



Australasian Fire and Emergency
Service Authorities Council

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

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Submission by Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC)

1. Introduction

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services at Australian airports* (Inquiry). The submission is based on consultation among AFAC membership as well as our broader understanding of the context of the Inquiry. As defined in *Airports Act 1996*, **airport** means an airport in Australia.

We ask the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (Committee) to note that the submission should not be taken as the position of any single AFAC member. Also, some of our members will have contributed to the inquiry through jurisdictional submissions, and nothing in this letter should be taken as implying that our members do not fully support their jurisdictional submissions where made.

In providing the submission, AFAC remains ready to assist the Committee with its Inquiry and to answer any questions or expand on any concepts and suggestions made herein.

2. Background

2.1 About AFAC

AFAC is the national council for fire, land management and emergency service authorities in Australia and New Zealand, representing 31 member organisations, including Airservices Australia, comprising permanent, part-time personnel and volunteers, totalling 288,000 firefighters and emergency workers. A full list of AFAC members is provided at Attachment 1.

AFAC engages with members through a collaboration model as well as event facilitation, professional development and influencing regulations and standards. It exists to support the fire and emergency service industry, making communities safer and more resilient. AFAC has no direct role in the delivery of services to the community e.g. the implementation of education programs or giving advice. It has no role in representing its members in industrial matters.

AFAC facilitates national collaboration through the AFAC Collaboration Model, which encompasses 36 groups, technical groups and networks. AFAC members 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 aims to add value to AFAC members, the fire and emergency services industry and ultimately enhance community safety. This approach facilitates and supports engagement, enabling members to jointly consider common challenges, generate solutions, develop doctrine including positions, guidelines and technical notes, and inspire new directions in practice.

AFAC and AFAC Member Agencies support the current structure of Airservices Australia Aviation Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) service.

2.2 AFAC Strategic Directions for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand 2017–2021

The work of AFAC is directed by the Strategic Directions for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand 2017–2021. The Strategic Directions provide clarity on intent and identify and prioritise actions at a national level for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand. AFAC recognise that a collaborative approach is critical to achieving the Strategic Directions and gives fire and emergency services a national voice and broader impact, while enhancing collective capabilities.

There are five Strategic Directions for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand 2017–2021. Strategic Direction 2 is *“Providing trusted response and facilitating the transition to relief and recovery”*. Fire and emergency service agencies provide the best incident management services. This includes responses before, during and after the event, expert advice and advocacy for community safety outcomes. These key services are the focus of Strategic Direction two. Through the application of AIIMS in training, scenario based exercising and incident response, people from fire and emergency services, government, not-for-profit agencies and industry have come together to share the responsibility of risk and to effectively manage the most challenging of incidents. Through the various groups, technical groups and networks, practitioners and technical experts are working to review and develop new operational doctrine which outlines the method for the provision of incident and disaster management and interoperability. They foster and promote the sharing of case studies, emanating from the delivery of their services.

3. Emergency Response at Australian Airports

3.1 Risk-based approach

ARFF's level of service ranges from the provision of Category 6 to Category 10 services, as determined by Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regulations, at 26 of Australia's aerodromes.

Categories dictate the required amount of water and foam that is needed to be carried, the response times, water discharge rates and the number of personnel. The size (length and width) of the largest aircraft serving an airport determines the service category provided.

3.2 Common capability

3.2.1 Interface Arrangements with other agencies

The provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services in major Australian airports is primarily facilitated by ARFF. Local fire, rescue and emergency services provide this service at all other Australian Airports. All airport fire, rescue and emergency services are regulated by the Commonwealth. ARFF is one of the world's largest with more than 900 operational and support personnel based around Australia as they respond to a broad range of aviation and airport emergencies, including aircraft incidents, structural fires, medical assistance requests, water rescues and fire alarms. The provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency response at Australian airports is regulated by CASA who uphold the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998.

CASA lists two key functions to be performed by aerodrome rescue and fire fighting service providers:

1. to extinguish fires and rescue people from aircraft that have crashed or caught fire and
2. to control and extinguish fire, and protect people and property from fire or the threat of fire anywhere on the aerodrome.

ARFF achieve this by having suitable equipment and trained personnel deployed to airports and by maintaining a level of operational readiness that ensures immediate and rapid response to, and effective management of, emergency situations at airports.

Manual of Standards Part 139H - Standards Applicable to the Provision of Aerodrome Rescue and Fire Fighting Services, made under regulation 139.712 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) 1998 mandates the Interface Agreements between ARFF and state or territory fire brigades and/or other third-party providers.

AFAC supports that the training and experience of ARFF firefighters is consistent with those from urban fire agencies across Australia and New Zealand.

AFAC supports interoperability between response agencies that provide any level of firefighting, rescue or emergency services at any Australasian airport. This includes compatible equipment and communications to support AFAC members commitment to community safety.

