

To whom it may concern

RE. RTIC submissions. Referring to point 4d

I wish to convey comments and recommendations on behalf of the PLANTAGENET SHIRE BUSH FIRE BRIGADE (BFB) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

## **BACKGROUND**

This committee oversees all aspects of bushfire planned burns, emergency response, bush fire response asset management, fire safety management and communications.

We oversee the whole Plantagenet shire, an area of 4800 square kilometres, which encompasses 3 townships.

The Plantagenet bush fire system comprises of 12 very active volunteer brigades spread throughout the 4800 sq km of the shire.

These brigades are trained volunteers with suitable trucks and safety equipment to respond to planned and emergency outbreak of fires

These trucks and other mobile equipment do have VHF and UHF radio communication

In recent years there has been a successful use of phone and data signal to aid this communication. In actual fact with the encouragement of Department of Fire And Emergency Services (DFES) many 000 callouts to incidents are done through the mobile network. DFES also provides access for our incident controllers into their automatic vehicle location (AVL) portal which allows real time information where fire units are on a fire ground.

## **COMMENT**

Obviously this communication of data streaming is totally reliant on continuous mobile phone coverage, something which has not been reliable, and has degraded. This degradation is particularly prevalent on holiday times which I presume is a high load on the network. Unfortunately this "extra load" is detrimental to the speed and reliability on the system when there is a fire emergency and the things described above are required to work for a response to be as safe and swift as possible.

Also in at least one particular period of last summer, when fire bans were in place planned works on the mobile network was occurring. This planned work was notified to the public including fire services but mobile signal and reliability degraded to the point that communication through the mobile system was totally unusable due to drop outs, and intermittent signal which affect clear messaging. Fire incidents did occur during this time and the lack of reliable mobile coverage did affect operations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Speed and reliability of mobile signal is monitored closely and any adjustments made possible are done to ensure that mobile signal strength is maintained at a safe functioning level. There should be historical data kept to allow a contingency plan and action for when mobile signals drop below a safe functioning level to be put in place.
- There be a system whereby the companies and/or contractors that do maintenance, upgrade, or any work which may affect the quality and reliability of the network are in communication with DFES to allow direction to be given to possibly delay or reschedule work.

Regards

Iain Mackie. Deputy Fire chief of Plantagenet Shire  
On behalf of the Plantagenet Bush Fire Brigade Executive Committee

