

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE STATE'S PREPAREDNESS  
FOR THIS YEAR'S FIRE SEASON**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2012**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

**Mr A.P. O'Gorman (Chairman)**  
**Mr R.F. Johnson (Deputy Chairman)**  
**Ms M.M. Quirk**  
**Mr I.M. Britza**  
**Mr T.G. Stephens**

---

**Hearing commenced at 11.03 am****MARTINELLI, MR FRANK****President, United Firefighters' Union of Western Australia, WA Branch, examined:****JOLLY, MR KEVIN****Secretary, United Firefighters' Union of Western Australia, WA Branch, examined:****ANDERSON, MS LEA****Assistant Secretary, United Firefighters' Union of Western Australia, WA Branch, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** We will just wait until everybody settles down again. The cameras are just going to film up until we start asking questions. They will not be filming while we are asking the questions. I will start and go through the official bit that we need to do and then I will introduce the committee and get on with it.

The committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that the proceedings in the house itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And did you receive an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before committees?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Rob Johnson is the Deputy Chair of the Committee and member for Hillarys; the member for Girrawheen, Margaret Quirk; Ian Britza is the member for Morley; and Tom Stephens is the member for Pilbara; and I am Tony O'Gorman, the member for Joondalup and Chair of the Committee.

Before we start, you have provided us with a submission. Are there any opening comments you would like to make before we throw some questions at you?

**Ms Anderson:** If I may, though the Chair, Mr O'Gorman. The union appeared before this Committee previously with regard to the trauma inquiry, and we raised an issue with your secretariat who said that perhaps the next time we appeared before you we could clear up a point of clarification very quickly. Would you like us to do that at the beginning?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, you could do that, please.

**Ms Anderson:** The union advised the Committee, when you were inquiring into the impact of trauma on emergency workers, that FESA's—now DFES's—welfare section has a total of four people employed. FESA's evidence given by director Karen Roberts is that there were four operational personnel and two other people employed, which is not the case, and I just wanted to clarify that we had a number of members who contacted the union and in fact we have triple-checked. There are only four personnel employed in FESA's, or DFES's, welfare section, two of whom are operational. Notwithstanding all of that, the union continues to assert that DFES's

welfare section is chronically under-resourced, given the need for its services by professional and volunteer personnel.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think one of our recommendations, if I remember correctly, was that DFES needs to increase the number of people in that particular role. There are a lot of firefighters out there, a lot of volunteers and a lot of potential tragedy or trauma to them. So, hopefully, our recommendation will be accepted and we will see a lot more.

**Ms Anderson:** Thank you.

**Mr Jolly:** Certainly. If I may, Mr O’Gorman. The United Firefighters’ Union of Australia, Western Australian branch, is represented today by me, Kevin Jolly, branch secretary; Frank Martinelli to my right, branch president, and Lea Anderson on my left, branch assistant secretary. Frank Martinelli and I, between us, have over 68 years’ experience as both volunteer and professional firefighters. We both grew up in regional WA and we are both qualified professional station officers as designated by rank within the WA Fire and Rescue Service. Our union represents professional firefighters, and the majority of our members come from a fire and rescue background. A minority of our members are professional firefighters from a bushfire background.

From reading FESA’s final annual report, you will see that our members attend and deal with just over 80% of the State’s fire incidents. This statistic is important because the validity of what we say is not based on how big we are or how many people we have on our books or how much of our state’s land is vested in our care; what counts is that our members are there attending 80% of WA fire incidents. From reading some of the submissions put to you by other organisations, it is interesting to observe that there is a myth that exists with regard to which personnel understands, manages or has the knowledge of bush firefighting in WA. As Frank’s and my careers attest, it must be noted that professional fire and rescue firefighters and officers do have extensive bushfire, wildfire and grassfire experience. You only have to examine the occurrence books of our fire stations and to review the statistics collected annually from the fire incident reporting system—FIRS—to determine this.

