doubt the worst ARFFS safety regulations in the world, with nearly 300 unprotected airports and a 350,000 passengers per annum ARFFS Establishment benchmark that is nearly double the next worst country which is Canada.

Airservices must believe that the ARFFS role is so worthless they can now just **close 5 to 8 more fire stations** and leave another **3 million regional passengers a year** to fly into major regional centres unprotected, without any impact on safety. The Union feels so strongly about this loss of critical safety

services to regional Australia that we have funded a public information campaign called '3 Minutes to Live' to highlight this issue.

Senators when did the actual Commonwealth Government's 'ARFFS service provider' get to be the advocate of **reducing safety services to Regional Australia** just so the airlines shareholders can make more profit? What happened to the ministerial directive to Airservices that safety is the first priority? How can safety have even been a consideration at all, if Airservices proactively supports DIRDC policy proposals to totally remove the ARFFS services from 5-8 airports and leave over 3 million more people using Australian Airports unprotected every year? Senators should note that closing these 8 stations will mean the loss of 131 front line ARFFS staff from rural and remote areas.

Reportable safety Incidents in Australia according to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) have risen by 56%. Air traffic of RPTs as shown previously have risen by 40%. A crash here is inevitable, Australia does not have some magic formulae to prevent such incidents. Safety incidents classified as serious are reported to the ATSB weekly to fortnightly, incidents where the prevention of a crash is more luck than process. International statistics show that for every one million departures one to .5 of those aircraft will crash.

What the Union wants is for CASA to be reminded why they are here, it's actually written into their philosophy:

> CASA will adopt a regulatory approach based on a sound assessment of the level of risk associated with particular aviation operations. In doing so, **the highest safety priority** will be afforded to passenger transport operations, and operations in which passengers and others exposed to higher levels of risk are not in a position to make informed judgements and effective decisions about the risks to which they are exposed. (CASA Regulatory Philosophy point 3)[11]
>
> CASA performs its functions consistently with Australia's international obligations
>
> Except where a difference to a standard specified in an Annex to the Chicago Convention has been properly notified to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) by Australia, CASA will strive to ensure its regulatory requirements, policies and practices:

- are consistent with ICAO standards and
- harmonise **with best international regulatory practice**, having particular regard to aviation jurisdictions with features similar to Australia's.

(CASA Regulatory Philosophy point 4)

14. Regulatory Review and Grandfathering

Airservices in supporting the DIRDC review were proudly advocating changes to the regulations that would have seen a further 3 million passengers a year fly in and out of unprotected airports. When one of these up to 180 seat aircraft crash on those unprotected runways the Union will be providing the media with all the correspondence we have provided to CASA, Airservices, DIRDC and the Minister warning them of their unsafe decisions. A country that prides itself as one of the leaders in aviation safety allows hundreds of passengers to burn to death to save a few dollars on an ARFFS service.

[11] https://www.casa.gov.au/about-us/standard-page/our-regulatory-philosophy

Airservices now state on record that no existing ARFFS service will be closed down. Senators you have all been around long enough to know that this is simply a smoke screen. As soon as everyone's attention is diverted off this issue fire stations will again close like they did in the previous review where ARFFS were down to only 14 fire stations at our lowest ebb.

Right now is the time to act to prevent any changes to Australian ARFFS regulations that will take us even further away from internationally accepted standards. The Union believes that no Royal Commission into a major aircraft crash will support the risks that ARFFS, CASA and DIRDC management are willing to take with aviation safety. It is totally contrary to the International standards that we profess to follow as a signatory to ICAO. This Union will ensure that any Royal Commission is kept very well informed of who was responsible and who allowed these changes to become law. A private members bill would assist in cementing the ARFFS position more firmly into the Australian emergency services.

15. Domestic Response Services and First Aid

ARFFS is Australia responds to approx. 7,000 emergency incidents every year. ARFFS respond to around 4000 calls for emergency first aid. Of these around 20-24 are treated by our members for Cardiac Arrests. Up to 12 lives are saved each year directly by the actions of our ARFFS firefighters and the other persons are given the best possible chance of survival by our early intervention and defibrillation service. In most people's opinions, this would be seen as a very successful and effective use of ARFFS staff and resources. Using the Governments own figures for Value of Statistical life[12] of $4.2 million means those saved lives could be valued at over $50 million dollars in 2014 figures. Potentially if 22 of these patients had been saved that's a value of over $92 million. This is for a fire service that only has an annual budget of approximately $110 million.

