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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 more than 100 locations across the length and breadth of the State.

Members of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service do not only respond to landscape fires (or bushfires as they are more commonly known), but also turn out to road crash rescue, structure fires (houses and caravans), car fires and direct to brigade alarms (hospitals, aged care facilities etc) at all hours of the day; and they often train on a weekly basis to ensure their skills remain current.

Over the last few days, a number of statements have been made in the media by the Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades in response to an article on the front page of The West Australian newspaper on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April.

This article, referencing the Department of Fire and Emergency Services submission to the Ferguson Inquiry, suggested that DFES had suggested that all Bush Fire Brigades be brought under the control of DFES – in a similar way to which the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Career Fire and Rescue Service and Volunteer Fire and Emergency Service already operate.

The AVBFB have, on a number of occasions, insinuated that only BFS Brigades are community focused and intimately involved in their local areas. This is an obvious exaggeration and ignores the fact that members of the Fire and Rescue Service (particularly regional volunteers) are also intrinsically linked to their communities – often interacting with them on a daily basis.

To suggest that DFES will invoke centralized, Perth based, control of regional Brigades shows a lack of insight into the way in which the organisation works whilst supporting the members of the VFRS in regional areas. This system has been in place for many decades and has proven to be effective and workable; although no system is perfect. There are 7 country and 4 metropolitan regions – each with their own regional offices – and the Area Officers, District Officers and regional Superintendents are also strong advocates of their local communities.

There is widespread acknowledgement that the management and cooperation between agencies at large scale incidents needs improving; however, this is unlikely to occur under separate fire agencies, with differing operational procedures and practices. Large scale incidents also have challenges around fatigue management – both of frontline firefighting personnel and incident managers – that will always require support from metropolitan (or further afield) based volunteers and staff.

The benefits of having one organisation responsible for fire services in Western Australia could be enormous – not the least of which would be ensuring training and operational procedures are consistent across all fire services. This can only be a good thing for the community of Western Australia.

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

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