

# Fire & Rescue Services Review Report to Zones

Local Government New Zealand

August 2006



*Local Government New Zealand*

*le pūtahi matakokiri*

## *Review – planning for change*

**Three key propositions driving a need for change:**

- **legislation is outdated and is focused almost solely on fire, rather than a wider rescue role.**
- **current system of fire management is not well suited to future needs.**
- **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 or at a small increase than might be achieved in the current system?

**So...**

**Consider the efficacy of the system for delivering fire and rescue services in its entirety?**



## *Information Gaps*

Addressing efficacy questions is not easy.

**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 motivate & support their continued service).
- the characteristics of resilient communities



*Info gaps cont'd*  
*poor quantification of...*

- the practical import of funding anomalies
- The type and scale of “inequity”
- levels of service expected in different contexts (providing for variable standards?)
- resources needed to provide these LOS
- the geography of need and of response (at a national level) = no theoretical underpinning able to match demand with supply (risk management models used as proxy).



**Meanwhile, the system is working!**



## *Consider*

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



## *The challenge for local govt...*

- 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?**



## *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 (4 Rs) 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 so/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 (national) standards, and better quality assurances against desired levels of service.
- equitable (transparent) funding arrangements in terms of both contributors and beneficiaries.
- clear accountability arrangements.



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

- Overall legislative mandate for a range of functions provided across services (rescue);
- A service based around the 4 Rs (reduction, readiness, response, recovery);
- Include fire as a land management tool;
- 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?**



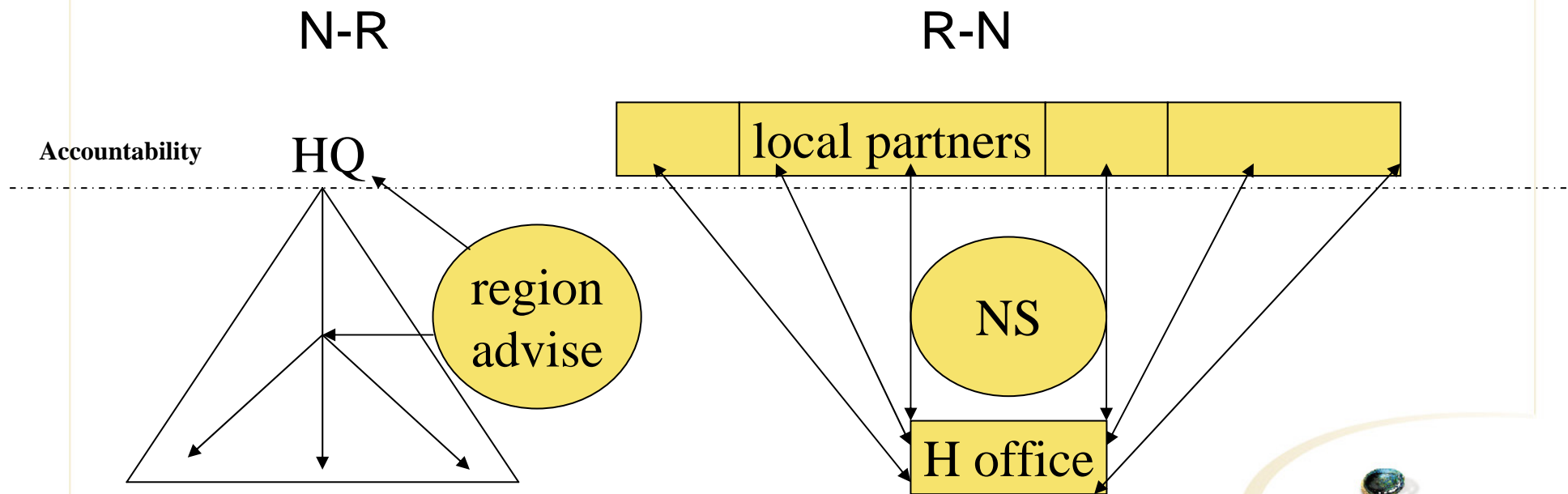
**Key conclusion drawn - stakeholders support a “national – regional model”... But outstanding questions remain around:**

- 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?*

- “National-Regional” does mean different things to different people
- Is a / the pivot around the point of accountability / control = relationships (clients, mangrs & 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



