

Fire & Rescue Services Review Rural & Provincial Sector Workshop

Local Government New Zealand

17th August 2006



Local Government New Zealand

le pūtahi matakokiri

Introduction – John Forbes

The Programme for the Workshop

- Review - Issues
- Objectives
- Volunteer Fire Fighters
- The Role of Councils
- The Challenge
- Are we asking the right questions?
- What information do you need?
- What support do you need to deliver reform?
- What reforms?



Review – planning for change

Three key propositions driving a need for change:

- **The legislation is outdated and is focused almost solely on fire, rather than a wider rescue role.**
- **The current system of fire management is not well suited to future needs.**
- **The system is unfair from both funding and service delivery viewpoints.**



Specific issues - discussion document identified

Current legislation:

- Is ambiguous about fire suppression services functions and accountabilities;
- Is unclear about fire boundaries;
- Has gaps in the mandate for fire fighters to perform non-fire tasks
- Is complex in its description of who is accountable for attending structural fires in rural areas



Issues cont'd

- Relationships between (urban) volunteer brigades and the NZFS unclear;
- Lacks guidelines about payments to volunteers in the rural sector;
- Allows for different standards and processes for fire permits in different regions, and;
- Funding anomalies (inequity?)



Interim Conclusion

- Any ambiguities, gaps and inconsistencies in the legislation need to be fixed.
- Such issues, while requiring legislative reform, do not in themselves demand a new management system.
- Integration can be achieved by establishing linkages, mandates and better understanding between existing service providers.



Other drivers for change?

Ask:

- Can the current job be done for less than it costs under the present system?
- Can more be done for the same cost as the present system or at a small increase than might be achieved in the current system?

So... Consider, within this review, the system for delivering fire and rescue services in its entirety?



Information Gaps

Addressing these questions is not easy. There are information gaps.

There is poor description / quantification of:

- the contributions (direct \$, indirectly and in-kind) made by councils and communities.
- the variety and complexity of current “capacity”
- the needs of volunteer fire fighters (to maintain motivation & support their service).
- the characteristics of resilient communities



Info gaps cont'd
poor quantification of...

- the practical import of funding anomalies (and of inequity)
- the levels of service that might be expected in different contexts (standards?)
- the resources needed to provide these levels of service
- the geography of need and of response (at a national level) = no theoretical underpinning able to match demand with supply (risk mngment models used as proxy).



Meanwhile, the system is working!



Also consider

- What is the role of your district council, of your regional council, of Government, of MCDEM & the local CDEM sector, and of the NZFSC the NZFS, and the NRFA?
- Your existing relationships with fire risk management (& rescue)?
- Your strengths and weaknesses?



One of the challenges...

- Some councils want out of fire
- Others say local capacity is embedded so deeply as to be inextricable from council.
- Some do rescue (want to / have to)
- Others aren't keen (can't / wont)
- What about the 4 R's (not just responder)
- **Can these differences be accommodated in this reform?**



YES THEY CAN (reality check?)

- The current system provides for councils and other stakeholders to determine an (appropriate) local response
- YES or NO?
- Does that qualify as an appropriate national response?
 - Is this always true? (exceptions?)
- Who makes that decision?
 - What factors might you expect their rationale to cover?



Top of the head – stretch...

- Do you expect reforms to allow any local discretion around F&R service delivery (either LOS or modus operandi?)
- Could you anticipate others making decisions about levels of service to your community, what influence might you wish to have?
- Under what circumstances would you want influence as to fire & rescue services
- What about “want control of fire” &/or “rescue”.



- Do you need/want (?) to be service provider / purchaser – in what circumstances?
- Who else (what, where, when, how, why?)
- Better ways of doing things? YES / NO
- Regulation **OR** by any other means
 - *standards, guides, triennial agreements, codes of practice, MOUs, contracting, accreditation, registrations, operating procedures, etc)*



Project team - assistance

- Case studies to describe current variety
 - formal “section 15” agreements
 - providing capacity (contracting/MOU)
 - enlarged rural fire districts (profile some)
- The NZFS Urban Fire Districts arise under the current legislation. That framework allows adjustments. UFD are not fixed.
- Do we need to describe NZFS activity / geography / modus operandi? Anything else?



interim observations...

We could design a new system, but can we guarantee its successful implementation?

This isn't a clean slate theoretical exercise - there is an existing system that relies on large doses of goodwill by all of its participants.

This review intended to support, strengthen and engender more goodwill. What is at risk?



A Vision

***The management of fire risk
through an integrated service
that is efficient, effective and
responsive to different contexts
and communities***

Can we confirm this?

What about 'rescue'?



Objectives?

