Review of the role of the Group in strengthening Local Command & Control in CFA

A concept document for consultation and discussion

A proposed framework that enables local commanders to exercise command and control at intermediate and developing incidents. Aimed at better recognising the role of the Group in delivery of the local command and control function and strengthening their capacity by identifying authority to act, systems of work and triggers for escalation consistent with the principles of AIIMS and the State Command and Control Arrangements for Bushfires in Victoria

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1. Executive Summary

The ability of local CFA commanders to exercise local command and control of fires and incidents has been an important part of the history and evolution of CFA's and Victorian fire agencies current command and control systems of work.

CFA's ability to exercise effective command and control at intermediate and developing fires and incidents is critically important, both in our own service delivery to the community as well as supporting state arrangements for command and control in Victoria's fire and emergency management arena.

Following a series of meetings/workshops reviewing the role of the Group in strengthening local command and control in CFA the project working party have made the following recommendations;

1. Fire Brigade Groups remain the "best fit" structurally within CFA to deliver this intermediate capability.

2. Group membership must be strengthened to maximise the knowledge and expertise that exists across the Group so that they reflect and represent the collective capability of member Brigades.

3. Clear authority to act must be delegated to Group level. This delegation must be understood and supported by all officers at both Region and District level, in particular Rostered Duty Officers.

4. This delegated authority also brings accountability and Group performance should be regularly monitored under Section 29.

5. A rank of Group Commander should be established to be responsible and accountable for leadership across the range of group activities.

6. The Group Commander should be supported by a number of Group Officers who will have responsibility for coordinating a range of functions across the Groups area of operation.

7. The incident management capability of a group must be competency based. Fire ground command and control roles should only be performed by appropriately endorsed personnel.

8. Each Group will have an Operational Skills Profile (GOSP) to enable the delivery of this incident management capability. The building and maintenance of the GOSP must be identified as a priority in both District & Regional training plans and developed in consultation with the District Operations Manager.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

1. Develop a framework that enables local commanders to exercise command and control at intermediate and developing incidents.

2. Outline a pathway and process to promote the development of a local command and control capability and capacity in CFA. This includes the application of AIIMS at small, escalating and medium sized incidents.

3. Propose systems of work for local commanders that will include the system and triggers for transfer of control. The systems of work will be inclusive of local command and control for a range of incidents including: bushfire, structure fire, Hazmat and support to other control agencies. The triggers for escalation shall be consistent with the state arrangements for transfer of control.

4. Propose changes to the CFA line of control that will better;
   (i) recognise and strengthen the role of local command and control,
   (ii) establish the role as the baseline within the command and control arrangements thereby ensuring ongoing local participation in any expanded response as an incident grows in size and complexity.
   (iii) clarify the function, role and scope of "Division Command".

5. Identify the functional and operational roles that are required to successfully plan, prepare and deliver effective command and control for incidents that are not within the scope of the state arrangements for command and control (i.e. not "major fires"). Develop role statements for each role identified.

6. Consider options for and make any recommendations for the name, terminology and rank markings associated with the "Group".

7. Make any other recommendations as necessary to ensure CFA is able to properly exercise its statutory responsibilities in respect to command and control.

3. Introduction

As a consequence of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission there has been a focus on the development of the state's capacity and ability to respond to major fires. A large investment of time and money has gone into developing Level 3 training and infrastructure. Notwithstanding the critical importance of this effort in building the state's capability such fires form a very small percentage of the total number of fires and emergencies which occur across the state annually.

CFA brigades attended a total of 38,831 fires and incidents in 2011–12. It is important therefore that the organisation has solid, widely understood and accepted doctrine around local command and control.

The benefits of implementing sound local command and control practices efficiently are;

- The rapid deployment of capable personnel and appropriate resources in support of Level 1 Incident Controllers combined with established and well-practiced local arrangements that can build incident management capacity quickly in response to any incident escalation should, as a consequence, result in fewer larger incidents.
- Local commanders proficient in command and control at escalating and medium fires will provide the pool of experienced and skilled personnel critical in underpinning the Level 3 arrangements. The incorporation of local knowledge into IMT's will be far more effective when appropriately trained local people fill relevant incident management roles rather simply providing advice to Incident Management Team members
- Routine implementation of the principles of command and control provide regular opportunity for the training, development and mentoring of future incident managers which is crucial for succession planning and/or capacity building.