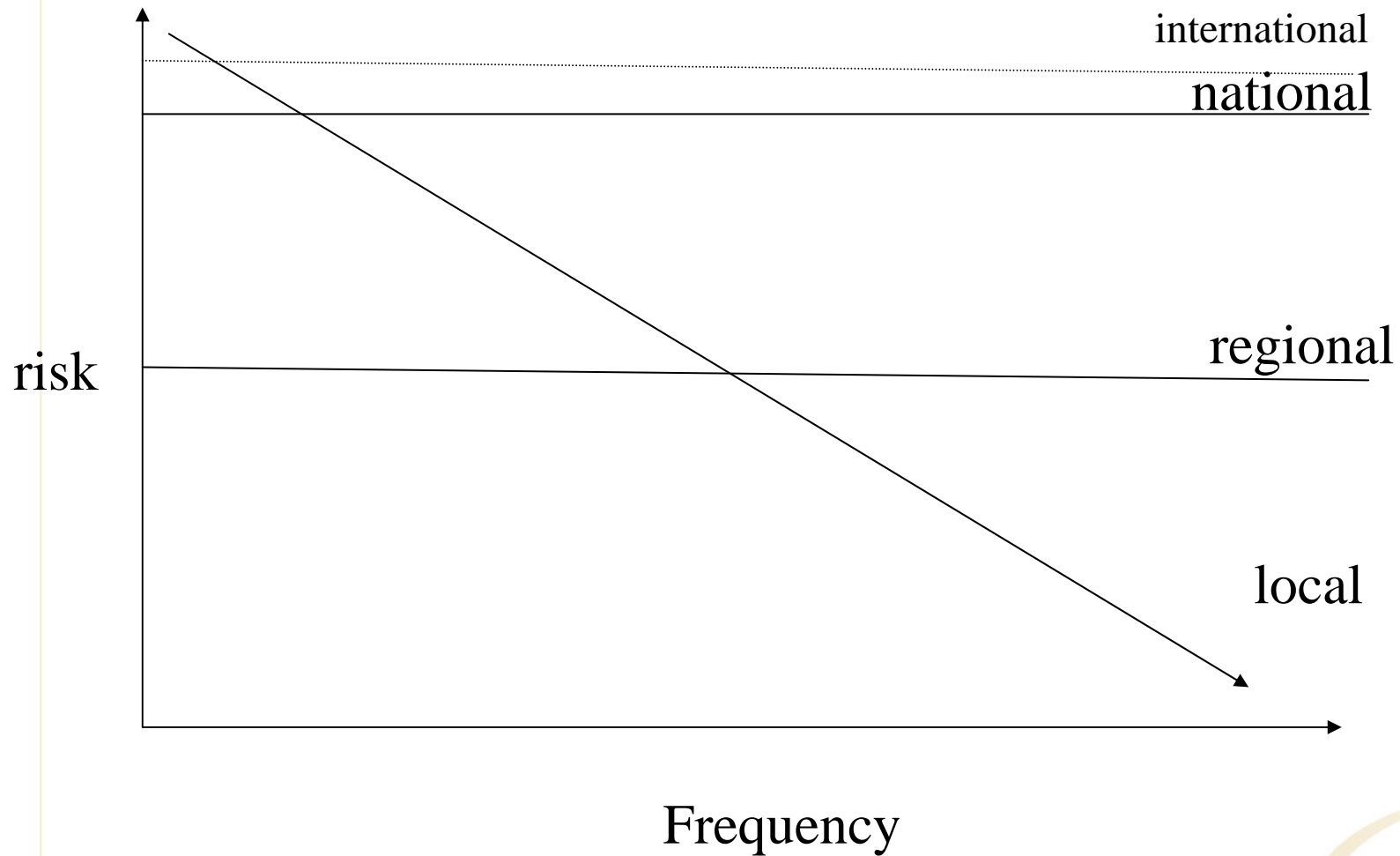
## *Regional – National*

An extreme: -

- Very distributed command and control
- Local discretion – based around self described communities and their agreed LOS
- Active participation by members of community as core providers of services.
- Demand support from head office
- Input to standards that apply locally
- Bid for additional funds to meet Nat standards



## *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, poorly quantified transfers occur between 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).
- Some receive great service others don't (variation not due to how much paying).



## *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*

- Fire service levy paid with car registration
- Ratepayers pay for 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 (direct/indirect) e.g. volunteers & in-kind.

**And funding is only one part of CAPACITY –**  
e.g. in use but available (modes of ‘standby’)



## *Collection issues?*

- Dissatisfied insurers (collecting for services they don't control)
- Ratepayer willingness to pay against other demands for services from rates
- Not capturing for non-fire services
- Tax 4 'public good', property levy, user charge
- What is ACCs role (rescue)?
- Just who are the beneficiaries of F & of R services and how to tap their contribution?
- Relationship between setting costs (charge) and those who pay (the bill) – accountability?



## *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);



## *Another conclusion*

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

(Facilitator, from the Minister’s workshop)



## ***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)?**

**Does this include 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.**



## *Questions for decision makers*

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



5. Do you need/want (?) to be service provider / purchaser? (in what circumstances?)
6. Who else (what, where, when, how, why?)
7. Better ways of doing things? YES / NO
8. Regulation **OR** by any other means

*(standards, guides, triennial agreements, codes of practice, MOUs, contracting, accreditation, registrations, operating procedures, etc)*



## *Zone ongoing tasks*

9. Have we described the problem (all issues)?
10. What is your interest in this review?
11. What do you value about the current system?
12. Do we have clear objectives for the future?
13. 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?)
14. Will you agree on future services, structure for delivery, governance & funding?



## ***Future Fire Services***

### **Integrated fire risk management framework**

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

**The continuum of integration options along a N – R model has to be described and evaluated.**

**Your choice as to which is the best option will hinge on clarifying/agreeing accountability relationships (Yes or No?), that in turn might depend on appropriate balance between national stds and local discretion/influence on community contribution (given or demanded)?**



## *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?

