

## **2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, Morwell**

### **Submission by the**

### **Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC)**

#### **Introduction**

1. AFAC welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. In providing the comments and recommendations below AFAC remains ready to assist the Commission with its Inquiry and to answer any questions or expand on any concepts and suggestions made herein.

#### **About AFAC**

2. The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) is the peak body for Australasian fire, land management and emergency services.
3. Established in 1993 to collaborate on matters of international, national and regional importance, AFAC is supported by the staff at the AFAC office. AFAC currently has 33 member agencies and 14 affiliate members. The senior agency representatives of all full members make up the AFAC Council. AFAC Ltd is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and is governed by a Board, elected from the AFAC Council.
4. The total membership has a \$4bn annual expenditure and has a workforce of 37,000 full-time, 6,000 part time and 256,000 volunteers. AFAC member agencies provide emergency services throughout Australia and New Zealand. By AFAC agencies sharing each other's extensive capabilities, experience, knowledge and learnings, communities benefit from the economies of scale, reduction in the duplication of effort and the strengthening of industry capability. This continuously improves community safety and resilience in an effective, efficient and collaborative way.

#### **AFAC Contribution to this Inquiry**

##### ***Strategic alignment***

5. This submission has been prepared by AFAC and the views expressed within this document are consistent with the *AFAC Strategic Directions for the Fire and Emergency Services in Australia and New Zealand 2014 – 2016*. These directions are supported by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC), and were endorsed by the former national Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM) on 8 November 2013. The five strategic directions are:
  - Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction

- Providing a trusted response
  - The source of credible and timely information
  - Effective governance and resource management
  - Informed by research
6. Central to the strategic directions outlined is the need for a nationally-consistent incident management system. Fire and emergency services are now operating to a single mantra: *'all agencies, all hazards, all the time'*. Interoperability is critical to how fire and emergency services operate, and there are few incidents that do not require a multi-agency response.
  7. The Australian state and territory governments and emergency service organisations recognise that emergency events do not respect geographic boundaries. There needs to be the capability for all fire and emergency service agencies to manage emergency incidents seamlessly and cooperatively inter and intra-state, and the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System provides that capability in Australia.

### ***AIIMS in emergency management***

8. The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) was first introduced in Australia during the mid-eighties and originated from the United States National Inter-agency Incident Management System (NIIMS). Progressively adopted by the fire and emergency services, AIIMS is now the industry national standard (doctrine) for the management of all incidents, imminent or actual, occurring in the natural or built-environment. AIIMS provides a common incident management system for all responding agencies and personnel, enabling a seamless integration of activities, resources and decision making for the effective and safe resolution of any incident.
9. AFAC submits that AIIMS is fundamental to our ability to deploy personnel to other jurisdictions and still have them operate safely and effectively. Conditions at an emergency incident are often fast-moving, uncertain and challenging, and it is critical to the safety of responders and the success of the mission that there should be a common approach to the way in which the incident response is organised and managed.
10. The 2014 Hazlewood Mine Fire illustrates the operational benefits of using AIIMS. By being trained in AIIMS, organised, equipped and ready, operational personnel from Queensland and New South Wales and others were able to work effectively and efficiently with their colleagues from Victoria, and to integrate effectively into each other's systems of work. This was evident both on the frontline of operations and in the various incident management teams.
11. The fires in South Australia earlier this year also reflected this same integration of effort; interstate teams worked cohesively and effectively with South Australian teams. By working to a common incident management system, this focussed the emergency management activity on minimising the impact of the emergency and its potential consequences to the community, essential infrastructure and the environment. Time, effort and resources were focused on managing the response and working with communities to mitigate their risk.
12. The alignment between AIIMS and the US National Incident Management System (NIMS), previously NIIMS, has for a number of years facilitated international deployments between Australia, the United States and Canada. These deployments have been highly successful and have led to a deeper understanding of each other's systems of work. The effective

integration into these incident management teams is directly linked to working to a common incident management system. AIIMS can provide that common platform for incident management across emergency management organisations within Australia.

13. AIIMS is also applicable to the management of non-emergency response situations such as major sporting competitions, exhibitions and conferences. AIIMS has been used to manage significant events involving many levels of government, emergency management organisations and the community.

### ***AIIMS and its evolution***

14. AFAC works closely with the users of AIIMS to ensure that the System, and its application, builds on the experience of emergency management practitioners and lessons learnt from formal and informal reviews. AFAC's 2012 review of AIIMS doctrine, and the subsequent release of AIIMS 4th Edition (AIIMS-4) in 2013, involved over 70 of Australia's most experienced incident managers and trainers, representing every emergency service organisation in the country.
15. The review was informed by the research findings of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and a range of other research institutions into human factors and their impact on decision-making within incident management teams, leadership and management capabilities, and the integration of local knowledge into Incident Management Teams.
16. Findings from inquiries and analysis of major incidents undertaken by government and agencies in recent years were also factored into the review and to ensuring that the System evolves as we build our national capability.

