



Fire Services Review Submission July 2015

INTRODUCTION

This submission is made by the United Fire Brigades' Association (UFBA). The UFBA welcomes Government's intention to review New Zealand's fire services and appreciates this opportunity to contribute.

The UFBA

The UFBA was established in 1878, long before New Zealand's first fire legislation was enacted. Its founding objectives were to:

- advocate for the interests of fire brigades to their governing councils and fire boards
- develop firefighting skills and competencies through inter-brigade competitions, and
- foster recruitment and retention of volunteers through service recognition, welfare provision and social events.

Today, the UFBA advocates for the interests of its member brigades and rural fire forces to the New Zealand Fire Service Commission (NZFSC), to the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) and to Rural Fire Authorities (RFAs). It continues to develop firefighting skills and competencies, provides specialist leadership development, administers welfare services and fosters volunteer recruitment and retention via a mix of competition, challenge, service recognition and technical education programmes.

The UFBA membership is made up of 385 volunteer urban fire brigades and rural fire forces, and 140 career service brigades, industrial brigades and defence fire forces. The 385 volunteer brigades and rural fire forces are drawn from the country's 12,000 active fire volunteers.

Support for the Review

The UFBA appreciates this Review is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to align New Zealand's fire services with best-practice risk management, governance and organisational structure. Immediately following the release of the discussion document, the UFBA contacted all member brigades and fire forces to alert them to the Review.

The UFBA also carried out an informal survey of member brigades and individual members of brigades for their views on aspects of the review proposed in the discussion document and issues especially relevant to volunteers. Over 650 responses were received and this informationⁱ, and a summaryⁱⁱ of the issues of main concern are attached.

The UFBA is confident this submission, on behalf of its members, reflects their views and provides an informed analysis of current, relevant issues.

CURRENT ISSUES

The discussion document set out many of the fire services' current problems and their consequences. It stated the situation warranted substantial reform of elements of the framework for managing fire and non fire services in New Zealand. The UFBA agrees.

Factors underpinning the need for reform include:

1. The need for clear statutory authority for delivering non-fire emergency services. The UFBA supports the far-reaching solution proposed in the Swain Report and the measures adopted by Cabinet to address the situation.
2. The need for greatly improved support and funding for voluntary rural fire forces. While the UFBA has less experience in rural fire matters it considers the current situation has arisen from the Commission's unwillingness to take responsibility for small urban communities that have grown to a point where they warrant protection under the provisions of the Fire Services Act 1975 rather than the Forest and Rural Fires Act. The UFBA accepts that rural fire management is an integral part of wider rural land management practices and this should be reflected in any reforms.
3. The need for more equitable and sustainable funding arrangements. The ability of some property owners to minimise their levy liability undermines public confidence in the current funding arrangements. The fact that fire insureds fund the delivery of non-fire services creates another inequity that further undermines confidence.

The UFBA believes some key drivers for reform were overlooked in the discussion document. These include:

1. **The outdated service delivery model.** Urban fire services within NZ still reflect the risk profile of the early 20th century built environment. The fire safety provisions of the building code, the nature of the current building stock, contemporary fire monitoring technology and fire suppression systems, and international emergency response practices have advanced significantly since then. The incidence of fire has been steadily declining.

In 2014, of the 73,000 incidents attended, just 5,300 involved a structure fire. However, the basic fire service delivery model has remained the same.

The UFBA believes any reform of New Zealand's fire services must reflect today's risks, current building fire safety regulations and codes, fire suppression and monitoring technology and contemporary good practice emerging internationally for response to emergencies.

2. **The value and breadth of services provided by volunteer firefighters in provincial and rural New Zealand.** Fire services' role in rescue, hazardous substance emergencies, natural disasters and medical emergencies is growing and recognised. Less well understood is their contribution to social, health, justice and law enforcement services. Volunteers work with young fire-setters to change their behaviour and bring at-risk youth into their brigades as 'cadets' where they can be mentored by good role models. They provide informal back-up to police in isolated rural areas and are often called on to provide first aid. Volunteer firefighters provide a fire, general emergency and social service within their communities. This role and its value must be reflected in any reforms.
3. **Emergency services collaboration.** The discussion document notes that a key recommendation of the Swain Report – the establishment of the Emergency Service's Coordination Group – has "started slowly". This is disappointing given the findings and recommendations of the various enquiries into the response to the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake on the need for greater collaboration and cooperation. The UFBA submits that any reform of New Zealand's fire services should include requirements for more collaborative arrangements with other emergency service providers and joint resource allocation models. The Keelty Report (2013)ⁱⁱⁱ provides insight into features of a mature model of community safety.
4. **Fire Service culture.** The Swain Report noted that the review panel had been told the prevailing culture in the NZFS had the potential to undermine implementation of its recommendations. The Swain panel noted "issues relating to the need for greater coordination, collaboration, co-location and, in some instances, integration with other rescue and emergency services, and the need to promote a strong volunteer base". It urged the Commission to investigate these culture issues with a view to developing a more appropriate organisational culture able to meet long-term challenges facing fire, rescue and emergency services as a whole.

