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Dr Jane Thomson  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Dr Thomson

Please find the enclosed New South Wales Government submission to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry into the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services at Australian airports.

If you have any questions in relation to this submission, please contact Sam Toohey, Director, Emergency Management Policy and Coordination

Yours sincerely

**Feergus O'Connor**  
Executive Director  
Office of Emergency Management

**NSW fire services response to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee Inquiry into the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services at Australian airports.**

**The inquiry has asked for advice 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;**

There are two fire agencies responsible for providing fire services to communities in NSW: Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS). FRNSW is responsible for fire services within fire districts and the NSW RFS is responsible for fires in rural fire districts which are predominately any area that is not a fire district within the State of NSW, with the exclusion of Commonwealth Lands.

Both the NSW RFS and FRNSW provide rescue services where accredited to do so by the State Rescue Board, and both have defined operational doctrine and protocols for attendance to fires and other related incidents (including medical emergency). Due to the construction of modern aircraft and the nature of aircraft incidents, some aircraft incidents may become a hazardous material incident. FRNSW is the combat agency for hazardous material incidents.

In NSW there are 88 operational airports, including: 9 private airports, 2 water based, 3 public but not registered, 7 are military, 35 are registered airports and 32 are certified airports. Due to the size and number of movement of aircraft, certified airports pose the greatest level of risk. 48 (54%) of airports fall within rural fire district and 41 (46%) within fire district. FRNSW and NSW RFS, within their respective fire districts, provide fire and emergency response capability to all airports in the State. Both fire services work collaboratively with emergency services, military and private resources at airports to ensure a comprehensive response to fires and other emergencies, including aviation incidents.

NSW has robust arrangements for the response and suppression of bush and urban fires (including aviation related incidents) by the fire services. Both fire services use the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) that allows seamless integration into operations and incident management.

It is essential that consideration of operational response to emergencies within Australian airports factors in the broader risk profile of the region. The NSW RFS has legislated requirements to prepare, through local Bush Fire Management Committees, Plans of Operation and Bush Fire Risk Management Plans. These plans, where appropriate, would include Airports and Aerodrome infrastructure and operational and risk mitigation arrangements for this infrastructure.

Both fire services note that at a number of NSW airports, existing fire service capacity is supplied by Airservices Australia or private contractors through the Department of Defence. The NSW RFS and FRNSW work collaboratively with Airservices Australia or private contractors to ensure a comprehensive response to fires and other emergencies.

From a hazardous materials perspective, a significant aircraft incident at an airport may involve a flammable liquid fire or a significant fuel spill. To deal with this type of incident large quantities of B class foam are required. NSW RFS and FRNSW carry both A and B class foam concentrates and recommend that certified airport maintains a bulk supply of foam appropriate to size of the aircraft using the airport and of a type appropriate to the risk. This allows for an immediate and effective fire attack and fuel vapour suppression on the arrival of the first fire truck.

- 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;**

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority Council (AFAC) has a collaboration network made up of fire and emergency service agencies from across Australia and New Zealand. AFAC should be approached to consider standards and systems for firefighting, emergency and rescue response at Australian airports. AFAC may also be best placed to advise on a review of Airservices Australia policy and administration of aviation rescue and firefighting services.

AFAC members (including the NSW fire services) regularly come together to share knowledge, exchange insights, explore opportunities and create solutions that shape practice and guide the industry's development. The AFAC collaboration model adds value to our members, the fire and emergency services industry and, ultimately, enhances community safety.

This approach facilitates and supports engagement, enabling AFAC members to jointly consider common challenges, generate solutions, develop doctrine and positions, guidelines and specifications - and inspire new directions in practice.

With specific reference to item (d) above the NSW fire agencies note that the AFAC collaboration network through the Urban Operations Group would be in the best position to provide consideration to best practice, and standards applications.

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

The role of CASA is to focus on aviation matters including engineering and piloting. AFAC would be an appropriate national body to assist in generation and assessment of aviation fire related standards.

The NSW RFS notes and highlights that the operation of aerial firefighting (e.g. bush fire suppression) is not within the scope or consideration of this submission.