- integrated services (between Rural Fire Authorities and the NZ Fire Service).
- oversight of all aspects of fire risk management and rescue services, stronger links to regional civil defence groups
- value and support all fire and rescue workers
- clear mandate to attend non-fire emergency incidents and do rescue work – (for those who agree to do it/not a requirement).



Objectives cont'd

- legal protection for all fire and rescue workers when carrying out their duties.
- a more consistent approach to setting levels of services & setting standards, and better quality assurances against desired levels of service.
- equitable (transparent) funding arrangements in terms of both contributors and beneficiaries.
- clear accountability arrangements.



Group Task

1. Have we described the problem (all issues)?
2. What is your interest in this review?
3. What do you value about the current system?
4. Do we have clear objectives for the future?
5. What do these objectives mean to you in practice – can you confirm this with your constituencies and other stakeholders in the delivery of the service? (How)



Perspectives - a view from a constituency and a stakeholder

Volunteer Rural Fire Fighter - Gavin Wallace

Wainuiomata Bushfire Force

Forest and Rural Fire Association of NZ
(FRFANZ) – volunteers spokesperson

Interpreter of surveys and contexts

Reframing the problem – another way of looking
at the world.



Group Task

Responding to Gavin

- What did you hear?
- What do you make of it?
- Does it inform what you need to do?
- Who else do you need to hear from?
- What information can the project team get for you, to help your deliberations?



The Role of Councils – what else?

- Community wellbeing
- Facilitate
- Decision making (principles)
- Leadership
- Service provider
- Required to provide rural fire risk management
 - Capacity (funding, skills, resources, synergy)
 - Efficiency and effectiveness



Review / Reform / Change?

- What
- Where
- Who
- How
- With
- When
- Why

ARE THESE USEFUL QUESTIONS?



Conclusions from Minister's Workshop – reform should achieve...

- Overall legislative mandate for a range of functions provided across services (i.e. rescue services need to be included);
- A service based around the 4 Rs (reduction, readiness, response, recovery);
- Fire as a land management tool to be included;
- National standards – for equipment, training, qualifications, response times;



Conclusions cont'd

- Define services delivered locally/regionally within an agreed framework of national standards;
- Appropriate accountability for standards;
- Appropriate accountability at the level of service delivery;
- Acceptance that some things must happen nationally and others must happen regionally.

Can we confirm these?



Key conclusion drawn - stakeholders support a national – regional model.

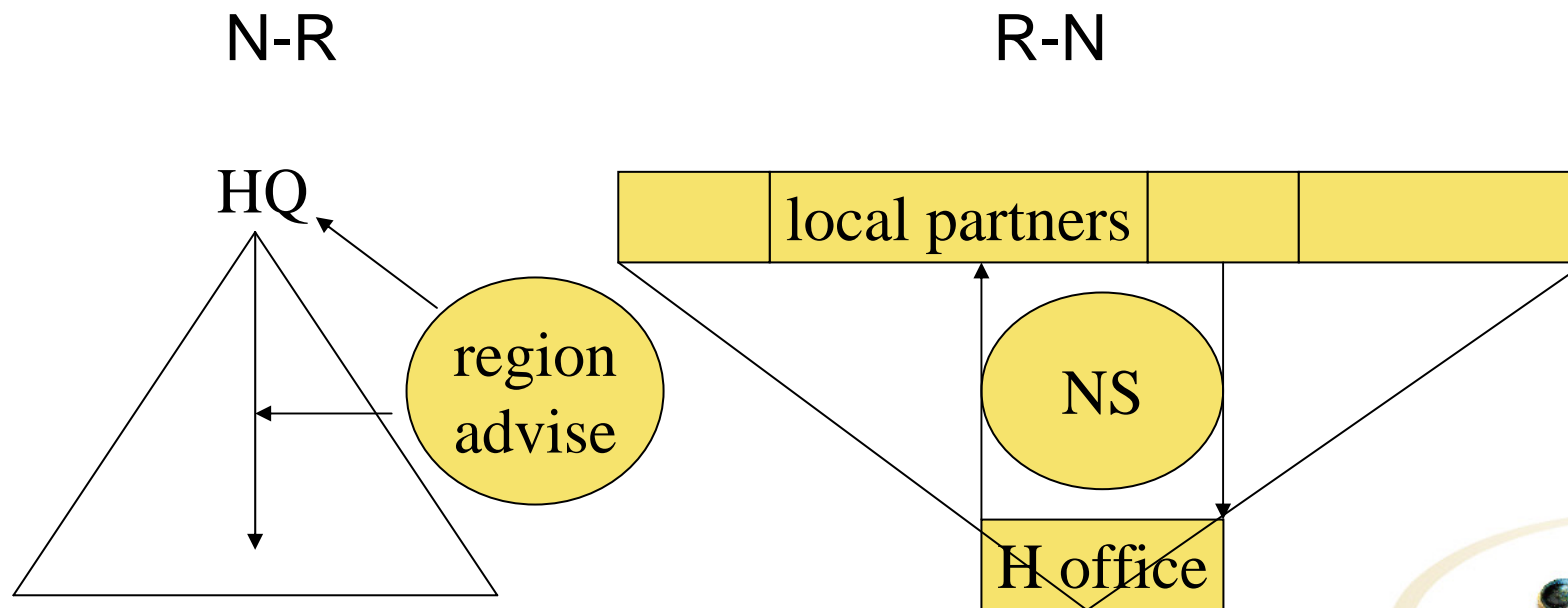
But questions remain around:

- Governance and accountability arrangements;
- Who will own the assets;
- How local communities get voice into regional and ‘national’;
- How the system should allow movement of resources inter-regionally in response to events.



What National – Regional Model?

- So... “National-Regional” means different things to different people
- Is a / the pivot around the point of accountability / control = relationships (client, mangr, governrs)?



National – Regional

An extreme: –

- Centralised command and control.
- HQ discretion over management of operations to deliver F&RS to (HQ defined) communities
- communities & individuals as passive recipients of services...
- with some 'regional' channels to communicate wishes to controllers &
- a strong local presence (chief and station) but limited local discretion



Regional – National

An extreme: -

- Very distributed command and control
- Heaps of local discretion – based around self described communities
- Active participation by members of community as core providers of services.
- Demand support from head office
- Input to standards / levels of service
- Bid for additional funds to meet Nat standards



Something to think about...

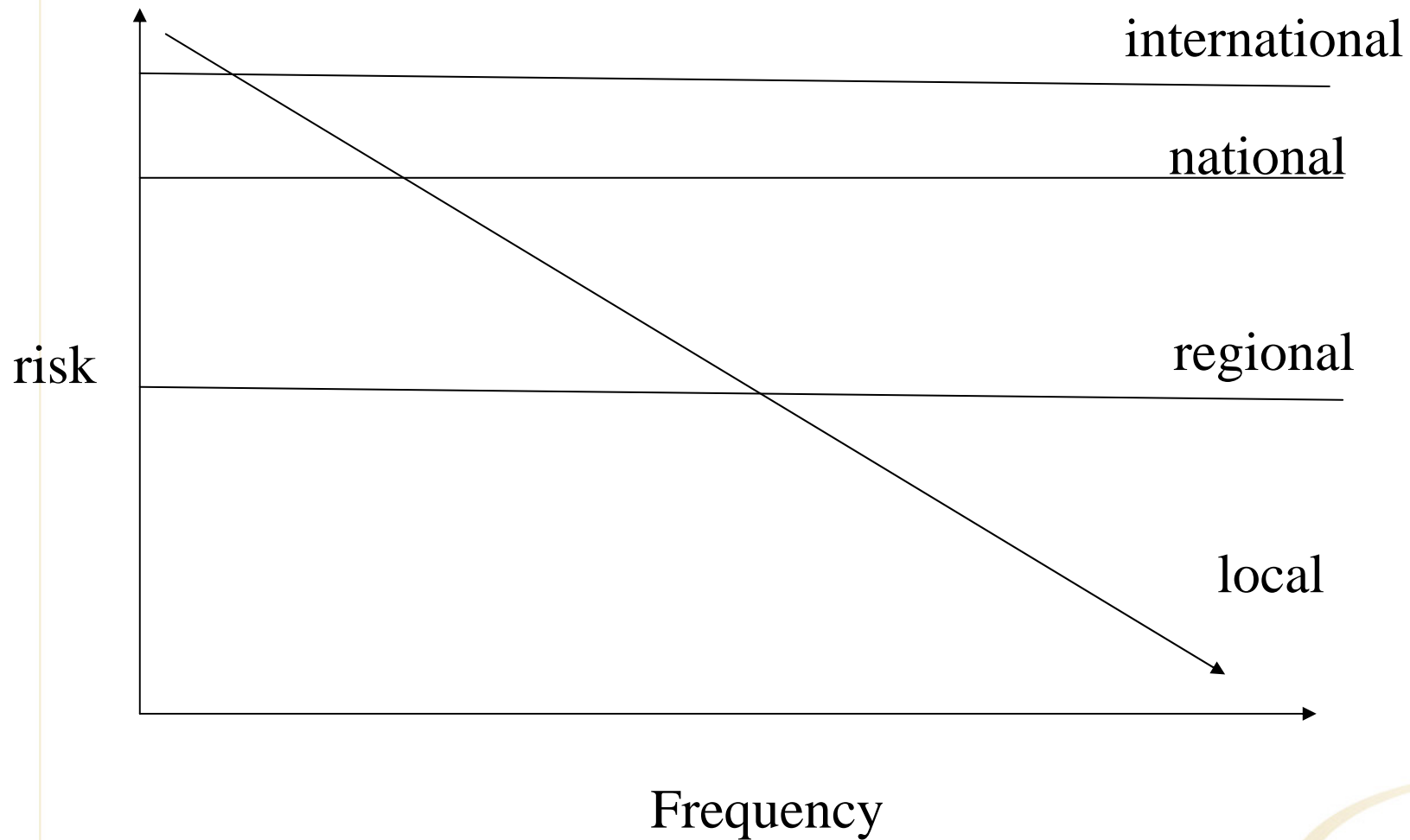
- While stakeholders appear to support a national – regional model...
- perhaps we better address the 'outstanding questions'...
- perhaps by way of describing the continuum from N-R to R-N and evaluating relative merits...

