

Abstract**Total Cost of Fire - Australia. "Who pays, how much, who cares".**

The lid of Pandora's Box has been opened and the light shining in is illuminating some interesting issues, some of which we may not like. However, we cannot and must not try to close the lid or lessen the light.

Each year in Australia approximately 100 fatalities occur as a direct cause of fire with approximately 3,000 injuries resulting from structural fires and about \$ 540, 000 in property losses. These losses occur despite the fact that Australia spends approximately \$6.56 billion dollars on anticipating and responding to fires (and other emergencies) including; engaging in research, building protection, education, training, regulating, maintaining fire safety systems, mitigating the risk, responding to and investigating fires as well as responding to or initiating criminal justice activities.

If this has been and continues to be the average number of lives lost, injuries caused and property lost, with little variation year after year, do we need to do something different? What would be the result in consequence of fire if we were to remove 30% of the total fleet of fire appliances from across Australia? What difference would it make to the ongoing loss of life, property and the environment? On the other hand, what if we added 30% more fire appliances (one on each corner) but still did nothing to decrease the average number of fires occurring, what difference would that make? How about if we got rid of half the fire safety regulations spread across dozens of pieces of legislation, would that make a difference?

It could be said that the performance measures used to compare fire services in the "Report on Govt services" are inadequate and only in their infancy. It could also be said that the Tasmanian Fire Service puts out fires better than any other state in Australia. Others might dispute this, but based on what evidence. This presentation shines a spot light on a number of critical issues and states the case that our capacity to continue as effective emergency services will depend on our courage and ability to unpack Pandora's Box, examine the contents and adequately address the issues because, if we don't, others will.

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