The union does not criticise or detract from the fire mitigation practice and knowledge that DEC personnel have and neither is the union anti-volunteer. Volunteers work alongside professional firefighters and officers at many incidents and are often the only resource in the less populated parts of our state. When fires across WA are significant or catastrophic and threaten life and property, it does not matter where they start or which agency or brigade has had control of them, if they escalate to a stage where they cannot be managed locally then professional resources are deployed to take control within a disciplined, rank-structured chain of command led by our senior officers and service.

In the last 12 months the union has seen many improvements under the leadership of the new Commissioner Wayne Gregson, Deputy Commissioner Lloyd Bailey, and senior officers of the fire and rescue ranks. In preparation for this submission the union reviewed the details of information we put to the Committee last year. I would like to go through that information, if I may.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** It is fairly lengthy. This is all in evidence.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We will put it up as a submission on the website as well. We will probably spend the hour going through it. There are some questions that people want to ask.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I know that the union has been keen to have more areas gazetted, especially around town sites and urban fringe. I understand that FESA is gazetted, for example, the town sites of Yallingup, Witchcliffe, Cowaramup and Prevelly, but the nearest career fire station is still going to be Bunbury. Are there any issues around that?

**Mr Jolly:** With the gazetted, the risk to resourcing needs that proper modelling to occur. We are not aware whether that modelling has changed from past years. That certainly needs to happen.

---

Those areas are some of the fastest growing areas in Australia. They certainly need some career presence down there.

**Ms Anderson:** It is apparent that with the collapse of the purchase of a block of land for the proposed Australind fire station, on an interim measure Bunbury fire station will double in capacity and become what we refer to as a two-pump fire station.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** That is what is needed just to handle Bunbury.

**Ms Anderson:** Without a doubt. That does not mean that those resources will readily extend into that south-western corridor. As Kevin Jolly has just stated, the district and Shire of Busselton, going back into that cape to cape region, is one of the fastest growing areas for population and infrastructure growth in the country.

**The CHAIRMAN:** To your knowledge, are there any plans to put career firefighters in the Margaret River area? Gazetting means that all those residents down there will pay a significantly higher amount under the ESL.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** There is no money in the budget for it.

**Mr Jolly:** It is not immediately planned. The union has been lobbying for some time for some career presence in the Busselton region. It is not just about fire; it is also about the car wrecks. The trauma that volunteers are carrying is extraordinarily high, as you would appreciate. That burden would need to be lessened and the only way you do that is to put a career service down there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Just remembering that you said the new CEO has done a fair amount of work, can you tell us a bit about your equipment levels as well? The last time you spoke to us you said that some appliances are being decommissioned because of the lack of staff. Is that still the situation or have you managed to recruit staff and keep those appliances in operation?

**Mr Jolly:** There has been a significant increase in that area. Staffing levels have come up. However, some of the specialist appliances like the incident command vehicle and the aerial appliances are ageing. They come out of service quite regularly. The incident command vehicle is a new vehicle, though it has some inherent electrical problems with the way it was constructed and the high-tech areas within that vehicle are not functioning to their best capabilities. It tends to find itself off the road more than on. When that happens, there is the decommissioning of that function, which is a concern. That vehicle is very needy, particularly for fire conditions when you have large incidents. We have only two aerial appliances. When they fail, the replacement is older than the two that are there, so that is unreliable. As you know, these vehicles are very expensive so the replacement of them has been on the backburner for some time.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I understand they are in Perth and Fremantle. Is that correct?

**Mr Jolly:** Yes, Perth and Fremantle.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** For example, somewhere that has multistorey buildings such as Bunbury is not covered?

**Mr Jolly:** That is right. There is a need in most regional centres. The vehicle is predominantly used for high rise, certainly for the rescue of casualties. It is a secondary means of escape for firefighters should they become trapped. Anywhere you have a two or three-storey house, which you see on these marinas—you only have to go down to Mandurah and places where all these marinas are popping up—there is certainly a need. Firefighters are finding it very difficult to fight those fires at height. Aerial appliances are very needy equipment.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** A seven-storey hotel in Karratha is a risky proposition.