The UFBA has no information that suggests the Commission has attempted to address the culture issues. Reform of the prevailing management culture remains a critical issue for the UFBA and its member brigades. The Commission could look to the Queensland experience for information on integrating rural and urban, volunteer, auxiliary and career staff into one entity.

In Queensland, the rural fire service was amalgamated with the urban fire service 22 years ago under the umbrella of the (former) Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS). Prior to amalgamation, rural volunteers expressed deep concern "that the creation of a single entity would create a huge, all powerful centralised bureaucracy which would leave any area outside of Brisbane [read Wellington] without a voice and impotent in the area of fire services" (Malone, 2013, p. 5^{iv}).

Politicians assured the rural volunteer brigades the strategy was based around autonomy for the new regions. Following amalgamation, few volunteers felt autonomy and local ownership of issues had eventuated. Instead, rural fire service volunteers felt their operations were negatively influenced by the predominant urban fire response-focused culture. This is different from the rural land management practice of prevention and community (self) responsibility. This imposed shift in focus to response drove a more intense training burden and more expensive equipment and fire appliances reflecting an urban need rather than what was suitable.

Most importantly, volunteer management disappeared from the leadership structure. This led to volunteers feeling disenfranchised because the organisation was exclusively managed and run by urban management staff. Since the urban part of the fire service did not engage volunteers¹, senior paid staff never developed the skills to manage volunteers during their formative years in the career service.

Following two major reviews in 2013, a new Queensland Department of Fire and Emergency Services organisation was established. This structure combined the rural fire volunteers, urban fire career and auxiliary personnel, and state emergency service volunteers into three semi-autonomous divisions. One of these is the Emergency Services Volunteers (ESV) Division, which provides operational and volunteering support services to a unique mix of over 35,000 fire service and 6,000 State Emergency Service volunteers. The division is led by a deputy commissioner responsible for the volunteer workforce. The Swain Report essentially recommended the same approach for volunteer leadership within New Zealand. This recommendation was rejected by the Commission on the advice of NZFS senior managers who prefer an integrated management model, presumably, akin to the status quo.

Managers and leaders play a vital role in the successful management of volunteers. The Urban Institute (2004)^v found clear evidence that having a paid staff member who dedicates a substantial portion of their time to management of volunteers brings benefits. Organisations with a paid manager of volunteers experienced fewer recruitment challenges, reported positively on their capacity to take on more volunteers and demonstrated greater adoption of an array of volunteer management practices^{vi}. In contrast, Volunteering Australia (2009) found that fewer good volunteer management systems and processes were reported in organisations with no (dedicated) manager of volunteers. In New Zealand, Smith et al. (2010) found that 44% of the managers with responsibility for volunteers surveyed tend to squeeze their volunteer management tasks around everything else.

The UFBA believes the current review provides the opportunity for this issue to be re-examined.

Discussion document options

The discussion document offers a range of solutions to the problems identified. It clusters them into Options 1, 2 and 3 along a continuum according to the extent of change required to achieve them. As the document acknowledges,

¹ The QFRS utilised auxiliary (part-time paid) staff instead of volunteers in non-rural areas.

multiple combinations of the proposed reforms are possible. Many of the proposed reforms are independent of the other reforms they are clustered with as part of one option. Also, some reforms such as those proposed for funding, mandate and limitation of liability could be easily legislated without changing any other aspects of the status quo.

As a result, the UFBA found it difficult to respond to the options. Instead, the UFBA felt it would be more useful to identify policy design principles in areas such as sustaining volunteerism, protection of volunteer rights, the engagement relationship, governance and management, community engagement and rural-urban integration.

Our submission reflects this approach.

SUSTAINING VOLUNTEERISM

Fewer New Zealanders are volunteering within their communities. Rural communities are shrinking and their populations are ageing. In many areas there are few people available to help in an emergency response. As a result, local fire services are under pressure to assist in a much broader range of emergency situations.

