



New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union

12 February 2019

Kerry Gregory  
Deputy Chief Executive Service Delivery  
FENZ  
By email: [Kerry.Gregory@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:Kerry.Gregory@fireandemergency.nz)

Dear Kerry

**PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTATION ON THE SERVICE DELIVERY BRANCH  
LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

We refer to your proposal dated 5 February 2018.

We understand that you developed the proposal, will be receiving the feedback and will ultimately decide if your own proposal goes ahead. In the least that gives rise to a perception of bias undermining this consultation process. This is not a criticism of you personally but a criticism of the lack of independence which may impact on the nature and type of responses received.

Despite this flawed process, the NZPFU is of the view that this proposal is fundamental to the organisation and therefore we make the following response.

We welcome your acknowledgement that the people of the organisation are to be involved in the design of the organisation "as our people understand and know how our organisation needs to operate to serve our communities" and that there will be the need for leaders "who are respectful of the experience and skills" of those people.

But these sentiments are not followed through as it is proposed that the Region Managers and National Manager roles are being advertised internally and externally requiring "significant response leadership experience in emergency management – not specifically fire experience".

The case for change highlights that we have a broader mandate than just fire, but 66% of all incidents responded to last year were fires so any manager appointed must have a fire background for any credibility and assurances amongst the firefighters.

It is vital that these positions have extensive professional career firefighting experience. The Region managers will be working "on the business and in the business" and the National Managers will be overseeing firefighting capacity and capability, will need technical and specialist experience to provide the strategic advice on response.

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All response, including non-fire incidents, medical and specialist, is provided by professional career firefighters and it is widely known and accepted within FENZ that career firefighters are 20 percent of the capability undertaking 80 percent of the emergency response, and career and urban volunteers respond to 90 percent of the vegetation fires.

Professional career firefighters are highly trained specialist problem solvers. They understand what is needed for and by the organisation for them to protect the community. They adapt to the changing risks and develop specialist response skills. They are on the frontline of risk reduction and preserving life and property. Their safety, and the safety of the community, depends on sound management decisions and qualified incident controllers.

Further, the appointment of professional career firefighters to these management roles will be a strong message of respect for their experience and skills. The community deserves to have the operational arm of a fire service managed by professional career firefighters.

It is in the organisation's interests to carve a promotional path for professional career firefighters to management, to aspire to leading the organisation. To appoint an external appointee will demotivate and disenfranchise professional career firefighters capable of these roles, and will isolate and demotivate other professional career firefighters.

Further, the role descriptions for the National managers do not reference the Target Operating Model work undertaken, and promised to continue, to define response capability into the future. Nor is there any reference to the TOM work in risk reduction. These positions do not mention integration work or how they will work around, within or without integration.

It should also be a requirement for these managers to engage with the union in decision-making. There is no reference to the relationship with the unions which is a fundamental omission for management roles designed to oversee response capability.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wattie Watson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wattie Watson  
Secretary