

From: [Greg McConville \(UFU ACT\)](#)
To: [Jim Donaldson](#)
Subject: ESA website and reporting of data
Date: Wednesday, 5 June 2019 1:11:45 PM

Dear UFU member

Please refer to the email below, sent to the ACT Chief Minister today

In Unity

Greg McConville
Secretary
United Firefighters Union of Australia ACT Branch
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Dickson, ACT, 2602
secretary@ufuact.asn.au

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR INDUSTRIAL CAMPAIGN GO TO
<http://www.ufuact.asn.au/act-branch-in-the-news/act-on-fire-a-modern-fire-service-for-the-act/>
www.facebook.com/UFUACT/



From: Greg McConville (UFU ACT)
Sent: Wednesday, 5 June 2019 12:31 PM
To: BARR <BARR@act.gov.au>
Cc: AlexWhite@unionsact.org.au
Subject: Real Time Reporting of Worker Activity

Dear Chief Minister

I draw your attention to the Emergency Services Agency Website, which following a significant overhaul went live this morning.

<https://esa.act.gov.au/>

Leaving aside the issue that the UFU was not consulted at all about the website rebuild and therefore the depiction of our members, and the implications this has for good faith bargaining, the website now has an “Emergency Incidents Attended Today” counter.

This raises serious concerns for the UFU, and I would suggest all public sector unions, concerning the real time reporting of inaccurate single measure organisational performance data. Our concerns in relation to this include that:

- No other area of the ACT Government is subjected to this level of scrutiny and reporting of performance data;
- No other jurisdiction in Australia reports performance data in this way;
- The data shown is not for the whole of the ESA, only ACT Ambulance Service and ACT Fire and Rescue;
- The use of a scoreboard trivialises responses to life threatening emergencies to a single line statistic which is open to misinterpretation;
- The data conflates emergency incidents and non-emergency attendances;
- The reporting of ACTAS and ACT Fire and Rescue incidents attended implies some sort of competition between the 2 services, when there is not;
- Performance data for ACTAS and ACT Fire and Rescue is not, and should not be considered, as comparable in any meaningful way;
- The data is completely inaccurate: it currently shows 51 incidents attended by ACTAS, and 0 by ACT Fire and Rescue. As at 11 am today, ACT Fire and Rescue had attended 16 incidents;
- The reporting of incidents attended has connotations of regressive industrial relations practices such as payment of piece rates;

Underlying our concerns is a long standing problem concerning how ACT Fire and Rescue data is reported. An example is that the 2003 bushfires, in which 500 homes were lost, counted as only one incident attended by ACT Fire and Rescue. Similarly, a fire such as that at the Pialligo concrete recycling facility, which ran for several days and involved hundreds of vehicle movements (including transfers of firefighters to the fireground), counted as only one incident. Data reported by ACTAS is based on a single vehicle movement being counted as an incident, even if 2 or more vehicles are despatched to the same address. This inconsistency would lead a reasonable person to unfairly draw inaccurate conclusions about the performance of the Ambulance Paramedics and Firefighters. Further, the data implies that the need for the emergency services is driven by utilisation rather than capability: a corollary would be that there is no need for the defence forces on the basis that we have not been involved in a war for some time.

Studies have shown that media controversy surrounding the performance of first responders contributes to post traumatic stress, particularly in circumstances where those personnel are led to question whether their contribution is valued. That the ESA could develop a new website over many months, at significant expense, and not even bother to consult firefighters or their union, shows a cavalier disregard for firefighter wellbeing and safety. It is also at odds with the commitment that you stated in writing to the UFU in 2016, that a re-elected Labor Government would:

“forge a productive relationship where our career firefighters feel engaged and valued, and their experience is properly recognised”

(Andrew Barr
MLA to UFU ACT
Branch
Secretary,
October 2016)

We are uncertain as to who approved this website, or indeed when it was approved, however in discussions with the Chief Officer of ACT Fire and Rescue this morning I ascertained that he did not know that the website was going live today. The timing is however deeply unfortunate, insofar as it has immediately followed an excellent budget delivered by your Government in respect of emergency services, and this publication has the capacity to significantly detract from that budget.

We request as a matter of urgency, and as a matter of good faith, that the “emergency incidents attended today” counter be removed from the ESA Website, pending genuine and appropriate consultation with the UFU and other parties on the website design. We have made a similar request to the office of the Minister for Emergency Services this morning, with no success.

Should the reporting of such data remain in the public realm, we will have no option other than to criticise it in terms similar to those set out above. We would prefer to avoid the unnecessary controversy that such criticism would generate, however such discourse would be necessary, in our view, to protect the professional reputation of firefighters.

Regards

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**UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION
OF AUSTRALIA**



ACT BRANCH