4. Background

In 1989 CFA adopted AIIMS ICS for the management of fires and incidents. This is supported by Chief Officers Standing Order 9.00 – *All fires and incidents shall be managed in accordance with the principles of the Incident Control System of AIIMS.*

The decision has proven effective at either end of the incident command and control spectrum i.e. for the commander at an incident control point or for a fully functional Incident Management Team. However, there were no adjustments made within CFA at the time to adapt the role of the Group in line with the new arrangements. As a consequence the Groups role and structure, which had always been important in supporting brigades with developing incidents and/or managing intermediate incidents beyond an individual brigade's capacity, became less clear, in particular at major fires. The use of rank titles such as DGO on the fire line confused rather than supported line of command. Compounding this further, endorsement was required for Level 2 Incident Controllers but not for the appointment of Group and Deputy Group Officers.

The advent of VicFire and Category 1 CAD dispatch across CFA was also significant in eroding the traditional role of the Group. This meant that one of the groups key functional roles, that of maintaining a "listening watch" and providing the 24/7 communications critical to Brigade operations was no longer required.

In 2002 a Working Party developed a position paper – "A Definition of the Role of The Group". A fundamental recommendation from this paper was that "The role of the Group is not to manage the incident but to ensure that the incident is managed." This principle is now documented in Chief Officer's SOP 15.01 Role & Structure of Fire Brigades Groups.

The basic concepts of Group operations which were initially developed to support multiple brigade response to bushfire, also do not translate readily into the structural environment. This is an environment where the local brigade management generally remains capable of exercising effective command over all resources allocated, including any additional resources responded to support larger fires & incidents. This resulted in the creation of Operations Areas rather than Groups in some localities with a predominantly structural risk.

5. Constraints

This review is aimed primarily at the role of the Group in strengthening local command and control in CFA. While this aim is narrow in focus it is recognised that the role of the Group is much broader than just readiness & response.

The Group has roles, in some instances under statute, such as integrated fire and emergency management planning, supporting brigade training and coordinating broader scale exercising. Further work will need to be undertaken around these broader roles under a second phase.

Recommendations adopted from this first phase will inform and influence further examination on the role of the Group. However, this review has limited its analysis to command and control.

6. The Role of the Group – Roles and Functions in the "Line of Control"

The AIIMS Incident Control System is used to enable organisation and implementation of a command structure to systematically manage fires and incidents. It is the role of the Group, not to manage these incidents, but to ensure that they are managed. Both of these statements underpin our current command and control doctrine for intermediate and developing incidents.

In support of these principles a framework is required that guides a common approach to local command and control across CFA while still enabling an implementation appropriate to local requirement and capacity. This framework will identify who within CFA is responsible for;

- managing Level 2 and developing fires and incidents
- building and maintaining this incident management capacity
- authorising the mobilisation and deployment of this capacity

In determining an effective framework that would enable the attainment of these objectives the Working party focused on the "Where', "What", "How" and "When" of Group activity. Specifically:

Where do Groups fit in providing support to brigades for "routine business" (i.e. Level1 fires and incidents) in ensuring that the incident is managed at intermediate (Level 2) and developing incidents and in support of Level 3 IMT's and the State Arrangements?

What is the scope of their role in both the readiness and response phases and in support of the State Command & Control Arrangements?

How will they deliver that role? What will be the structure i.e. the ranks and roles that will identify function and authority to act amongst the member Brigades?

When? What are the triggers that guide transition from support to Brigades into a Level 2 command and control role and then escalation beyond into a Level 3 structure?

Recommendations

It is evident that there is a need for a defined intermediate level between Brigade and District to ensure successful provision of fire and emergency service delivery to broader local communities. Generally Fire Brigades Groups have provided the “best fit” structurally within CFA to deliver this level of organisation.

In particular the Group system provides a proven structure to plan for, build capacity and deploy capability in response to intermediate and developing incidents. Given recent developments in the States command and control arrangements, as well as potential future change, it is important that the role of the Group in strengthening local command and control is well established, clearly defined and maintained.