**Mr Jolly:** Karratha does not have a career station so there are certainly needs right around the State.

---

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You were talking about the resources in relation to incident control units. From my recollection, it appeared to me very often that DEC had far superior equipment to FESA, which I found quite strange. Do you have any dream of getting their type and quality of equipment?

**Mr Jolly:** One of the fundamental flaws is bad practices within FESA not having a research and development area. Fundamentally, that is why we are chasing technology changes. Certainly, you do not have to reinvent the wheel when the military, DEC and other fire services in Australia have developed this technology. It is not unknown but we always seem to have to reinvent the wheel.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** When FESA makes a decision that a fire is so serious that it assumes control and command, does it take over the vehicles with DEC or is it only limited to its own vehicles? I am talking about the incident control units, which seem to be Rolls Royce.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** My understanding is that they do not.

**Mr Jolly:** They do not take over; they are an independent organisation.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** FESA has to work with its older not so adequate units as compared with DEC, which might not be in control and command.

**Mr Jolly:** That is correct.

**Mr Martinelli:** The problem still arises with communications. Whilst we are moving towards similar communications, we are supposed to be having digital now that we are all on the same digital. In fact, that has not happened through budgetary constraints. We are stuck with an interim system. We have five portables at a truck that we have to use to communicate on a job depending on who we are talking to. That in itself is a major issue. Obviously, the more equipment that we have that is trying to communicate, the more areas we can go wrong in.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Are you talking about WAERN or something else?

**Mr Martinelli:** It is part of WAERN.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I heard some volunteers saying on the weekend that they found it not that user friendly because there were all these buttons and lights and stuff. They found it quite difficult to use.

**Mr Martinelli:** It is not just the radio itself. Because of the system that we are in the process of changing to, the radios that we have are VHF and UHF at the moment; the VHF was going to go to digital but because they have pulled the funding, we are now stuck in this—

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** When did that occur?

**Mr Martinelli:** They told us that they were going to go to digital this financial year, which is now. They are supposed to be up and running but they are obviously not. When they rolled out WAERN—there are four radios plus the UHF—they told us it is a bit of a dog's breakfast. There is a sheet that we need to go down to work out which radio to use for which incident. Some radios are not compatible for internal use, so we have to use the external radios. We have to set up a comms plan, so there is a communications plan for bushfires that is currently transposed across to the urban rescue-style fires because they are not compatible; they will not work internally and they are not intrinsically safe. Hence, it is a dog's breakfast.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Has that not been the recommendation of numerous committees and inquiries?

**Mr Martinelli:** Probably for 30 years that I have been in the job, communications has been—

**The CHAIRMAN:** I have been here 12 years and I think it was one of the first things we asked about—why it was not happening. Now the funding has been pulled so that has stopped that in its tracks.

**Ms Anderson:** This is an Australia-wide issue. Police unions and federations around Australia have also raised issues about poor access to digital radio networks. There just seems to be a lack of will

as well as funding to ensure that our emergency service infrastructure that underpins our communications system keeps pace with technology and is available not only in metropolitan Perth but certainly in the urban rural interface areas and in regional Western Australia where even the latest Telstra communications networks can be unreliable.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** One of the things that obviously arises in the context of dealing with a large incident is fatigue management. One of the issues that has arisen over the years with your members is the fact that you have got numbers, basically, to cover not too much extra and so that meant a lot of your members were having to do large amounts of overtime. My colleague to my right very kindly made an announcement, I think last year, for some additional firefighters. But is that really enough to cover, say, it is a busy time in the middle of summer, in the metropolitan area you have got fires at Wanneroo and down south at wherever, Warnbro or whatever—

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** And the Hills.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** —and the Hills all at the same time? That is going to create some problems.