3.2.2 Operating Systems

ARFF operate under the principles based Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS), the nationally recognised system of incident management for fire and emergency service agencies. Organisational principles and structure are used to manage bushfires and other large

emergencies utilising the all agencies approach. As with other fire and emergency service agencies in Australia and New Zealand, it is accepted and incorporated into operational readiness strategies that large and/or complex emergency events require a multi-agency response. Community safety is the highest priority in considerations regarding operational readiness for all fire and emergency service agencies.

Through AFAC, ARFF are represented on the AIIMS Steering Group. The AIIMS Steering Group was formed to establish a tighter governance process and greater quality assurance arrangements to aid the implementation of AIIMS. In addition to ARFF, the group comprises representatives from urban operations, rural operations, land management, SES operations, community safety and learning and development. It is primarily formed from incident management practitioners and is chaired by a senior representative from the AFAC membership. The four guiding principles informing the work of the AIIMS Steering Group are:

1. that the integrity and effectiveness of the system are dependent on consistent application
2. that no single member agency or AIIMS user shall make unilateral changes to the system
3. that the effectiveness of the system in supporting multi-agency response to emergency incidents or events is dependent on a common understanding and application of the principles, structures and processes
4. that the processes of management, ongoing development, review and application of AIIMS is based on the organisational learning process described in AFAC Fundamentals of Doctrine. The Group continually reviews and develops incident management doctrine to support the implementation and application of AIIMS.

3.3 Integrated planning for preparedness and response

ARFF is pro-active in the planning and delivery of frontline emergency services at airports, with Aerodrome or Airport Emergency Plans developed for each Australian airport and Memorandums of Understanding to ensure an adequate service delivery with other relevant jurisdictional emergency service agencies. As airports and aerodromes are recognised throughout all levels of government as a location of greater potential risk to the community, airport disaster response, including health emergency response, is also accounted for in district, state and commonwealth level disaster plans.

3.4 Joint training and exercising

As part of the ongoing commitment by fire and emergency service agencies in Australia to their operational readiness and competency maintenance, regular exercises utilising the AIIMS structure, both field and table top, are conducted to ensure a multi-agency response is available at Australian airports. These regular exercises form part of each Aerodrome or Airport Emergency Plan, with consideration given to all other appropriate jurisdictional emergency or disaster plans.

4. Closing comments

The provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency services at Australian airports is currently supported by appropriate planning, operational readiness and multi-agency training exercises at all airports, as stated in each Aerodrome/Airport Emergency Plan.

Airservices Australia are currently represented on a number of applicable AFAC collaboration groups, technical groups and networks, including the Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee. AFAC members regularly come together to share knowledge, exchange insights, explore opportunities and create solutions that shape practice and guide the industry's development. This also enabling members to jointly consider common challenges, generate solutions, develop doctrine including positions, guidelines and technical notes, and inspire new directions in practice.

AFAC and AFAC Member Agencies support the current structure of Airservices Australia Aviation Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) service.

References

AFAC, 2016, *Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services in Australia and New Zealand 2017-2021*, Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, Melbourne

Wood G., April 2018, *Australian Journal of Emergency Management Volume 33 No.2*, Australian Incident for Disaster Resilience

Airservices Australia, 2019, ARFF Levels of Service, Last updated: April 24, 2018

MOS Part 139H—Standards Applicable to the Provision of Aerodrome Rescue and Fire Fighting Services, Version 1.2: January 2005, regulation 139.712 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998.

Airports Act 1996 s5(1)

AFAC Members January 2019

Full Members

ACT Emergency Services Agency
ACT Parks and Conservation Service
Airservices Australia
Bushfires NT
Country Fire Authority, Victoria
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions WA, Parks and Wildlife Service
Department for Environment and Water, SA
Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA
Department of Home Affairs, Emergency Management Australia
Fire and Emergency New Zealand
Fire and Rescue NSW
Forest Fire Management Victoria - Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
ForestrySA
Forestry Corporation of New South Wales
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Melbourne
Northern Territory Fire, Rescue and Emergency Service
NSW Rural Fire Service
NSW State Emergency Service
Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW
Parks Australia
Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania
Parks Victoria
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
South Australian Country Fire Service
South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service
South Australian State Emergency Service
Sustainable Timber Tasmania
Tasmania State Emergency Service
Tasmania Fire Service
Victoria State Emergency Service

Affiliate members

Australasian Road Rescue Organisation
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
Australian Red Cross

Brisbane City Council
Bureau of Meteorology
Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations
Department of Conservation New Zealand
Emergency Management Victoria
Geoscience Australia
Hong Kong Fire Services Department
HQ Plantations Pty Ltd
Melbourne Water
Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management
National SES Volunteers Association
NSW Environment Protection Authority
Office of Bushfire Risk Management, Western Australia
Office of Emergency Management NSW
Pacific Islands Fire & Emergency Services Association
South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission
State Emergency Management Committee, WA
Surf Life Saving Australia