RECALL – what info do we need?

And what will be at the crux of this evaluation?



Respective roles and strengths



But just as likely...

- Who pays and who benefits?
- What influence does the payee have over the services received?
- Who is accountable to whom and how....(i.e. who decides what gets done, where, when, how and why)

These questions inform structure, mandate and integration, not the current issues identified around funding...



Funding – anomalies and inequity

- The two systems are funded differently
urban – structural / rural - vegetation
- Complex arrangements have arisen, whereby poorly quantified transfers do occur between the two systems.
- Some contribute, some don't. Some pay many times (e.g. house / contents insurance, rates, vehicle registration, personal protection, A.C.C., volunteer FF, donations, other in-kind).



Another conclusion

“This work needs to be qualified by the question, “what is best for communities?” not by “what is best for the delivers?”

(Facilitator, from the Minister’s workshop)



Insurance as a basis for fire levy

- A lack of equity between those who are fully insured and those who are not (uninsured, underinsured, self insured, offshore insured).
- The fire levy also funds other services (e.g. rescue, HSNO incident)
- Lack of transparency about who is contributing
- Lack of incentives for fire safety measures
- Potential erosion of funding as new insurance comes into the market



Funding is not only via property insurance however

- Similar observations apply to the fire service levy paid with car registration
- Ratepayers contribute to vegetation fire risk management – poorly quantified (embedded)
- Ability to recover costs from rural land owner (owner of fuel) or the fire starter – vegetation.
- Unquantified community contributions, including in-kind.



Collection issues?

- Dissatisfied insurers collecting for services they don't provide or control
- Ratepayer willingness to contribute against other demands for services from rates
- \$ are not related to non-fire services
- What is ACCs role in rescue?
- Just who are the beneficiaries of fire & rescue services and how to tap their contribution?



Funding – Minister's workshop

Principles or criteria that might inform decisions include:

- Keep it simple – don't add unnecessary collection costs;
- Find an approach that is fair – in distributing costs against the beneficiaries;
- Some systems could have advantages, in encouraging or incentivising fire risk management;
- Accountability – a connection between service delivery and the collection of funds.



Outstanding questions

- Governance / accountability arrangements (at different levels) – national and regional;
- Definition of ‘region’;
- Ownership of assets;
- Protection of regional assets (meaning those protected by current rural arrangements);
- Command and control (3 centres currently supporting NZFS);



Who are the parties to funding / capacity

- NZ Fire Services Commission – NZFS / NRFA
- Rural Fire Authorities
 - Territorial authorities
 - Department of Conservation
 - NZ Defence Force
 - Forestry Companies
- FF - Professionals / volunteers
- Clients / communities
- Regional councils? CDEM link



Future Fire Services

Integrated fire risk management framework

Note “integration” does not equal “unitary” nor does in equal “amalgamation”.

The continuum of options within National - Regional hasn't been described or evaluated.



ACCOUNTABILITY – what does it mean to you?

Does accountability hinge on providing for appropriate relationship between those paying and those deciding the type and levels of service (being purchased). This includes an ability to evaluate the LOS and adjust payments (transparency).

RECALL - The system isn't broken!

First what is needed... then what might be desirable.



Evaluating options

- Identify the key issues to consider
- Agree the facts and other information needs
- Provide for local government input
 - information
 - analysis - assisting with evaluation
 - work with stakeholders to make choices
 - work with communities to manage transition
 - accommodate needs - sequence change at pace of those who deliver the service.