**Mr Jolly:** Fatigue is always a critical issue, particularly for safety as people fatigue. It is just an inherent issue with firefighting; even the volunteers fatigue. That is where the incident command crews have to be vigilant, they have to be monitoring and they have to change out crews on a regular basis, otherwise it becomes dangerous and crews are put in life-threatening situations.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Now, there are a couple of things I want to ask. There are some issues about getting timely information; for instance, meteorological information and the particular burn nature of the environment where the fire is occurring. So, for example, if it was up in that Wanneroo area, there is that sort of peat and what have you. Are you confident that your members get enough information in a timely fashion to deal with the different habitats, if you like, that you have got to deal with?

**Mr Jolly:** Certainly, the new facility, we have not actually seen it in full vogue, but if it is anything like the police facility—we have had a look at that, that was set up for CHOGM and it is state of the art. We would like to see that sort of similar system within the department where they could have real footage from a helicopter being imaged back to Cockburn, as well as satellite imagery. I think they are on the right track. We have had some meetings with the people in that area with regard to mapping and the fuel load of the state, which is very, very interesting, understanding that we are getting drier and drier as we go on. I think all that sort of stuff is new, certainly high tech, and it is going to help the crews on the ground.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** But none of that has gone live yet?

**Mr Jolly:** I cannot answer that, to be quite honest. We know that they are working towards it, but I am unsure whether it has actually come to fruition.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** One of the issues that came out of Keelty, number one, was the planning issue. Basically, people should not be able to build houses in some places or they should be significantly modified. It appears to me, from my examination of how things are going, that that recommendation has not been advanced too much. Is your union involved in any of the subcommittees set up under Keelty?

**Mr Jolly:** No, that is the unfortunate thing, and I think it is a vital error on behalf of the government not to have us as part of that. We represent the firefighters and the officers and all the managers around the state and it is a vital part that is missing in the link to have that feed information back through that committee. So, we did not get an opportunity to represent.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** In terms of training, is that an issue or are you happy with the level of training your members are currently receiving?

**Mr Jolly:** No, we have still got grave concerns, as we reported last year and through meetings with Mr Gregson. He was astounded with the level of training within the organisation. It still has a long

way to go before it gets to where we need it to be. Certainly, I think there is some reluctance in the prioritising of the training and qualification that is necessary. Even out of the Keelty 1 and 2 where there are levels of training for, particularly, level 2 and level 3 incident control and operations certifications, they have not been realised by, certainly, the station officers on all the fire stations. I thought with some urgency at least the fringe stations that deal with the urban interface, Perth, as well as the country station officers that have limited resources, they would be the first priority, but it appears that that has not happened, even though we have requested that to happen. I think fundamentally there are some issues with the payment of overtime to get these people trained in time for this summer season.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that purely their reluctance—funding?

**Mr Jolly:** I believe so. Even though we have been told it is not an overtime issue, there certainly is a reluctance to have that prioritised. The only way you can bring that on is to pay the overtime and get it done; a small cost for such a critical bit of training that should have happened.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have the budget cuts cut into that, because that is really—

**Mr Jolly:** I am not aware, so I cannot comment on whether the budget cuts have caused it, but it certainly looks that way. But without seeing the evidence, I cannot say.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Obviously, there is lots of discussion these days about traffic congestion. I just want to know: is that impacting on response times, especially in the outer metropolitan area?

**Mr Jolly:** It certainly has.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** What can you tell us about that?

**Mr Jolly:** Well, it is just a never-ending thing that happens in urban built-up areas.

**Ms Anderson:** And if I may, there seems to be a systemic problem with regard to the planning of roadworks and to variations, particularly for major arterial roads. The Fire and Rescue Service is often one of the last agencies consulted or advised, if you like, of change. You only have to have a look at the centre of our city and see how many of the main streets have gone down to one lane of traffic. So, you can imagine trying to get our trucks up from the Wellington Street station and the single aerial appliance even up to West Perth and to these buildings, it is extremely difficult during most times of the day. Great Eastern Highway is a nightmare and the same could be said for some of the major variations that are occurring to road traffic management in some of our regional cities and towns.