To strengthen the role of the Group its membership must be compiled of the senior leadership of its member brigades not simply brigade delegates. It must be seen as a collective of Brigade capabilities, maximising the knowledge and expertise that exists across the Group. The delegates for each member Brigade at Group management meetings should be the Captain plus one additional member with appropriate experience, qualification or specialist skill.

Provision of clear authority to act must be delegated to Group level. This reinforces both the role of officers at this level as well as the principle of Mission Command i.e. providing for decision making to be implemented as close as possible to the incident scene enabled by delegated authority to act, consistent with the mission. With the delegation of this authority also comes accountability. Responsibilities associated with positions must be clear and unambiguous. It is also important that any such delegated authority be well understood and supported by all officers at both Region and District level, in particular by Rostered Duty Officers.

To ensure that the delegated role and functions of a group are maintained efficiently at all times the Group should be regularly inspected as a part of each Districts routine Section 29 inspection program.

A rank of Group Commander should be established. A Group Commander should be appointed as the manager of the Group, responsible and accountable for providing leadership across the range of Group activities. This rank should be developed and recognised as a senior volunteer rank within CFA with the intent of making it an aspirational position that attracts effective and respected volunteer leaders. To reflect its senior level and to maximise the capacity of an individual to undertake this role it would be preferable that the incumbent not be a current Captain of a brigade.

The Group Commander should be supported by a number of Group Officers who will have primary responsibility for coordination of functions across a Group’s area of operations. These Group Officer positions will be roles and not a rank i.e. there is no directional or reporting relationship to a corresponding functional role within a member Brigade.

The incident management capability of a group will be competency based. It will be drawn from appropriately qualified and endorsed personnel from its member Brigades. This would not preclude Group Officers, including the Group Commander, from performing such roles however; their deployment will be commensurate with their endorsed competencies, not in their role as an Officer of the Group.

Each Group will establish a Group Operational Skills Profile (GOSP) in consultation with the District Operations Manager. The GOSP will identify and quantify the numbers of incident

management personnel, from Strike Team Leaders through to Divisional Commanders/Level 2 Incident Controllers, required to provide a local command and control function. The GOSP should also include those accredited personnel identified for level 3 IMT roles.

Development and maintenance of the Group Operational Skills Profile must be identified as a priority in both District and Regional training plans.

The recommendations of this review are presented in tabular form rather than a narrative. They provide a framework that outlines where the responsibilities of a Group start and end so that there is a common understanding of the role. But they are purposely not prescriptive to enable adaption to local circumstance, requirements and capacity.

6.1 Role of the Group at Level 1 (complex) Brigade fires and incidents

6.2 Role of the Group in Command and Control at Level 2 fires and incidents

6.3 Role of the Group in Level 3 or major incidents and/or in support of the State Command & Control Arrangements

6.4 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group in Readiness

6.5 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group in Response

6.6 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group in supporting the State Command and Control Arrangements

6.7 Group Structure: Functional and operational roles

6.8 Group membership classifications

6.9 Group membership roles

6.10 Group membership classifications – rank/role identification

6.1 Role of the Group

Level 1 (complex) Brigade Fires and Incidents

Principles:

- Brigade remains in control at a fire or incident within their fire district and this includes support resources allocated.
- Group to assist unless the Brigade requests a transfer of control.

Support to Brigade	Preparation for Escalation	Provision of Information
• Provide personnel resources - change over crews - assist at brigade incident control point • Implement welfare arrangements (food, hydration etc.) • Aid the implementation of appropriate communication plans for more complex incidents through additional communications resources. • Plan for and enact arrangements to provide for brigade district security when - incident reduces brigade capability - there are multiple Level 1 incidents across and operations area • Support requirements for specialist equipment deployment through the maintenance of a local assets/contractors register	• Monitor level of brigade activity • Mentor – provide experienced Incident Controllers to assist brigade commanders • Plan for escalation • Plan for another incident in the Brigade area, • Maintain information flow - with Brigade incident control point ("are you still able to…?" "do you require assistances with…..?" etc.) - with RDO/DCC maintain situational awareness • Notify and prepare for deployment level 2 personnel i.e. L2 IC, IMT personnel as required, S/T's & STL's etc.	• Provide incident information and warnings i.e. Public Information Officer role where capacity exists, in support of level 1 Incident Controller • Provision of incident information, both current and predicted to: - BMT's of supporting brigades involved - neighbouring Brigades and Groups • "informal" EMT function through provision of incident information and updates to other Emergency Service Organisations (ESO's), municipality etc.

