

Union Response to Auckland Fire Region Proposal to adjust Auckland's Career Fire District Boundaries.

The principle of district amalgamation is one the Auckland Local of the NZPFU fully supports. However, we would make the following submissions which outline the preferred restructure model.

- The proposal to reduce the Districts does not, in our opinion, go far enough and we can see no operational reason for not reducing to one District.
- We believe the whole restructure is based around administrative requirements which usually cannot be adapted to operational needs.
- We are greatly concerned, that timely response to emergency incidents is not considered part of the role of District staff.
- The purpose for change, as outlined on page 2 of the document, does not address any of the concerns that the Auckland Local has about operational effectiveness and efficiency.
- We do not consider that the proposal for alignment of District boundaries with boundaries of "*other key service providers and key stakeholders*", is of any relevance to the operational effectiveness of the Auckland Fire Region.
- It is pleasing to read the statement that "*there will be no change in staff numbers*" if that means there will be no reduction, but if that also means there will be no increase then the Auckland Local would have some concerns, considering that Te Atatu and Silverdale are supposed to be joining the Auckland Fire Districts.
- The Auckland Local would also require a written "grandfathering clause" to be placed in any amalgamation agreement which would prevent our members being transferred on dubious pretexts to stations that they had no desire to serve at and which, because of redefined District boundaries, certain malicious individuals would be able to transfer them because of the intra District transfer policy. This would refer to all of the amalgamated districts, and would remain in force until such time as the individual opted to move of their own free will. This has been the case with the pre 1984 North Shore District staff, who still are covered by that agreement.
- It is disappointing to see that a number of contiguous Volunteer Districts have been excluded from this restructuring document, they being Silverdale, Waitemata, Greenhithe and Titirangi, and the Auckland Local would see this as an impediment to any agreement being reached, considering Management's continued renegeing on previous agreements; in particular the agreement reached on Silverdale that the Fire Service seems to continually put back. We consider this to be the ideal time to amalgamate these Districts into the Auckland Fire District and return to a logical operational command and control system which, at present, is ludicrous.
- The Local is also disappointed that it was not invited to have a representative on the working party mentioned on page 4 of the document, as we consider any outcome from any amalgamation affects our members more than any other interested party.

- We consider that the continued references to the Police, DHB's and Local Authorities to be a smokescreen, and we would consider that alignment with the only other emergency service in the Auckland Region, St. John Ambulance, which we find intriguing that nowhere in the whole document is this service mentioned, would be more appropriate.
- We are mindful that the Royal Commission into the Governance of Auckland is at present receiving submissions, and find it rather bizarre that the Auckland Region is pressing ahead with boundary alterations without giving any consideration to the outcome of this Commission's enquiry.
- The proposal to move Otahuhu Station into Manukau District is seen as being contrary to the stated desire to align the District with the Local Authority boundaries, as Otahuhu is in the Auckland City Council area, not Manukau. We have come to the conclusion that this move is not done for the reasons stated, but to ensure that the Manukau District has a similar number of stations to the other two Districts.
- District rostering has not been addressed. The proposed Districts are much larger than the present districts and the amount of work now done by 7 roster offices may have to be done by 5. (3 Firefighter, SO and SSO).
- We note the expressed view that "*any amalgamation of the North Shore and Waitakere Districts would require an executive presence in both centres to build and maintain relationships etc. etc.*". We would have thought that the primary reason for this proposal would have been to "*maintain an executive response within a reasonable time to emergency incidents*".
- We are also concerned at the proposal to appoint more than 1 Deputy to each District. We are of the view that there can be only 1 Deputy in each Fire District and that any further appointments must be to a different rank. Otherwise it would be feasible to appoint more than 1 Chief Fire Officer to each District which would be ridiculous.
- We are also concerned that the 2 DCFO's assigned to "cross District functions" would actually be doing the job that Divisional Officers used to do. This is appointment by deception.
- The section of the proposal on Page 11 "Executive Availability" makes the statement that "*This Model of executive deployment is operating in some fire services in UK and Australia to good effect*". We would ask, is this the only model of executive deployment that operates worldwide "*to good effect*"? and also, which fire services does it operate in? The American system of executives on shift is operationally far more effective. We were bombarded during the 1994 pre review period with supposed examples of overseas fire services that operated with different crewing levels than we had, all of which proved to be false or exaggerated. We are very sceptical of claims such as are made here, when no evidence is produced to back up the claims.
- In conclusion, we would make the observation that the time frame proposed for consultation is too short, and remind Regional Management that we also have to consult with our members on this proposal.

Summary

1. We do not consider the 3 District proposal to be the best option.
2. We consider the single Auckland District, incorporating Silverdale, Waitemata, Greenhithe and Titirangi to be the only valid option.
3. We do not consider that the proposal places sufficient emphasis on operational needs and is based purely around administration, which was one of the major failings of the 1995 “reforms”.
4. The supposed boundary alignment with DHB’s, Police etc. is considered a smoke screen, and is irrelevant to any NZFS operational restructure.
5. We will require our members to be protected from irresponsible Executive Officers, both now and into the future, by a “grandfathering” clause which will prevent their transfer from a station that they may have spent many years getting to, against their will. There is still in existence a North Shore “grandfathering” agreement, dating from the amalgamation of North Shore and Auckland Fire Districts in 1984, that creates absolutely no operational difficulties.
6. We consider the appointment of more than 1 Deputy Chief Fire Officer to any District to be probably illegal and definitely inappropriate.
7. Rostering of staff has not been addressed and is of concern to our members.
8. We are concerned about the lack of detail in the proposal which leads us to think there may be different agenda’s behind the smoke screen of the document.
9. We cannot see why this is being rushed through, when the Royal Commission on the Governance of Auckland is still sitting, and may well alter Council boundaries beyond recognition, which would make any work done under the pretext of boundary alignment null and void.
10. The consultation period is too short, as the consultation process we are required to participate in with our members is not a simple action and will be time consuming.