

**Submission
No 101**

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Organisation: NSW Farmers

Date received: 2 August 2017



2 August 2017

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Chair, Legal Affairs Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Re: Inquiry into emergency services agencies

Dear Mr Borsak,

I write in regard to your inquiry, and specifically with reference to 1e in the Terms of Reference: the relocation of the New South Wales Rural Fire Services Headquarters to Orange, Dubbo or Parkes.

In September last year, we wrote to the then Minister for Emergency Services, David Elliott, regarding the future location of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) headquarters following the announcement of \$14.2 million in funding for a new headquarters. At its 2015 Annual Conference the Association passed a motion calling for the RFS headquarters to be relocated to the Central West of NSW.

Whilst we are aware that the RFS has a number of fire stations (like that announced in the recent Budget in West Tamworth), our members believe that a relocation of the RFS headquarters to a region such as the Central West of NSW could improve the overall operational management of the RFS.

Further, feedback from our members suggest that following the Wambelong Inquiry and the Sir Ivan Fire, there is considerable mistrust in some sections of the community, which will need to be repaired for the future smooth functioning of the RFS and its local command structure. A move to a regional location would foster a more regionally-focused culture in headquarters staff, and would also result in a greater ownership of and regard for the organisation among the people of rural NSW.

We are aware that plans are well advanced to locate the new HQ at Olympic Park in Sydney, despite the fact that Orange, Parkes, Forbes and Dubbo Councils have all approached the NSW Government with proposals for relocation of the RFS to their respective areas. We understand that all of these councils would be supportive of a decision to relocate to the Central West, regardless of which location is successful.

We are also aware that the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association is supportive of a move to decentralise the RFS headquarters and relocate it to the Central West. There can be no real technical constraints to locating the headquarters in a regional area and before a new site is built, this is the perfect opportunity to move a government department to a rural region without impacting on its effectiveness and efficiency.

Should your office need further information, you are welcome to contact Policy Advisor, Isabella McDougall, on or via email:

Sincerely,

Sonia O'Keefe
Chair, Rural Affairs Committee

NSW Farmers' Association

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