6.2 Role of the Group

Command and Control at Level 2 Fires & Incidents

Principles:

- Transfer of control only when despite assistance initial Incident Controller's span of control is exceeded
- May include transfer of control from a previously Level 3 classified incident now downgraded and handed back to local command and control
- All fires and incidents shall be managed in accordance with the principles of the Incident Control System of AIIMS.
- Positions filled by the most appropriate person i.e. role not rank

"Home" Brigade	Roles / Functions	Other
• Acknowledge and communicate transfer of control. • Provide, where possible, a "face to face" transfer/briefing with Level 2 IC. • Maintain role corresponding to competency and/or resources allocated i.e. Operations Officer, Sector Commander etc. • Ensure implementation of relevant local footprint pre-plan. • Provide identified personnel to L2 IMT roles and ensure provision of local knowledge is maintained within IMT structure.	• Appoint/deploy IMT personnel as required. • Develop initial IAP (or implement existing pre-incident plan) • Operate ICC facility (static Local Command Centre or MCV) • Provide situation reports to DCC and/or RDO • Plan for and request via District resources to maintain Group area of operations security. • Request, receive and deploy support forces • Develop and implement appropriate unit plans as required e.g. catering, ground support etc. • Request specialist resources via MERC	• Participate in Incident EMT • Provide liaison when resources i.e. Task Force/Strike Team etc. are deployed to support other Agencies (MFB, Interstate) • Ensure other response agency resources are integrated into the IAP and (if applicable) the IMT.

6.3 Role of the Group

Level 3 or Major Incidents and/or in support of the State Command and Control Arrangements

Principles:

- For Level 3 incidents the Incident Controller will be appointed in accordance with agency arrangements and the State Command and Control Arrangements for Bushfire in Victoria (The Bushfire Arrangements).
- If transfer of control occurs to a designated L3 ICC and Incident Controller on days when the Bushfire Arrangements are in place (due to acute weather conditions in readiness for a major fire which may occur) the local control point will continue in an incident management role as default Divisional Command Point for that fire.
- Where control is transferred to a Level 3 ICC every effort should be made to integrate the Level 2 IMT into the Level 3 roles.
- Consider the "12 Questions for Transfer of Control"

Maintain "Local" Oversight	Roles / Functions	Other
• Strike Team maintenance, Crew rotations etc. • IMT personnel resourcing. • Plan for 2nd fire. • Maintain Group area of operations security. • Maintain information flow/liaison with District	• Perform Divisional Commander function (provide appropriately skilled personnel for required roles, provide facility and coordinate resources allocated) • Provide suitable level of local knowledge into IMT at ICC • Develop/have input into the Divisional component of the IAP • Assist smooth assimilation of external resources into local arrangements. (including community not only emergency) • Supply local knowledge/guidance to supporting resources. • Maintain situational awareness and provide timely situation reports to IMT	• Communicate with local community - provide "local face" at community briefings - deal with local media (as authorised) • Provide support both operational and welfare, to local brigades - incident information, both current and predicted. - Access to CFA support services via District/RDO - Response support and area coverage for brigades committed to fire or incident. - "Recovery of CFA resources that may have been affected by the incident.

6.4 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group – **Readiness**

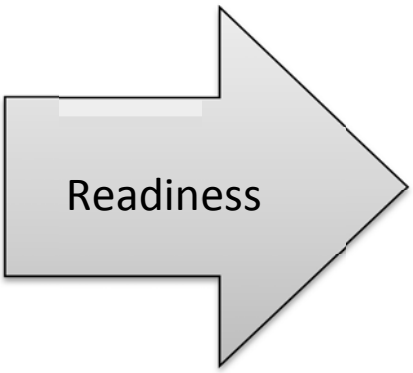
Definition: Readiness refers to arrangements made for the active involvement of resources in accordance with pre-plans and SOP's when the prevailing circumstances (including predicted weather conditions) indicate that a fire is likely to occur or in the event of a fire it will be difficult to control e.g. identifying the default staffing levels for a Divisional Command Point is preparedness, prepositioning of these personnel based on the potential (risk) of the day is readiness. Readiness levels will vary in accordance with the level of risk.

