EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORTS SEPTEMBER 2013 – JULY 2014

Organisation: NSW State Emergency Service

Date Received: 4 September 2015

4 September 2015

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Notley-Smith

Auditor-General *Report on the NSW State Emergency Service Management of Volunteers*

Please find enclosed the NSW SES responses to the Auditor-General's *Report on the NSW State Emergency Service Management of Volunteers*, which includes all actions to date.

The NSW SES welcomed this report and the part it has played in improving and standardising practices to ensure a sustainable volunteer workforce to respond to emergency and disaster demands.

Original timeframes agreed were aspirational as the service was addressing multiple recommendations and reform in the broader organisation context.

Notwithstanding, we have made significant progress and defined pathways to ensure an effective and efficient framework for managing our volunteer workforce. These initiatives will be further enhanced by the commencement of an external assessment of business process, functional review, and the recruitment of a workforce planning team in the current budget.

The outcome is a stronger NSW SES for having gone down this path.

Yours sincerely

**Adam Dent
Commissioner**

Report - NSW State Emergency Service Management of Volunteers

	RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) AND COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
1	By December 2014, improve analysis and reporting on management information about volunteers, including: a) numbers, contribution, skills, profile, availability and turnover b) reasons for joining and leaving c) gaps in data completeness and quality This should enable SES to demonstrate an improvement in the completeness and accuracy of management information by April 2015	Accepted	a) The NSW SES will develop standard reports that will be available through the self-service portal for volunteer numbers, skills and turnover. The SAP-HR system has a feature for non-operational activity recording and this will be implemented fully to record the contribution of volunteer members. b) The NSW SES has developed a draft Exit policy and procedure, including an exit survey process to capture the reasons that volunteers join and leave the organisation. A pilot program using these tools was conducted in the Central West Region. At a national level, the NSW SES is engaged in the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC). The Sustainable Volunteering research cluster will provide insight into issues faced by volunteer based agencies across the sector and nationally consistent strategies to attract and retain volunteers. - The NSW SES will promulgate exit policy and procedures - The NSW SES will analyse exit data to inform annual reviews of the Workforce	31 Dec 2014	**a) Complete** A suite of reports are available on the Volunteer Administration Portal (SAP) that provide management information on volunteer; numbers, skills, profile, availability and turnover. Ad Hoc reports are also available through SAP to enable further analysis. **b) Delayed** Final draft Exit Policy and Procedure complete. Procedure includes exit survey to capture reasons for joining and leaving. The Exit Policy and Procedure will be published in October 2015. The BNH CRC research has been completed by University of Wollongong. Results of the project to be published by December 2015. Further analysis and reporting enhancements will be implemented as part of the Strategic Workforce Planning Framework (refer to 2a) **c) Complete** The NSW SES has implemented a system enhancement of "Payroll Cockpit" reports which identify errors in the Master Data for volunteers. The report is run on a regular basis and allows the administrator to view the errors in detail and	People and Culture Directorate

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			Management plan and the implementation of strategies to attract and retain volunteer members. c) The HR Systems team has an ongoing role to monitor the completeness and quality of volunteer data, where errors are detected the team will liaise with Regions to rectify. - The NSW SES will run regular system audit reports to identify anomalies and then advise users how to rectify the data issue that has been identified. - The NSW SES will implement identified system enhancements to improve volunteer data including: qualifications for dual members (staff and volunteer), length of service and vaccination records.		provide feedback to users on how to rectify data issues or to fix them prior to a service desk log. Data cleansing (historical data) is ongoing and the hiring process of volunteers to staff is still to be firmly embedded. Length of Service data analysis is currently being undertaken by Fire and Rescue NSW (SAP host). Upon completion in December 2015, the data will be uploaded and reviewed by Regions for accuracy. Vaccination records master data has been investigated and found to be correct. The report displayed an incorrect extra field.	
2	By December 2014, develop a volunteer workforce plan to focus resources for recruitment and retention on areas of greatest need. The plan should be based on regional capability plans that assess in a consistent way: a) how many volunteers they have and need	Accepted	a) The NSW SES will consolidate data from the Region Capability Plans to identify the numbers of volunteers needed at a Unit, Region and State level. Recruitment strategies will be aligned with the composition of the population where SES Units are located to attract women, people with a disability, CALD and Aboriginal community members. Key performance indicators will be established in Region Capability Plans to achieve diversity targets and increases in volunteer numbers.	31 Dec 2014	**a) Delayed** To inform volunteer strategic workforce planning the NSW SES consolidated Region Capability Plans and undertook a review/assessment against region volunteer capacity and capability requirements, based on the Safe Standards of Cover methodology. A Volunteer Strategic Workforce Planning Framework, aligned to a six-monthly dashboard report that monitors the current capability and capacity within each Region and overseen by a senior executive governance structure, will give a	People and Culture Directorate