The UFBA supports the Cabinet decision to introduce legislation requiring the Commission to actively provide for the continued sustainability of the volunteer base. However, the UFBA believes this can only be achieved if the Commission and NZFS make a concerted effort to foster a more collaborative, cooperative relationship with volunteers.

The UFBA believes the starting point for any fire services reform should be formal recognition that 80% of the country's fire services' personnel resource is provided by volunteers. There should be a requirement in legislation for volunteer engagement and sustainability to be fostered and supported by the agencies and communities involved. This legislation should also require a complementary operating framework or volunteer charter between the NZFSC, other fire service providers, the Minister for Internal Affairs and volunteer representatives. Research into fire and emergency services international best practice found that most reform within the fire and emergency services sector was followed by legislative change to ensure fire and emergency services agencies could meet the challenges of broader duties and remain fit for purpose (Olsen, S., & Jaegle, B., 2012^{vii}). It was also highlighted that legislation has a role in encouraging volunteers by enshrining in law their value and representation, and protecting their employers' interests.

There is no framework for genuine ongoing involvement of volunteers in matters that affect them in either the current Fire Service Act 1975 or in the functions of the Commission. There is no requirement or process for volunteer perspectives to be included in strategic developments, and no specific voice for volunteers within the senior leadership team. No member of the senior management team has direct responsibility for fostering the relationship with volunteers or advocating for their interests. There is no requirement for a member of the board to have skills or experience in volunteerism.

A UFBA survey of members showed over 85% of respondents believed NZFS should have a senior leadership role responsible for volunteer sustainability. Three-quarters of respondents also felt the promotion of volunteerism should be a specific statutory function of the Chief Executive. Almost all believed there should be at least one board member who has experience in volunteer issues. Respondent: "The NZFS should consider employing more people who have a background in the volunteer part of the service and that background should be appreciated."

This is not to say that NZFS or RFAs do not consult with volunteers or engage them in decision-making. But there is no requirement for this involvement and, as a result, the processes for doing so are often unclear and the practice somewhat patchy. There is also no audit process to measure the success of the engagement that does take place.

The UFBA survey showed that three-quarters of respondents felt volunteerism should be a specific statutory function of the Chief Executive. A similar number believed the Minister should receive an independent annual assessment of the board's performance of its governance function to foster volunteerism.

There is also no requirement for the Commission to consult with communities or seek advice on services provided at community level.

Just over half of those surveyed (55%) felt their connection to communities should be strengthened through formal community input to the brigade; 19% were neutral. Respondent: "Volunteer organisations are driven from the bottom up to make them effective. They are responsive to community needs and change as those needs change. They do not wait for the powers that be, but get on with it."

➤ **Volunteer Charter.** The UFBA believes a Volunteer Charter modelled on that used by the Country Fire Authority of Victoria would strengthen volunteer sustainability in New Zealand's fire services. A New Zealand Charter should include the following principles:

- The relationship between all parties should be fair, reasonable and inclusive.
- The contribution of volunteers and their families should be recognised, fostered and supported.
- The outcomes sought should be practicable and sustainable and in the best interest of communities.
- Volunteers should be consulted, engaged and represented on all strategic issues and major organisational decisions affecting them and their brigades.
- Resources and support levels should reflect the needs of individual brigades and communities.

The UFBA also suggests the Volunteering Australia National Standards for Volunteer Engagement^{viii} and Volunteering New Zealand's Best Practice Guidelines^{ix} be considered in developing a Charter for New Zealand fire services.

Volunteer sustainability policy design principles

1. Formal recognition that New Zealand's fire services are made up largely of volunteers supported by career staff.

2. The Government, the governing board of a new fire services entity and fire services volunteers should be required to enter into a Charter setting out the rights, roles and expectations of the parties.
3. Promoting, fostering and sustaining volunteerism in the fire services should be an explicit responsibility in any governance or management structure.
4. Fire services should be required to establish specific measureable targets for volunteer sustainability and to report their performance against those targets in its annual report.
5. At least one member of the governing boards should have demonstrated experience in the management or governance of a voluntary organisation.
6. One member of the senior management team of the fire service should have explicit and sole responsibility for fostering the relationship with volunteers.
7. Volunteers should have genuine and frequent opportunities to provide their perspective on strategic developments to the governing board.