ARFFS management is always looking at removing or downgrading this first response from our 26 airports. They give it names like unregulated services to try an undermine its importance. The first aid service was implemented as a way for ARFFS to add value to the airports, airlines and flying public. It utilises the skills and capability already in place at the ARFFS stations at the 26 busiest airports without generating significant extra costs. It provides our members with exposure to emergency responses that makes them better and more effective firefighters and first responders. Over the past 20 or more years that the ARFFS has provided this service literally hundreds of Australian lives have been saved. The Union is sure that the 12 people whose lives were saved this last year and their families would be very pleased with the efforts of our members. Senators just Sydney Airport alone caters for 40 Million passengers last year. ARFFS provides first aid response services to all passengers and airport workers at 26 major airports with over 100 Million persons protected. In any other service the value of this emergency response would be promoted and acknowledged, and the quality of the response upgraded to Emergency Medical Technician or higher as can be seen with the Victorian Fire Service Model.

As Senators would be aware the heightened security arrangements in place and the requirements for screening and access to the airside environment causes significant delays for the ambulance services and this has proven detrimental to a successful outcome in the past. Our members currently attend

[12] Best Practice Regulation Guidance Note Value of statistical life
December 2014

major traumatic injuries without the equipment or training required despite repeated call for the skills and training of our members to be upgraded.

Senators should note that removal of the ARFFS domestic response service would result in the loss of a further 56-60 frontline ARFFS staff as well as result in the loss of 20 or more salvable lives every year.

16. Recommendations

The United Firefighters Union of Australia Aviation Branch makes the following recommendations:

1. That the RRAT Committee recommend an independent investigator to enquire into, coercion, bullying and harassment in Airservices.
2. That the RRAT Committee recommend appointing an independent Operational Risk/ICAO Expert to review and report on the quality and validity of the Risk Work done and in assessing operational risk for service delivery changes in the ARFFS. Research and challenge the validity of assumptions accepted by Airservices and CASA and in assessing operational risk for service delivery changes in the ARFFS.
3. That the RRAT Committee recommend that any current and future reviews of ARFFS regulations are conducted properly utilising a committee of Operational Firefighters that are ARFFS/UFUA experts from Public Safety, CASA, Airservices, the United Firefighters Union and Pilots associations.
4. That the RRAT Committee recommend that any current or future Regulatory review has written into their Terms of Reference that they must ensure that all the ICAO SARPs are followed as closely as practicable and that any new Australian ARFFS regulations should seek to adopt the best practice standards in NFPA NFC 403 wherever possible as ARFFS best practice.
5. That the RRAT Committee recommend an independent ARFFS expert to CASA on a one-year term to review all the changes being proposed by Airservices and DIRDC for safety and operational efficiency and to observe ARFFS operational training and advise on effectiveness and improvement required.
6. The RRAT recommend CASA oversight of ARFFS be transferred to an ARFFS Inspectorate staffed by professional fire officers acknowledged Operations Experts in Public Safety, ARFFS and Firefighting. These experts to use their experience and subjective assessment of operations efficiency rather than pure compliance auditing which is a proven failure in maintaining an effective ARFFS service.
7. The RRAT Committee recommend a funding model for ARFFS that identifies the Passenger as the real customer of ARFFS. A Passenger/Airports Facilitation Charge or fire levy model will remove ARFFS costs from Airlines and place it with the real customers.
8. That the RRAT committee recommend that more ARFFS vehicles are purchased as a high priority and the reinstatement of spare vehicles at all locations is reintroduced to overcome the current critical shortage of ARFFS operational fire vehicles and regular failure to meet category.

9. That the RRAT committee recommend that fit for purpose training grounds as required under the MOS139H are re-established at all Airports with an ARFFS established.

10. That the RRAT committee recommend that ARFFS Emergency Vehicle Technicians (EVT's) are immediately brought under the control of a Senior ARFFS Operational Officer and the current critical shortage of EVT's is rectified as a matter of urgency.

11. That the RRAT recommend that immediate action be taken to replace substandard Fire Stations as listed in this submission.

12. That the RRAT recommend that any shared defence/civilian airport that meets the threshold of 350,000 passengers per annum is then subject to 139H ARFFS regulation or transferred to Airservices ARFFS to provide a compliant service.

13. That the Regulations (CASRs) be limited to addressing or regulating issues that that do not relate to critical factors such as staffing levels, and that ARFF staffing levels at ARFF aviation airports be mandated via legislation and not changes to regulation.

14. That a Passenger Facilitation Charge be considered to fund and expand ARFF services in circumstances where there is insufficient funding from other sources.

17. Conclusion

Honourable Senators the Union would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission and to voice our concerns. Please accept our concerns are for the safety of the flying public as well as the safety of our members. Members are seeing their fire service reduced to bare minimums. Unsafe cuts being made to service provision, Airservices simply has to ask CASA for exemptions to current rules and they are rubber stamped.

The Union trusts you will find our submission to you of value in your deliberations on the safety of the ARFFS and the significantly increased risk appetite of the current ARFFS and Airservices management.