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	b) the gaps and risks around volunteer numbers, skills and training		b) The NSW SES will identify gaps and risks from consolidated Capability Plan data and develop recruitment strategies to address these gaps in a Workforce Management Plan. Implemented strategies will include the attraction of members based on factors such as: age, gender, cultural background and skills profile. Additional resources will be required to develop a comprehensive Workforce Management plan that addresses volunteer resource needs out to 2021.		strong evidence base on which to develop recruitment and capability strategies to address gaps in volunteer resource needs. The Framework will enable all levels of management to develop tailored workforce plans. The Volunteer Strategic Workforce Planning Framework will be presented to the NSW SES Senior Leadership Team in October 2015 and implemented in 2015/16. **b) Delayed** NSW SES consolidated Region Capability Plans and undertook a review/assessment against region volunteer capacity and capability requirements, based on the Safe Standards of Cover methodology The Volunteer Strategic Workforce Planning Framework, will enable all levels of management to develop tailored workforce plans which include; recruitment and retention strategies, skills and training needs.	
3	By April 2015, update its recruitment guidelines and resources, and support units in better targeting recruitment	Accepted	a) The NSW SES will update the Recruitment Guide to reflect strategies for the attraction of members based on factors such as: age, gender, people with a disability, cultural background and skills profile. The Looking After People (LAP) Program will provide training to volunteer leaders	30 April 2015	**a) Delayed** The NSW SES Recruitment and Retention Kit has been revised to reflect strategies for the attraction of members based on factors such as: age, gender, people with a disability, cultural background and skills profile. The Recruitment and Retention Kit will be issued in November 2015 following consultation	People and Culture Directorate

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		on how to implement the Recruitment Guide and develop a recruitment plan specific to the needs of their local area. Additional funding will be required to deliver the LAP program to all existing volunteer leaders and new volunteer leaders as they enter the Service. b) In conjunction with the Corporate Communications section, AV promotional material for recruitment will be developed that can be used at a local level c) The NSW SES will develop new targeted Community Service Announcements work (CSAs). Work with Corporate Communications has commenced to develop new Community Service Announcements (CSAs) with a recruitment theme that will screen on the Prime TV network. Research is currently being undertaken to identify who volunteering CSAs should be targeting, and what messages are likely to most appeal to get people to join. Information on our volunteer make up, areas where we are deficient and the skills we need to recruit, will also be included.		with Regions. The Looking After People (LAP) Program has ceased as it was found to not meet the needs of the NSW SES. A controller development program which includes recruitment strategies will be developed to meet the shortfalls identified in the audit. It is anticipated that the program will be completed in early 2016. **b) Delayed** The NSW SES Recruitment and Retention Kit has been revised to include information that can be used at a local level. An e-recruitment portal is under development as part of the new NSW SES website. It will incorporate online Application for Membership processes for NSW State Emergency Service applicants. **c) Complete** Corporate Communications, in consultation with People and Culture and NSW SES Volunteers, identified that the targeted recruitment resource of Spirit of NSW SES DVD was the preferable direction to meet the volunteer need of resources to assist with recruitment and retention. Spirit Of NSW SES DVD developed incorporating 5 NSW SES volunteer stories to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention. DVD to be rolled out with	

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					the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention kit. Community Service Announcements (CSA) strategy is discontinued	
4	By April 2015, develop strategies and resources to improve volunteer retention, including: a) induction and development of leaders b) health checks for units to identify and address areas for improvement c) pathways for volunteers to take on greater responsibility d) consultation and communication e) recognition for volunteers and their employers	Accepted	a) The NSW SES has released a revised induction product called the 'NSW SES Fundamentals' that is currently being implemented across the State. In addition to this, the NSW SES is part of a multi-disciplinary leadership program aimed at volunteer leaders from our organisation and other agencies. The NSW SES is engaged in the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and the "Sustainable Volunteering" cluster which amongst other research questions is looking at volunteer leadership development as a retention strategy. The LAP program is currently being reviewed for efficiency of delivery and will be rolled out during the next financial year targeting volunteer leaders. b) A schedule of program audits at a Unit level will be developed to identify and address areas for improvement, the results of which will be reported to and monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee c) The NSW SES is developing Incident	30 April 2015	**a) Delayed** NSW SES Volunteers complete an induction program and have the opportunity to complete a Fundamentals course, to support their progression pathway. The multi-agency leadership program is currently being delivered throughout the state to leaders, with a focus on the differences between leading and managing people. The BNH CRC research has been completed and we are awaiting the results of the project. In addition, a controller development program will be developed to replace the LAP course (refer to 3a). **b) Complete** A schedule of program audits at a Unit level was developed and implemented in 2014/15 - results reported to and monitored by the NSW SES Audit and Risk Committee. The NSW SES Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2014-2017 was updated to include an annual program of internal audits at a Unit level.	People and Culture Directorate