**Mr Martinelli:** If I may, what compounds that also is that the stations have not been infilled with areas that have expanded. In other words, for example, Osborne Park initially had Balcatta and Bedford in their district to back them up. Those two were shifted, if you like; the district, they have picked up two industrial areas. The congestion, as you know, in and around Osborne Park now, getting out on the freeway, north, south, east or west, really, is horrific.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Certainly do not go near Ikea!

**Mr Martinelli:** And for us to achieve our turnout—well, we just do not achieve the seven-minute turnout. We are getting up to 12 to 15 minutes to get out to our border because, first, it is just too far and, second, there is congestion. So, there are two issues there: one is the lack of infilling with stations to meet the demand of population and, two, I have just said, the congestion in traffic.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Are there any areas within the metro area which are under your members' responsibility that do not have hydrants?

**Mr Jolly:** A lot of the outer areas that our members extend into, and that can include Ellenbrook, Butler, even Rockingham; they extend out to the urban fringe. Even Midland for that matter; Midland goes beyond the escarpment where there are no hydrants. That is a concern with low water supplies and having the ability to have big tankers reinforce their water supplies.

---

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Also, I gather there is a problem in some areas with water pressure?

**Mr Jolly:** Ellenbrook has a huge problem with water pressure because they did not put the proper size mains in that suburb when it first was developed. I know the Water Corporation is going hammer and tongs trying to fix that issue, but the fire crews out there are well aware of bad water supplies in that area.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** In your submission at point 10 you say —

*The Union is gravely concerned that the State Government's freeze on employment will impact on the creation of new Firefighter and Officer positions. Front line service delivery needs to be expanded but we find ourselves fighting for the mere maintenance of such services.*

**Mr Jolly:** That is correct. It does seem a bit ironic that we have these disasters and we have this committee, and we put the issues to the committee that the fire and rescue service and volunteer associations are inadequately resourced. We see all these gaps and then you see a reduction in the budget. To me, it does not make sense. If we are trying to fix our ability to fight big fires, which are getting worse—whether it is a climate change phenomenon; certainly low rainfall causes these horrific occurrences—we certainly need to be able to bolster our firefighting forces. The only way we can do that is to put in an injection of funds, not by reducing them.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Do you think there needs to be any enhancement in terms of arson investigations—is that adequately resourced?

**Mr Jolly:** That is an area that probably could be expanded. The specialist areas for structure identification as well as bush, I think the people who work in those areas do a fantastic job with the police but they are certainly under-resourced in terms of manning and equipment and resourcing. It is an area that needs to be expanded to get to the bottom of those causes of why people are lighting fires on these catastrophic days.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The budget cuts that have been announced recently in the efficiency dividends, will that have an impact on front-line services for fire and emergency services?

**Mr Jolly:** It certainly does because when you have management that are told through their supervisors that they must cut budgets, everyone is thinking about pulling in the belt, for whatever reason. If you have long-term sick leave or people wanting to do training courses, there is a reluctance to send those people on those courses because their position needs to be backfilled. Any reduction in budgets certainly has an impact. It restricts the ability of the organisation to train its people because it has not got the amount of people to backfill. We have been saying for many years that the fire service is very skinny. The Productivity Commission report that goes to the Federal Parliament states that Western Australia had the lowest money spent on its fire service per head of population. That has been documented for many years. The union has been highlighting that to all sides of government for many years. I think we are in a situation now that we need to rectify those areas that have been underfunded and cut short of resources. We need to have a proper fire service right around the State.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You mentioned that you are not particularly happy with WAERN and the way it has been rolled out. Does that mean we are going to have a less effective fire service this year because the communications are not up to scratch?