PROTECTION OF VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

The Fire Service Act 1975 includes a provision (section 34 (5)) preventing the Commission from making any final decision to settle a dispute between a volunteer and the Commission, or an employee of the Commission, until it has considered the representations of the UFBA. The same provision states that if an acceptable settlement cannot be reached, either party may refer the matter to the Minister for a final decision. This provision was hard won by the UFBA in 1975 when volunteer firefighters were concerned integration into a national service risked the volunteer ethos being overwhelmed by that of the career service.

This concern has not changed.

Almost 80% of survey respondents valued their current right of appeal through the UFBA to the Board and Minister.

The Swain Report proposed a more modern dispute escalation process and this was echoed in the discussion document among initiatives intended to improve arrangements for supporting volunteers.

The UFBA submits that volunteers need separate, independent representation when in dispute with their fire services. Volunteers are not employees and cannot be incentivised or sanctioned in the same way as employees. Aligning volunteer behaviour with organisational objectives requires a more subtle mix of motivational and disciplinary approaches. At a minimum, the UFBA believes both brigades and individual volunteers should have early access to an independent advocate when in dispute with fire services management or the governing board.

The UFBA is open to considering new dispute resolution mechanisms but records its expectation that it will be consulted directly on any specific proposals.

Protection of volunteers' rights policy design principles

1. Explicit dispute resolution arrangements are required to protect the rights of volunteer brigades and individual volunteers.
2. Dispute resolution arrangements should reflect the fact that volunteers are not employees.
3. Dispute resolution arrangements for volunteers should include early access to an independent advocate familiar with and sympathetic to the volunteer ethos.

PROVISION OF NON-FIRE SERVICES

The UFBA supports the recommendations of the Swain Report for the delivery of non-fire services. It also supports Cabinet's decision regarding the services the Commission would be **required** to deliver, and those **discretionary** services the Commission would be able (but not required) to deliver.

Almost all respondents (90%) agreed that there should be absolute clarity about what non-fire services they and their brigades are expected to carry out.

Two-thirds also accepted that not all brigades would need to provide all discretionary non-fire services.

Almost 90% felt the standards for discretionary services should be set at safe but reasonable levels.

Two-thirds of respondents supported the accreditation of rural fire forces to perform non-fire services.

The vast majority (86%) supported the funding of discretionary services at a national, not local, level.

Volunteer brigades and individual members will always try to meet the needs of their particular communities. In response to any identified need within communities, the Commission should be required to consult with brigades/fire forces and communities before authorising a brigade to carry out any discretionary functions and the standards they must meet.

This process must be backed up by clear policies and done in close collaboration and coordination with other emergency services.

Non-fire service delivery policy design principles

1. The method proposed in the Swain Report for accrediting brigades and rural fire forces to deliver discretionary non-fire services should be adopted.
2. Volunteers should be protected from liability in the event something goes wrong at a non-fire incident they are attending.
3. There should be absolute clarity around the services volunteer brigades are expected to deliver.
4. Brigades should have some say in the non-fire services they are expected to deliver.
5. Discretionary services should be funded from national resources.
6. The standard for accrediting brigades to deliver discretionary non-fire services should be set at safe but reasonable levels.

THE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

The UFBA and its member brigades believe the current volunteer engagement relationship works well and should be retained. Under this arrangement, brigade members are drawn from their community and take responsibility for its protection. The brigade is independently constituted and has an Agreement of Service with the Commission, which defines their relationship. Individual volunteers are not engaged directly by the NZFS but by their local brigade.

Sixty percent of respondents felt they would be treated like employees under the engagement relationship proposed in Option 3 and were unsure how such a change would affect their current strong sense of camaraderie within the brigade.

Seventy-five percent favoured the current engagement model.

Respondents were split on whether volunteers would be attracted to serving a national fire service under Option 3.

Eighty percent of respondents felt 'volunteers managing volunteers' was a key principle for sustaining the volunteer ethic.

Volunteer engagement policy design principle

1. The volunteer engagement relationship should reflect the high value volunteers place on the connection to their community, their families and their employers.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The UFBA favours retention of the current Crown entity model with a board and chair appointed by the Minister. The UFBA submits that the Minister, having regard for the key attributes and skills board members may bring, include one member with significant experience in volunteerism. This would ensure the organisation truly engages with, and reflects the needs of, voluntary rural fire forces and volunteer fire brigades to ensure sustainable volunteerism. The UFBA believes all board members should be non-executive and does not support the proposal that the Chief Executive should be a voting member of the Commission. Such a move would introduce a conflict of interest between operational and governance responsibilities.

Almost 100% of respondents believed at least one member of the board should have skills and experience in volunteer issues.