- Assist Brigades in maintaining day to day capability
  Identify and source competent people from brigades in the group to ensure all Brigade Operational Skills Profiles (BOSP) are met e.g. Drivers, B/A Operators, Crew Leaders etc.
  Provide additional incident management support to brigades where identified in Brigade Pre-Incident Plans
- Maintain Group Capability
  Rostered Group Contact Officer / Group contact arrangements
- Maintain "appreciation of the situation" across Group area of operations
  State of fuels, strength and availability of brigades, significant public events occurring
  Ensure continuous communication of the situation to both Brigades & District
- Identify and ensure the readiness of resources and facilities to support command and control function
  Local Command Centre/DivCom, MVC/FCV, Radio repeaters
- Identify &allocate competent people for IMT roles ("pick the team" for local command and control)
  Strike Teams (Tanker and STL rosters)
  DivCom and Local Command Centre roles
  Competent personnel for local command and control / Level 2 IMT roles
  IMT roles for the identified Level 3 ICC
- Implement contingencies
  E.g. turnout notes to assist with group area security
- Liaison
  Neighbouring Groups, Municipality, other ESO's, local contractors & suppliers
- Community preparedness
  Maintain communication with local community media/groups.

6.5 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group – **Response**

Principles:

- Provide support where requested or after consultation with the brigade Incident Controller
- Provide local command and control function to manage escalating local incidents
- Consistent with the principles of Mission command reinforce decision making is best made as close as possible to the incident scene.



- Provide mentoring role
  Assist inexperienced Level 1 Incident Controllers.
  Provide advisory role at complex incidents
- Activate additional supporting resources
  as requested by Incident Controller, in consultation with the Incident Controller or in the absence of local command and control
- Deploy Staging Area Personnel and Resources
  Manage Staging Areas
- Ensure incoming resources are properly briefed and tasked
- Strategically manage uncommitted Brigade resources to provide Group area security
- Request resource support from adjacent Group areas
- Authorise resource deployment to adjacent Group areas
  Preformed Strike Teams / support personnel
- Assume Incident Control and appoint personnel to IMT roles
  Principle of assist rather than take over straight away
  Transfer control after consultation and when despite assistance effective control cannot be maintained by the Level 1 Incident Controller or
  When directed pursuant to Chief Officers SOP 8.04
  Appoint by IMT role capability not by rank
- Respond personnel to implement and/or maintain appropriate command and control structures
  Sector Commanders, Staging Area Managers
- Respond personnel to operate local command & control facilities
  MCV, Local Command Centre/DivCom
- Request specialist equipment via RDO and/or MERC

6.6 Functions (identified authority to act) of the Group – **Supporting Command and Control Arrangements**

Principle: The principle of local knowledge is contained under Section 2.7 of the State Command and Control Arrangements for Bushfire in Victoria 2012. Specifically "The incorporation of local knowledge and experience is integral to the ongoing improvement of bushfire management" and "To the extent possible, local problems should be subject to local solutions."

- Provide Level 3 endorsed personnel for Level 3 ICC
  Nominate available personnel to District.
  Provide advice on deployment commitments to individual, Brigade & Group Officers
- Where the Group facility is a designated Divisional Command Point identify and allocate competent local people for roles.
  Reinforce principle of local knowledge in IMT in a functional rather than advisory sense.
- Operate Divisional Command Point Facility
- Retain appropriate capacity to maintain Group role
  Ensure appropriate facility & personnel capacity remains to undertake the role of the Group separate to the Divisional Command function.
- Maintain local communication & information function
  Between District & local Brigades
  Between Incident & local community

6.7 Group Structure – Functional and Operational Roles

GROUP COMMANDER		
Planning/Preparedness Capability Building Group Officers (Preferred minimum positions required) • Emergency Management • Administration • Communications • Community Capability • Training Group Officers (Optional) • Any other functional role deemed necessary by group	**Maintain Group Operational Readiness** Default role of Group Commander maybe filled by a Group Duty Officer where: • Group Commander is unavailable to perform role • Group Commander appointed by IMT role • Level of operational activity such that position required to be rostered or shared	**Incident Response** • Strike Team Leaders • Sector Commanders • Division Commanders • Public Information Officers • Planning Officers • Logistics Officers • Level 2 Incident Controllers Group Operational Skills Profile may also include specified numbers of accredited personnel identified for Level 3 IMT roles.
Specialist Skills and Capacity Based	Appropriately Skilled and Experienced	Competency Based

