

Communications & Technology Joint Committee -2 Minute Briefing

Issue 4, 24th March 2013

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meeting between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 24/03/2013)

EAS PAGER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

VFBV have received advice that ESTA and CFA will trial 400 of the re-configured and re-programmed Alpha Legend pagers from mid April 2013, the exact timing being subject to the pagers availability from the manufacturer. As indicated VFBV has sought wide distribution of the pagers to ensure at the very least all CFA Groups have the opportunity to be part of the validation testing. CFA Groups having active engagement with their member brigades have the best opportunity to consult and brief their brigades on the progress and outcomes given the short time frames available for validation testing. In addition, brigades that participated in the limited pilot in late 2012 that raised so many concerns and negative feedback also be included in the further field trial.

Currently CFA has the first 25 of these pagers allocated to selected members who have commenced their evaluation side by side with the current Infostream X3 pager.

VFBV has sought a robust and transparent feedback process to be incorporated and that simplified and 'easy to follow' setup instructions be incorporated into the upcoming trail.

RADIO BLACK SPOT REMEDIATION PROGRAM

The ongoing upgrade of equipment at defined sites and the access to new sites in many locations plus agreement to access sites operated by CFA's Paging Service provider is offering quicker and cheaper solutions to improve radio blackspot problems. CFA have mapped the entire State and with this recent agreement and improved access CFA Technology Services staff are confident that their upgrade program will be completed within their target 4 year timeframe.

REGIONAL RADIO DISPATCH PROJECT (RRDS)

This project has stalled several times since the previous State Labor Government allocated to CFA \$45M to build and operate a digitally capable Regional Radio Dispatch System. Delayed most recently due to budgetary constraints, CFA expects an announcement soon that the project will progress quickly, delivering improved radio dispatch services throughout Victoria. The outcomes for CFA will see all 1220+ brigades connected to Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, where ESTA will 'hatch and dispatch' all brigades effectively upgrading VICFIRE Category 1 dispatch to more than 900 brigades across the State that today have Category 5 or slightly better Dispatch support. An announcement of the successful provider to upgrade and operate the RDS will be made by Government soon.

ACMA 900 MHz BAND – Dedicated Space for Public Safety Agency's

VFBV has made a submission in response to the Australian Communications and Media Authorities (ACMA) discussion paper on Broadband Spectrum Allocation – part of a re-cut of the network space assigned to commercial providers and including that valuable space made available to Emergency Service Agencies. In October 2012, an expert panel made recommendations to ACMA and subsequently ACMA to the Federal Government to define the space allocations that should be 'up for grabs' by commercial entities ie the big telcos and broadcasters. Space has been squeezed for Public Safety Agencies with 10MHz allocated as being sufficient for future needs.

VFBV in collaboration with the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials - Australia and New Zealand (APCO) and the Australian Radio Communications Industry Association (ARCIA) prepared a response outlining the dangers in not allocating sufficient network space particularly in times of exponential technological advancements and network hungry data and visual applications that chew up network space. The use of video images and streamed data flows will become the norm not the exception in future emergency service activities. VFBV along with many PSA's are advocating for a rethink to set aside double the space – 20MHz and not sell off the network for a quick dollar.