The UFBA supports a management structure where there are four distinct senior executive roles: a Chief Executive and three Deputy Chief Executives (National Commander, National Rural Fire Officer and Director Volunteer Service Support).

The Swain Report specifically recommended that one senior management role be introduced to represent volunteer interests. This recommendation was rejected by the Commission because it wanted "operational management to be common to both career and volunteer firefighters, given the integrated nature of NZFS operations" (i.e. where career and volunteer crews may work

alongside each other). Historically and currently, all senior managers within the current structure come from a career firefighting background. We do not believe there is sufficient understanding or expertise in volunteerism at senior management level to adequately incorporate and reflect the needs of volunteers. The UFBA strongly recommends that the Commission revisit the issue.

Respondents: “Current governance/management come from career firefighters’ perspective only, volunteers need to hold more management/governance roles to better foster volunteerism.”

“NZFS should consider employing more people who have a background in the volunteer part of the service – and that background should be appreciated.”

As a matter of best governance practice the UFBA believes reforming legislation should not dictate the precise nature of the senior management structure. Instead, it recommends that, as well as being required to promote volunteer sustainability, the board also be required to ensure people with experience in volunteer organisations are appointed to appropriate senior staff positions.

Governance and management policy design principles

1. The contemporary Crown entity framework should provide the basic governance and management structure for fire services.
2. The Minister have regard to appointing at least one member of the board with experience in volunteer issues.
3. The board should ensure people with extensive experience in volunteer organisations are appointed to senior staff positions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Firefighters are part of the communities they serve and have a sound understanding of the local risks. Almost all brigades have a range of informal ways that allow stakeholders to provide input to brigade initiatives. Most communities also feel ‘ownership’ of their brigade.

RFA and NZFS senior officers engage with their direct stakeholders and to some extent they also engage with organisations in communities. However, the current methods and system for community engagement could be improved.

The UFBA believes the fundamental relationships between the Commission and volunteer brigades, between brigades and the community they serve and between volunteer members and their brigades should be preserved. Brigade members see themselves as representatives of their communities. However, enabling community input to brigade, local and regional risk planning would further strengthen community connections.

The survey showed that over half of respondents supported the introduction of formal community input to the brigade. However, respondents generally felt brigades should retain control over the discretionary services they provide to their community. One-third favoured communities having a direct say in the functions performed by brigades.

The UFBA considers a local government territorial level of community engagement would be the most appropriate. This engagement could use an existing structure, such as Safer New Zealand, which is already operating in many communities. This could be expanded to include volunteer representation and used as a mechanism to carry out community consultation on specific fire services-related issues in the local area. Mayoral forums and other such groups including those responsible for leading civil defence emergency management planning within communities may be alternative mechanisms for community engagement on the provision of fire and emergency services. The UFBA believes volunteer brigade representatives should be encouraged to take an active role in these meetings and their expenses should be reimbursed by NZFS. Consideration should also be given for a meeting payment as a formal recognition of the additional contribution being made by these volunteers.

The UFBA survey of members showed 48% felt local communities should have a say in fire service governance through regional advisory boards. Twenty-one percent were neutral, while 30% did not support the proposition.

Respondents: “Be very careful not to overload the volunteers (i.e. rural firefighting, medicals etc.)”

“Communities should not drive brigade activities. Rather, brigade CFOs should have more say and input at a regional governance level/advisory board.”

“Current ERFD (Enlarged Rural Fire District) models provide a good example how regional level governance could work.”

Community engagement policy design principles

1. The primary fire services relationship is between a brigade and its community.
2. Brigades should be constituted as an expression of a community’s desire to protect itself rather than a branch of a national agency.
3. The key function of the national fire services agency is to facilitate brigades to serve their communities and the nature of the relationship between brigades and the central agency should reflect that aim.
4. Brigades should be supported to engage with their communities.

RURAL-URBAN INTEGRATION

In comparable countries overseas, most fire services are made up of a mix of career and volunteer firefighters. Career brigades are established in high risk/high population areas² while volunteers respond everywhere else. In a few countries – usually in areas where there is a high demand on the time of volunteers – there is a system for providing some financial support to ‘retain’ the volunteer to keep them available in an emergency. The UFBA does not recommend a ‘retained’ model for New Zealand. Evidence suggests this model undermines the main volunteer drive – to help their community in time of need.

Rural fire forces are often separate entities established to fight vegetation wild fires and occasionally turn out to other types of incident. In New Zealand, there are a few rural fire forces that respond to the same wide range of fire and non-fire incidents as urban brigades. The UFBA believes these fire forces should be constituted as volunteer fire brigades under the Fire Service Act 1975 and receive the appropriate resourcing and support.

