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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

The Western Australian Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services Association (WAVFRSA) is the peak body representing WA's 2,400+ Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) members – serving their communities in 104 locations across the length and breadth of the State.

Our members are becoming increasingly frustrated at the unsubstantiated claims and myths being perpetuated by some spokespeople from the Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades (AVBFB), in their ongoing and self-serving attacks on the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), the Fire and Rescue Service and its members. It should be noted that our members were amongst the first Brigades to respond to the recent Waroona/Yarloop fires, almost 40 VFRS Brigades were involved during the incident; and there has been little coverage acknowledging their efforts from the media. This has been the case at every major fire in Western Australia so far this century where VFRS brigades have provided a significant firefighting service and undertaken a major role.

We have been loath to engage in a tit for tat media battle with the AVBFB, however their increasing rhetoric and escalating attacks on our members can no longer be ignored; nor can their manipulation of our State Government's elected members for their own political agenda.

The rose coloured glasses through which a number of their members (and some of our politicians) see the historic firefighting and mitigation capabilities following the Dwelling fires in 1961 (their favourite point of historical reference) is seriously distorted.

The reasons for the increasing number of major fires, with loss of homes and lives, are varied and to say the creation of a Rural Fire Service will fix these issues is simplistic and untrue; whilst their other suggestion – that the Bush Fires Board would have made a significant difference in reducing the risks is without foundation and based on a premise that existed in this State 50 years ago when climate and demographics were considerably different. This makes their claims fallacious to say the least.

An additional Rural Fire Service may provide the members of the AVBFB with the service they want, however we believe it would only create yet another bureaucracy (something the AVBFB has been railing against with DFES) and a silo mentality that would endanger the lives of the community and firefighters.

It is extremely disappointing that the AVBFB have chosen to embark on an "us versus them" dialogue in the media and continues to disparage our members to retain the media's focus on the BFS; when there are larger issues at play and more significant challenges ahead of us. It is way past time that they cease these attacks and become part of the solution, rather than the problem.

All enquiries with regards to this media release should be directed to the Association office on 08 9377-8900.

Paul du Boulay  
Association President

**As Volunteer Firefighters we do **WHAT** we can, **WHEN** we can, **WHERE** we can and to the **VERY BEST** of our **ABILITY****