### ***National Certification for incident management***

17. Incident Management is a highly specialised and specific function that requires considerable expertise, experience and knowledge. As the industry body for emergency and incident management professionals, AFAC has initiated National Certification for incident management and the establishment of a National AIIMS Certification Register (NACR).
18. This project will certify those performing emergency and incident management roles against professional standards established by the industry, and will support performance, raise standards and maintain currency of personnel conducting this critical function. The intention is to support practitioners (who carry considerable weight of responsibility) to keep pace with requirements in a rapidly changing environment, continually advance their expertise in this specialised area, and to optimise their effectiveness in managing emergencies in highly stressful circumstances.
19. This need and approach is not unique to Australia. In the United States, national training programs and accreditation are also a key aspect of NIMS and significant Federal resources have been invested in establishing national capability in incident management.

### ***Building capability beyond the industry***

20. AFAC submits that the adoption of AIIMS expands well beyond the fire and emergency services. AFAC estimates there are over 300 organisations applying AIIMS in both the private and public sector. State and local government departments, water industry, mining companies, corrections, airports, hospitals, universities and major infrastructure are only

some of the 300 users of AIIMS. The adoption of AIIMS into the broader community is confirmation that the system and the principles upon which it is based are sufficiently flexible and that they can be easily applied to many other industries and their workplace needs.

21. AFAC strongly contends that adoption of a common incident management system by emergency management organisations and industry will lead to a more effective, integrated and coordinated response to managing emergencies and in working with communities to manage their risk. A key principle within the *AFAC Strategic Directions for the Fire and Emergency Services in Australia and New Zealand 2014 – 2016* is 'Interoperability'. Most emergency incidents generate a response from a variety of agencies. Major emergencies intensify the number of organisations involved in managing the event. Achieving an integrated and coordinated approach across the multiple emergency management organisations, industry and the community requires the sharing of information, approaches and philosophies, as well as interoperable equipment, procedures and a clear understanding of command and control.
22. AFAC recognises that there is a need to work with organisations beyond the fire and emergency services to build capability and to support these organisations in their adoption of AIIMS and its integration into their business.
23. AFAC considers that there is a strong argument to expand national certification in incident management beyond the emergency services. This will enhance preparedness, response and recovery in emergency management across all agencies and organisations involved. Ensuring our emergency management practitioners are well trained, current and maintaining industry standards will maximise incident management performance and minimise the need for resources to be directed towards recovery.
24. Ensuring that communities beyond the AFAC member agencies are also meeting and maintaining industry standards is equally important for when they come together to respond to major events. By building the capability of emergency management practitioners both within the industry and in the many other private and public sector industries that are using AIIMS, there is a significant opportunity to raise community resilience and potentially reduce the impact of emergencies in communities.
25. The adoption of AIIMS into the broader community also provides an opportunity for stakeholders and groups to work together, to prepare for major events, and to put in place arrangements to mitigate risk. By adopting a common approach to incident management, there is the potential to enhance the confidence of the community and the agencies in managing their preparedness and response arrangements.
26. AFAC is the trusted source of incident management doctrine, information and advice; and its member agencies are actively engaged in broader emergency management, and in working with practitioners in many diverse fields. AFAC contends that by actively working with the broader emergency management agencies and stakeholders, this will raise community resilience and potentially reduce the impact of emergencies in communities.

### AFAC Members

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Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Agency	National Rural Fire Authority, New Zealand
ACT Parks and Conservation Service	New South Wales Rural Fire Service
Australian Capital Territory State Emergency Service	New South Wales State Emergency Service
Airservices Australia	New Zealand Fire Service
Attorney-General's Department (Emergency Management Australia)	Northern Territory Emergency Service
Bushfires NT	Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service
Country Fire Authority, Victoria	Office of Environment and Heritage, New South Wales (NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service)
Department of Environment and Primary Industries	Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources - South Australia	Parks Victoria
Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing - Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service	South Australian Country Fire Service
Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia	South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service
Fire and Rescue New South Wales	South Australian State Emergency Service
Forestry Corporation of New South Wales	Tasmania Fire Service
Forestry Tasmania	Tasmania State Emergency Service
ForestrySA	Victoria State Emergency Service
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Melbourne	

### AFAC Affiliate Members

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Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO)	HQPlantations Pty Ltd
Bureau of Meteorology	Melbourne Water
Department of Conservation New Zealand	Office of Bushfire Risk Management, Western Australia
EMQUAL	Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner
Fire Services Commissioner Victoria	Pacific Islands Fire Service Association (PIFSA)
Geoscience Australia	South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM)
Hong Kong Fire Services Department	Surf Life Saving Australia