



2 March 2010

Mr Richard Warwick
Secretary
United Firefighters Union of Tasmania
- Tasmania Branch
PO Box 20
North Hobart Tas. 7002

Dear Mr Warwick

Thank you for your letter of 19 February and invitation to attend a conference of the United Firefighters Union of Australia on the morning of 11 March 2010 in Hobart.

While my commitments preclude my attendance, the Shadow Attorney-General, Vanessa Goodwin, is keen to represent me at this forum.

I have pleasure, however, in providing a written response to this questionnaire on behalf of all Liberal Members and candidates, in relation to the tools and government support firefighters in this State need to do their job properly and better service the Tasmanian community.

Question 1: Is your party committed to the implementation of the recommendations from the Myer fire Coronial Inquest?

The State Liberals followed the coronial inquest into the Myer fire and have read the findings with interest and followed up on some matters in the last Estimates process.

In general, we would be very keen to see the recommendations from the Inquest implemented.

Question 2: To the extent that they are relevant to Tasmania, is your party committed to the implementation of the recommendations from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission?

We will ensure that every recommendation from the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission is scrutinised for its application in Tasmania with a full explanation for those recommendations which will not be progressed.

In addition, and in light of the black Saturday bushfires, are you prepared to commit to an independent review into the adequacy of the human and physical resources available to the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) with specific regard to the urban bush interface risk in Tasmania?

We are attracted to this idea, we have been concerned that the level of resources available to the Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS), particularly in regard to the urban bush interface risk, are based on historical and cultural policy settings. We would be pleased to discuss such a review with the UFU.

Question 3: Are you prepared to fund a third 24 hour 7 day a week career fire and rescue station on the North West Coast of Tasmania?

We are aware of the competing views on this matter and the good performance of the current retained volunteer fire fighting service at Ulverstone.

In Government we will need to be closely briefed by the TFS and the UFU before making such a decision. However, we will base such a decision on not just the efficacy of the current arrangements but also safety for all fire fighters on the North West Coast in terms of availability of backup in most circumstances.

Question 4: Are you prepared to immediately provide the \$45,000 needed to equip a third southern TFS road accident rescue (RAR) vehicle to be stationed in the Northern Suburbs of Hobart? In addition, are you prepared to immediately commit a further \$45,000 to ensure that the three 24 hour 7 day a week career fire crews in Launceston can respond to multiple road accident rescues and other incidents occurring at the same time? Are you prepared to give a commitment to provide a total of \$300,000 over the medium term to equip all front line urban pumpers with road accident rescue tools as described above?

We are interested in the UFU's case for an increase in additional vehicles for the Road Accident Rescue capability in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie. While we are impressed by the case made by the UFU, we would require briefings in terms of statistics and all other relevant matters by the TFS before final agreement on the new vehicles. If this information backs the UFU's case we would look to provide it in the 2011/12 Budget.

Question 5: Are you prepared to commit to a dual statewide road accident rescue response with SES and also air support when required?

We have been concerned for some time over the apparent lack of commitment from some players to end turf war issues over RAR Services. We agree that Rotary Air Services should include TFS personnel where indicated, we will instruct all appropriate agencies to review in a joint process, the Joint Tasmanian RAR arrangements.

Question 6: Are you prepared to give a commitment to ensure that career fire crews are responded to all technical rescue incidents throughout Tasmania?

Refer previous answer. The UFU makes a strong case that career fire crews should respond to all technical rescue incidents.

Question 7: Are you prepared to give a commitment to maintain TasFire Equipment as a publicly owned government business enterprise?

The TasFire Equipment does a good job in regional areas. We have no interest in its privatisation.

Question 8: Are you prepared to initiate an independent risk assessment of the fire and rescue needs of the Kingborough municipality?

The Tasmanian Liberals have developed a substantial concern over the risk profile of the Kingborough Municipality for urban and bush fire potential. Kingborough has recently expanded with a new shopping centre and has significant Commonwealth Government buildings in the area.

Further South, the areas which suffer the worst in the 1967 horror wild fires appear, in the minds of many Senior and respected individuals, to be in as bad a condition as the area was prior to the 67 fires and that little appears to have been learnt from that tragedy. As such, a Hodgman Liberal Government will carry out an Independent Risk Assessment of the fire and rescue needs to the Kingborough Municipality. We will seek to involve the CSIRO and the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre in this process. While it will take some time to assess the full cost of such an independent risk assessment inquiry we have allocated \$200,000 in new money to commence the process shortly after the election

Question 9: Are you prepared to fund an independent review of career firefighter training in the Tasmanian Fire Service?

A Hodgman Liberal Government will call for a report on this matter immediately particularly in the area of benchmarking TFS's training schedule against that of career fire fighters in all other States.

Question 10: Is your party committed to maintaining the TFS as the lead authority for the following activities:

- Road accident rescue
- Technical (heavy) rescue including buses, trains and trucks
- Aviation (excluding Hobart and Launceston airports which have their own aviation firefighters)
- Hazardous materials emergencies
- Chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological and incendiary incidents
- Industrial rescue
- Residential rescue
- Urban search and rescue (collapsed buildings)
- High angle rescue (rope rescue in the urban environment)
- Trench rescue
- Marine firefighting?

Yes

Question 11: Are you prepared to assign to a government agency a supervisory role to facilitate stronger adherence to the guidelines jointly developed by the Tasmanian Fire Service and the Local Government Association of Tasmania regarding fire safety in residential developments?

Clearly a better adherence is required. We will take advice including from the UFU on how best to achieve this.

Question 12: Are you prepared to give a commitment to negotiate with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (radio division) to further enhance its bushfire information service?

Yes, we are aware of both the advantages and limitations on the current arrangement and would be keen to discuss potential improvements with the ABC.

Please let me know if you require anything further and, again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely



Will Hodgman MP
Leader of the Opposition