In the early 21st century, the risk of urban fire is far less thanks to developments in building safety and protection. The growing threat is instead climatic – extreme weather events leading to flooding, wind damage, heat-related illnesses and wildfires.

These events require fire and other emergency services to work closely together in a widespread, joint civil response. Future fire services need to ensure they work much more collaboratively in their training, planning and resourcing in preparation for these major incidents. The impacts on volunteers need to be carefully factored into the planning for these responses. The Queensland model is currently the best expression of this approach within Australasia.

Option 3 describes a national fire service with integrated rural and urban volunteers and career staff. UFBA members believe combining rural and urban fire forces under the umbrella of a single governance entity is sensible. The UFBA advises that such a step should be taken carefully. The earlier experience of the QFRS 22 years ago provides clear examples of the significant challenges of integrating rural and urban fire services. Olsen et al. (2012) highlight that a key implication for New Zealand in progressing any reform to fire services functions is the need to retain the original identities of organisations being integrated, even when a new structural model is being implemented.

Respondents: “Rural brigades are required to perform a greater range of services despite a lower level of resources and training. Lower amounts of training/resources cause increased risk of safety issues for our volunteer firefighters. Our community expects the same level of service that the urban contemporaries provide yet we

² With exceptions in some South American jurisdictions where the entire fire service is provided by volunteers, even in metropolitan centres.

receive minimal level of professional training to meet the community's expectations.”

“I have been to many operational fire calls and incidents where the treatment of rural firefighters is nothing short of ignorance and arrogance.”

“Volunteers should be treated as equals and given the training and support they need.”

The relationships between rural fire forces, volunteer brigades and career staff have a long history of tension and misunderstanding.

Rural–urban integration design principles

1. Rural and urban fire service volunteers should enjoy the same terms and conditions of engagement.
2. Rural and urban fire services should be resourced according to the reasonable needs of their communities and stakeholders.
3. The different risk management principles, approaches and cultures adopted by urban and rural services should be respected within a unified structure.

FUNDING

The UFBA survey of members showed they were not overly concerned with how fire services were funded. They simply wanted to know they would have the resources needed to prepare for, and respond to, local fires and emergencies. However, many respondents felt the funding mechanism should also provide an incentive for property owners to reduce their fire risk and maximise community support for fire services. There was also general agreement that the proposed mixed funding model would be the most equitable.

Over 70% of respondents felt it was important that contributions to funding fire services should be broadly proportionate to the benefits received.

Respondent: “I am concerned that often the biggest users of fire services are the non-insured, the Government and others who don't contribute their share. Look how many fires we go to in schools and Housing Corp properties – all owned by the Government.”

Three-quarters of respondents also felt those who benefited from non-fire services should contribute to the cost of providing them.

Funding design principles

1. The contribution volunteers and their employers make to managing the risk in their community should be recognised in the funding mechanism.
2. The cost of providing fire and non-fire emergency services should be distributed equitably across those who benefit from the services.
3. The funding system should incentivise property owners and other levy payers to reduce their risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reform is needed to reflect the current operating environment and ensure volunteers are fully mandated to carry out a range of emergency services. This reform needs to be done from a volunteer-centric perspective. The UFBA recommends that:

- Legislation require volunteerism to be recognised, fostered and supported.
- The mandate for non-fire services be updated with appropriate protection for the people providing the services.
- New Zealand fire agencies be recognised as broad-based fire and emergency services to better reflect the current and future operating environment.
- Legislation require a Charter between agency providers and volunteers that specifically sets out the relationships and processes for engagement, representation and decision-making.
- Legislation require the appointment of at least one person to the fire agency board who is well qualified and experienced in volunteer matters.
- Fire services ensure there are specific volunteer-focused roles at senior management level.
- Provision be made for community participation in fire services at territorial authority level, with optional community representation at brigade level – consider meeting payments for volunteers to recognise their additional contribution.
- The current engagement model is continued, where brigades are independent and operate to an Agreement of Service with the NZFS Commission.
- Collaboration between urban, rural and volunteer fire services be encouraged to break down barriers and improve cooperation and teamwork.
- The fire services funding mechanism should be equitable, distribute the costs of non-fire and fire services across those who benefit and incentivise the public to reduce their risk.

Contact:

George Verry
Chief Executive Officer
United Fire Brigades' Association
PO Box 56079
Tawa, Wellington 5249
George.Verry@ufba.org.nz

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