

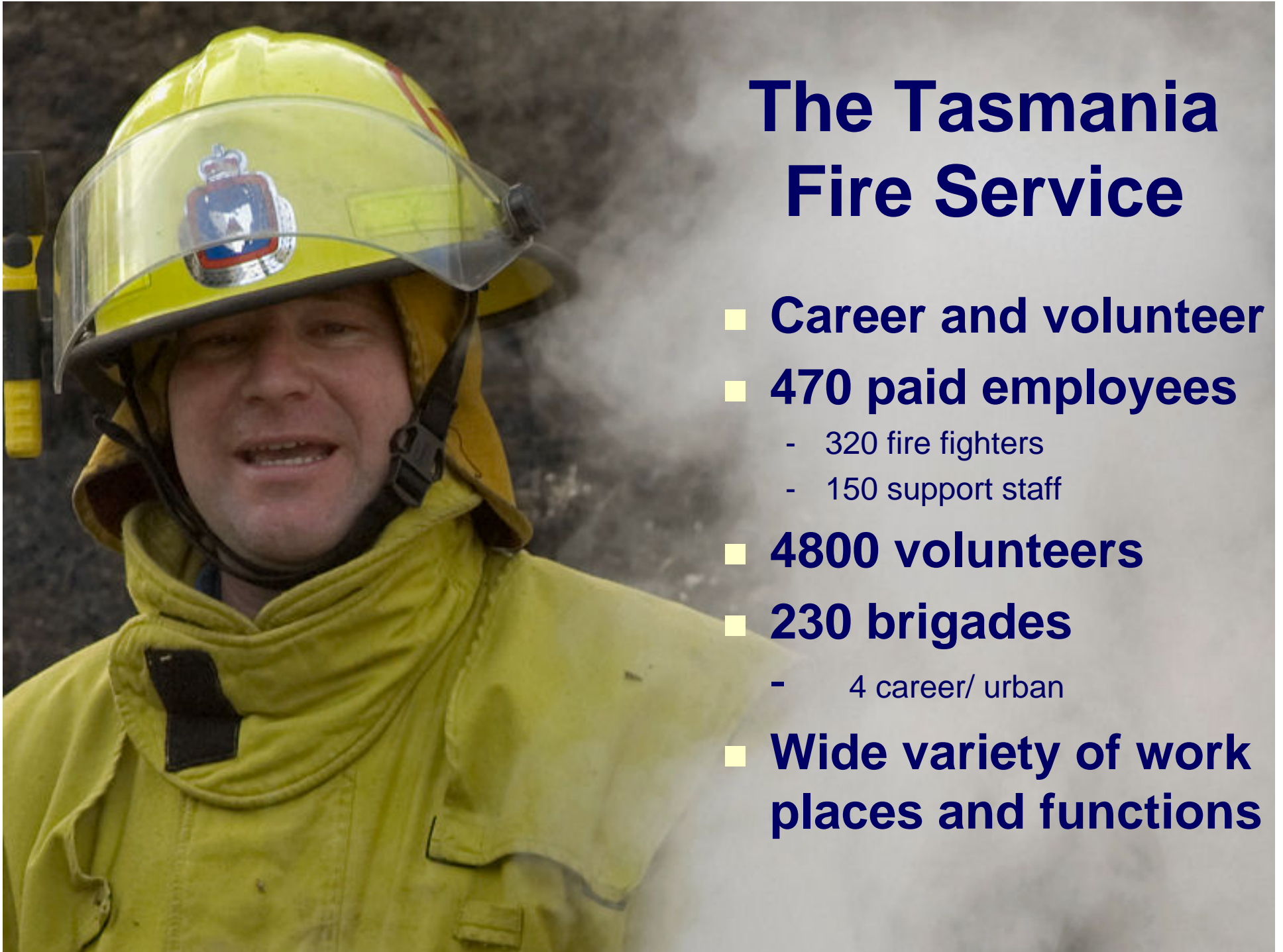


# Performance Management in a Fire Service



**Steve Willing**

**Tasmania Fire Service**



# The Tasmania Fire Service

- **Career and volunteer**
- **470 paid employees**
  - 320 fire fighters
  - 150 support staff
- **4800 volunteers**
- **230 brigades**
  - 4 career/ urban
- **Wide variety of work places and functions**

# *Origins*

- **1980's**: Performance Appraisal adopted  
- mixed success, low trust, scrapped
- **1998**: Employees & managers wanted performance feedback - Corporate Plan
- **1999**: Included in EBA
- **2001**: PM a State Service requirement
- Increasing internal demand for feedback

# *The Challenges*

- 'Performance Appraisal' history
- Variety of work functions & groups
- Lack of confidence/ skill
- Tradition of hierarchy
- Lack of trust
- Cynicism

# *The Intent*

- To give staff timely feedback about how they are performing
- To get staff talking about issues effectively
- To provide staff with the skills and confidence to do it
- To provide staff with the development they need

(Note: no mention of 'rating')

# *The Needs*

1. A system that is effective
2. A system that is accepted by people
3. A system that people will use
4. People actually using the system  
(and the skills)
5. Strong links to other systems, e.g.  
Learning & Development,  
Performance Improvement



# *To Create an Effective System*



Involve staff in developing it



Clearly define organisation's aims



Trial it



Adjust it

Identify and  
communicate  
the benefits



Address  
fears and  
barriers



Develop  
'champions'

## *To Create Acceptance*







## ***To Create a System That People Will Use***

Emphasise conversations,  
not judgements



Ensure confidentiality



Encourage people to  
evaluate themselves



Enable people to provide  
feedback to their supervisor

# *To Create a System That People Will Use*



- ❖ **Keep it light & flexible**
- ❖ **Separate it from pay, promotions and discipline**
- ❖ **Ensure that it leads to development for staff !!!**

# ***'Workplace Feedback System'***

## ***Principles***

- General feedback (day to day)
- Summary Meetings (1-2 per year)
- No surprises
- Two way (*all* levels)
- Confidential
- No links to pay, promotion, discipline
- Fair & transparent



# ***To Get People to Use the System***

**Develop skills and confidence**



**Clarify expectations and  
accountability**



***Show* senior management  
supporting and using the system**



**Build reporting into the system**



**Follow up if it's not happening**





## ***What Did We Learn?***

- Staff value transparency
- Staff like being heard
- Staff have valuable ideas/ experience
- Build in accountability
- Communicate face to face
- Keep the momentum going
- Commit resources – a dedicated driver

# ***What Next?***

## **Implement it!**

- Set up trainers/ coaches/ regional reps
- Roll out by work groups
- Use it soon after training (with coaching)
- Provide ongoing support

## **Then Evaluate It**

- After one year (& ongoing)

# *A Firefighter's Perspective*



# ***Summary: Essential Elements***

1. Executive Management commitment
2. Internal consultation
3. External advice
4. Sufficient resources
5. Trial & independent evaluation
6. Ongoing communication
7. Training & coaching for all staff
8. Ongoing support



# Questions/ comments?



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