


SA NEWS

SA's emergency agencies to be overhauled into a 'united front' as review finds lack of trust between bosses left SA worse off

A "tough but necessary" review has sparked a significant change to our emergency service agencies after it found its bosses didn't trust each other enough.

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The state's emergency services agencies will face a major overhaul after a review found that a lack of trust between their bosses had left the community worse off.

Emergency Services Minister Corey Wingard has released to *The Advertiser* an analysis by new SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission chief executive Dominic Lane into the joint operation of the State Emergency Service, the Metropolitan Fire Service and the Country Fire Service.


It finds failures across the services that include "complex layers of bureaucracy and governance", a lack of strategic computer technology capability, poor stakeholder relations with both paid and volunteer staff, duplication of responses and budget issues.

Mr Wingard has accepted all findings of a "tough but necessary" review, which he says is "about re-igniting our fire and emergency services to work in the way that it should".

The analysis makes six recommendations, the most fundamental of which is the push for a new shared charter between the agencies to "hold everyone to account" and ensure they have a "united front".

"Lack of trust across the emergency services has led to ongoing duplication and inefficiencies," Mr Lane writes.



 CFS firefighters Andrew Leitch, Matthew Freak and Shaun Tidswell on Kangaroo Island in January. Picture: Tait Schmaal

"Agencies remain siloed, preventing the benefits of collective effort from being realised. There is little evidence of a collaborative approach to reform and improved service delivery succeeding. There are multiple reasons which can be attributed to this such as a lack of clarity within the legislation, competition between agencies and stakeholder issues from industrial bodies.

"The emergency services and the SA community are worse off due to a failure of leadership by the chief executives and the chief officers, the senior public ... executives." The review, dated September, was to be made public late last year but its release was delayed by the [bushfire crisis](#).

A reform process starts this week as input is sought from staff, volunteers and unions.



Mr Wingard said services deteriorated under the former Labor government, despite the best efforts of dedicated staff.

“Significant changes have been made,” he said. “Old chiefs have been moved out and new chiefs have come in, but there’s more to be achieved. I want to see Government funding spent more wisely, improving support for our staff and volunteers and better use of cutting-edge technology.

“Our state has the best volunteers and paid emergency service workers in the country.

“It’s time the systems around them were strengthened and streamlined, because the safety and security of SA is of upmost importance.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF SA’S FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Leadership: The (SAFECOM) chief executive and (agency) chief officers need to drive collective leadership ... through the development of an emergency services joint executive charter.

Governance: Through the establishment of a joint executive charter, the chief executive and chief officers commit as a unified team when presenting at the SAFECOM board. This will allow Government priorities, improvements and changes to be implemented.

Financial control: Outcomes from the recently announced MFS expenditure inquiry to initiate a broader review of service delivery models and capital programs that better balance and align risk to service delivery outcomes and investment decisions.

Innovation and project delivery: Develop a 10-year capital works program that identifies priorities to enhance operational performance and meet future risks. Delivery of funded projects to be closely monitored by the SAFECOM board as the sponsoring authority.

Policy advice and support to Government: Build on the functional lead model across SAFECOM, with the additional creation of project management and governance functional lead positions.

Emergency management: An updated state emergency management plan, clarifying accountabilities of leadership, implementing systems for monitoring hazard plans (and) co-ordinating cross sector planning.