**Mr Martinelli:** The short answer is yes. Because it is so complex, it was rolled out initially for the crews to the point where they almost baulked at how much information there was. They have taken that up again and committed two full-time guys to try to get out to do the training. The training is occurring. There is a better understanding of the system. Personally, I think we are still a long way from being completely conversant with the system, which then leads to issues on the fire ground. The short answer is yes, I believe we are going to have issues. If we have a major fire that needs multiagency participation, WAERN is not going to cut it.

---

**Mr Jolly:** Last year we were asked about WAERN and I said I had very little involvement in it; however my crews had been trained. Some weeks later I went back to the station and was trained in the WAERN system. It is very complex. To have a system that is complex is a real worrying situation. Radio systems need to be simplistic and you need to be able to be across agencies. They have brought in a system that again I believe has not been researched and developed. Looking at other agencies, such as the military which has similar systems, I cannot see why we keep getting this wrong. It seems time and time again we have changed radios. In my career we have probably changed them half a dozen times. Every time we have ended up with lemons. This system to me seems too complex. I feel sorry for our volunteers because they only have limited time to spare. Radios are a safety mechanism for everyone on a fire ground. If we cannot get that right, then we are really in trouble.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** You should be on automatic pilot—

**Mr Jolly:** Absolutely.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Your adrenaline is flowing, you are getting information resources and you should be able to do it—bang

**Mr Jolly:** In the dark, you should be able to just turn it on and go. But these systems, you need to set your maps, you need to know what area it is, you have to set it on a radio channel to match the map. It is too complex for the layman. We are in serious trouble unless this is relooked at and reworked.

**Mr I.M. BRITZA:** You would agree with those gentlemen who said they would rather go back to what they were using before?

**Mr Jolly:** Absolutely.

**Mr Martinelli:** Under the new WAERN—I am talking about in my area in Osborne Park—we have only one designated communications plan because all the repeaters are on the scarp. We have actually trialled the plan that is set up for us and it falls over straight up if we are not in line of sight. We have gone back to the UHF hand-helds by line of sight.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** What do you mean by that? Where would you be if you were out of the line of fire?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Behind a building.

**Mr Martinelli:** Any smoke will do it.

**Mr I.M. BRITZA:** They obviously have not come to the front line to ask for their opinion.

**Mr Martinelli:** They never do. IT tend to develop what they think is good, but then they have not trialled it. Whilst that technology probably works well in some areas, without the infrastructure—that is, the repeaters that are set up to enable that system to work—it falls over. They know the issues with it. To my knowledge there are now two mobile repeaters that they will mobilise to an incident, but for us in the metro, the lead time and by the time they set up it is almost too late. It is probably gone.

**Mr Jolly:** I thought it might have been me not picking it up as quickly as some people. I actually rang a few firefighters I know that are subject matter experts on radios. One particular person is ex-military, highly qualified on communications—that is what he did in the military. He said, “They’ve picked the wrong system.” I went to another person who used to work for Woodside; again, a communications expert. I had him on a fire ground and we were trying to get these channels to work. There was feedback. There were all sorts of problems. I said to him, “What do you think of these radios and the system?” He said, “It’s a crock. It’s hopeless.” Again, they have gone to the wrong system. In summing it up, I think something needs to be done about it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Put it in the bin and start again.

---

**Mr Jolly:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am guessing the relationship has not improved between DEC and DFES because, if it has, I imagine you would be sharing command and control vehicles as well as everything else. What is the relationship like between DFES and DEC?

**Mr Jolly:** I think it has improved. Last year was not as bad as we probably predicted in terms of major incidents. It has certainly improved over the last three years, but it has a way to go. With the exchange of vehicles, that is an agreement that probably needs to be worked through. I certainly think the hierarchical exchange of information seems to be a lot better, from what we are led to believe. We will see how it goes.