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		Management requirements for levels 1 to 3 and will provide development pathways for volunteers to achieve these qualifications. d) The NSW SES is currently revising the Volunteer Joint Consultative Committee process at a Region and State level to provide more meaningful consultation and communication with the Volunteers Association. e) The NSW SES will continue to deliver honours and awards in recognition of volunteer service. Additional recognition awards will be considered by the Honours and Awards Committee that meets on a quarterly basis, recent awards that have been introduced include recognition of 5 years' service, the Cadet of the Year award and the Andy Roberts Most Improved Cadet of the Year award. The NSW SES will develop an Employer Recognition program to acknowledge the support of employers of volunteers.		**c) Delayed** The Incident Controller capability pathways have been developed. Formal approval for Incident Controller pathways, Incident Management Policy and Incident Management guidelines commenced in August 2015. The pathways will be released through a formal change management process. Accreditation will involve a combination of formal training (competency based), coaching/mentoring and experience. Incident Controller Level 1 course has been developed and will be implemented in September 2015. The development priority for Incident Controller level 2 and 3 is currently being determined and resources will be allocated for the development of the product. Opportunities for members to participate in a level 1 Incident Controller Course commence in October 2015. A minimum of 12 months is required to implement the course across the NSW SES. Incident Controller Level 2 pilot is aimed to occur in March 2016. Level 3 Incident Controller course is likely to be sourced externally due to the high risk currently within the NSW SES and limited availability of resources to develop the training package. Learning pathways for Incident Management roles	

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					(in addition to Incident Controller) are currently under development. Learning pathways for field capabilities are currently in draft and are scheduled for feedback and implementation in October 2015. **d) Complete** Volunteer Association Joint Consultative Committee is operational and reviews on an ongoing basis the consultation and communication processes within the NSW SES. **e) Complete** The NSW SES introduced the Recognition of 5 years' Service, the Cadet of the Year award and the Andy Roberts Most Improved Cadet of the Year award. A 'Certificate of Appreciation' is provided to employers and businesses to acknowledge their contribution to the NSW SES. Additional awards are considered on a quarterly basis by the Honours and Awards Committee.	
5	By April 2015, develop a training strategy that identifies volunteer training priorities and provides for ongoing review to ensure operational currency, flexibility of delivery and evaluation	Accepted	a) The NSW SES will complete the Organisation Learning Plan project to articulate learning pathways for volunteers to ensure operational currency in the full range of skill areas. b) The organisation will also complete a Blended Learning Strategy aimed at increasing the flexibility of delivery of	30 April 2015	**a) Delayed** A NSW SES Education Strategy, that will identify training priorities and flexible delivery and evaluation, is currently being developed in consultation with key stakeholders from across the organisation (Education Strategy forum held June 2015). The strategy will be completed in November 2015 and will incorporate a Blended Learning	People and Culture Directorate

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			training programs. Learning pathways will align with the results of the skills audit conducted with Government Skills Australia (GSA) and the skill gaps identified across the volunteer workforce and will also comply with the current version of the Public Safety Training Package PUA12.		Strategy. **b) Delayed** NSW SES Education Strategy (refer to 5a) will incorporate a Blended Learning Strategy.	
6	By December 2014, agree a charter with volunteers that clarifies roles and expectations including commitments by: a) SES to support volunteers to prepare for and respond to emergencies b) SES to make the best use of volunteers' time by introducing user-friendly systems and reducing the administrative burden on them c) Volunteers to turn-out when called to respond to emergencies.	Accepted	The NSW SES Volunteers Association has developed a draft volunteer charter in collaboration and has engaged with the Office of the Commissioner, and the Minister's Office to finalise and sign off the agreement. The purpose of this Charter is to provide a documented commitment between the NSW State Government, the NSW SES and the SES VA to enhance the objectives and outcomes of the NSW SES, ensuring the protection of the needs and interests of Volunteers. a) The draft Charter outlines the NSW SES commitment to volunteers and the contribution and commitment of volunteers in assisting their communities. The Charter is still under collaborative development and is expected to be completed by the middle of 2014. b) The Charter outlines SES Management	31 Dec 2014	**a) Complete** The NSW SES Volunteer Charter was agreed and signed with the NSW SES Volunteers Association (NSW SES VA) and NSW Government (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) on 12 February 2015. Charter has been implemented to reinforce the commitment and responsibility of volunteers, and the support they have from the NSW SES, NSW SESVA and State Government **b) Complete** The Charter outlines NSW SES Management commitment to consulting on policies that impact on volunteers, providing appropriate resources so that volunteers can do their roles and efficient administrative, operational and infrastructure support services to reduce the burden on volunteer members	Office of the Commissioner

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			commitment to consulting on policies that impact on volunteers, providing appropriate resources so that volunteers can do their roles and efficient administrative, operational and infrastructure support services to reduce the burden on volunteer members. c) The Charter outlines the volunteer commitment to ensure that the safety needs of the community are met to the best of their collective abilities.		**c) Complete** The Charter outlines the volunteer commitment to ensure that the safety needs of the community are met to the best of their collective abilities.	