**Ms Anderson:** The union extends its condolences to the family of Mrs Wendy Bearfoot and her colleagues. In the wake of that recent tragedy in Albany and whilst that incident is still under investigation, it does appear to us that all fire vehicles need to be properly equipped and resourced. There are some significant safety issues related to the provision of state-of-the-art vehicle safety equipment and protection, so that anyone in a fire vehicle on a fire ground, whether they are fire and rescue service, volunteer fire and rescue service, bushfire volunteers, volunteer emergency service workers or DEC personnel have the best protection in the event of burn-overs.

We are very concerned that these investigations identify whether or not we have standard operational procedures as well as equipment. If you are running a multiagency fire ground, you have to know that all the people under your control and command—we do work within a rank structure—are protected and are following the same high standards. That is one aspect of the investigation that we will continue to push for. We have been reluctant to go on the record given the serious illness and the battle that Mrs Bearfoot and her colleague had against their burns, but certainly it is important that we draw your attention to these issues because that should be a major wake-up call for all agencies.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** The volunteers raised that last week. You might be interested to know that two weeks after that fire, FESA actually released a tender to have an expert consultant give them advice on risks associated with burn-overs, which I find just extraordinary.

**Mr Martinelli:** It is.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I do not know if any of your members have talked to you, but there seems to have been some hiatus in handover from the City of Albany to FESA. I do not know if any of you know anything about that.

**Ms Anderson:** That incident is still under investigation. It appeared, for all intents and purposes, to have been a fairly straightforward level 2 incident. The advice that the union office received was that that was not so much the issue.

Our concerns were that within that region there are very few qualified and competent fire personnel at senior levels, so there is no fat on the ground. We have one experienced officer who was able to attend and who immediately joined the incident management team. But he had to be relieved by an experienced regional director from the Manjimup region. That is not satisfactory. We are extremely concerned about fire management within the Kimberley. We have some good operators, but from our perspective, the department needs to look at who they are appointing to senior positions and they need to ensure that they have prerequisite qualifications and competencies and experience from a fire background. We acknowledge that other emergencies are dealt with, but they are low-frequency, high-risk events and you bring in your experts for those. Fire and road-crash rescue, unfortunately, are events that our communities face 24 hours a day, seven days a week all year.

**Mr I.M. BRITZA:** Will you have access to the report or will you have access to view the vehicle that took the lives of those two ladies in Melbourne?

**Ms Anderson:** We will be asking for a full briefing.

---

**Mr I.M. BRITZA:** That will determine what kind of vehicle. We do not know how that vehicle responded to that. That is the concern we have.

**Mr Jolly:** Absolutely. Three years ago, Lea Anderson; Graeme Geer, the past secretary of the union; and I visited the Melbourne fire brigade training centre. They had just taken commission of some new Scania trucks. We were amazed at the level of their cab protection they had on their Scania trucks, which are predominantly urban pumpers that very rarely see any bush terrain. Melbourne is fairly isolated from bush areas. Inside the cab they had drop-down silver blinds front and sides. They had sprays all the way around the cab. The truck itself had its own tank of water purely for the cab protection. We were astounded that the MFB had gone to that level of crew protection knowing they do not go to bushfires that much. I looked at that and thought, “Why aren’t we doing that?” I did bring it back and I did raise that at a senior meeting, and it fell on deaf ears, unfortunately.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Unfortunately we have run out of time. Before we finish I will read a closing statement. Do you have anything in particular you need to get across that we have not addressed just yet, very briefly?

**Mr Jolly:** I refer to our written submission and thank —

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Which is excellent, thanks.

**Mr Jolly:** — the Committee for the opportunity to address. It is very much appreciated.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I thank the three of you for coming in this morning. A transcript of the hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any corrections must be made and the transcript returned within seven days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, we will deem it to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, can you please include a supplementary submission for the committee’s consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you very much for coming in.

**Hearing concluded at 11.45 am**

---