6.8 Group Membership Classifications

CLASSIFICATION	DESCRIPTOR
Group Commander	A rank to lead Group activities. It is not an operational role for incident management Responsible for the management of Group activities Responsible for maintaining Group operational readiness Responsible for ensuring the appointment of appropriately endorsed personnel for incident management roles.
Group Duty Officer	A rank to ensure Group operational readiness is maintained. The default role and responsibility of the Group Commander May be filled by another suitably skilled and experienced member of the Group when; 1. Group Commander is unavailable to perform role 2. Group Commander is appointed to an IMT role 3. The level of operational activity is such that the position is required to be rostered or shared by more than one individual 4. In regard to point 3 above this can be either routinely or on a needs basis according to the level of activity.
Group Officer Functional	The Group Commander is supported by a number of Group Officers who will have primary responsibility for coordinating a range of functions across the Brigades within a Groups area of operations where required such as Operational Readiness, Municipal Fire Management Planning, Group Exercising etc. It is a role not a rank. The role has no directional or reporting relationship to the corresponding functional role within member brigades, other than where requested.
Group Member	The Group membership (in additional to Group Commander and personnel holding functional group officer positions) consist of; 1. The Captain of each Brigade within the group area of operations 2. Plus one additional member from each Brigade with appropriate experience, qualification or specialist skill

6.9 Group Membership Roles

CLASSIFICATION	ROLE DESCRIPTOR
Group Commander	Is the Manager of the Group. • Provides leadership across the range of group activities. • Ensures that the roles of Functional Group Officers are conducted effectively. • Responsible for establishing and maintaining the Group Operational Skills Profile. • Represents the Group on District forums e.g. District Planning Committee **Note:** To maximise the capacity and efficiency of an individual to undertake this role it is preferable that the incumbent not be the captain of a brigade
Group Duty Officer	Primary point of Group contact for Brigades and District responsible for maintaining operational readiness • Plan for escalation • Identify and deploy IMT personnel as required • Activate Incident Control capability (FCV / MCV or static facility) • Ensure plans in place for group security • Authorise contingencies to support and/or cover member brigades
Group Officer Functional	**Emergency Management –** Is the nominal Deputy Group Commander. Responsible for incident response & contingency planning, represents the Group on Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees, maintains Strike Team & IMT rosters/availability.
	Community Capability – Coordinates broader scale fire prevention & community preparedness activities e.g. vegetation management, represents Group on Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee.
	Training – Ensures skills maintenance maintained for identified Level 2 IMT personnel in Group Operational Skills Profile, coordinates group exercises, coordinates collective brigade training across Group area e.g. Bushfire minimum skills programs
	Administration – Ensures the administration of the Group is managed in accordance with the requirements of the CFA Act &

	Regulations, Chief Officers Standing Orders and Group Model Rules
	Communications – Responsible for communications planning, Local Command Centre/Divisional Command Point communications and IT equipment (maintain inventory, routine testing & fault reporting) Radio & pager testing, maintain contact lists.
	Other Function – Other Group Officer Functional positions may be established where applicable and the need can be clearly identified. (The Brigade & Membership Classification Project may need to look at the development of appropriate business rules around this consistent with the approach taken in that project.)
Group Member	Each member Brigade within the Group should be represented by two members at Group management meetings i.e. the Captain of each Brigade within the group area of operations and one additional member with appropriate experience, qualification or specialist skill. These members are not simply Brigade representatives but appropriately delegated members responsible for determining Group policy and direction. This: • Reinforces Brigade ownership of the Group • Ensures collective Group governance & responsibility • Supports Group capability building • Maximises existing knowledge and expertise across the Group.

Note: The above role descriptors are indicative only. They broadly define the functional area of each role but are not meant to be definitive or restrictive. It is likely that further work will be undertaken around the Group Officer Function roles in during the next phases of the Review of the Group.

6.10 Group Membership Classifications – Rank/Role identification

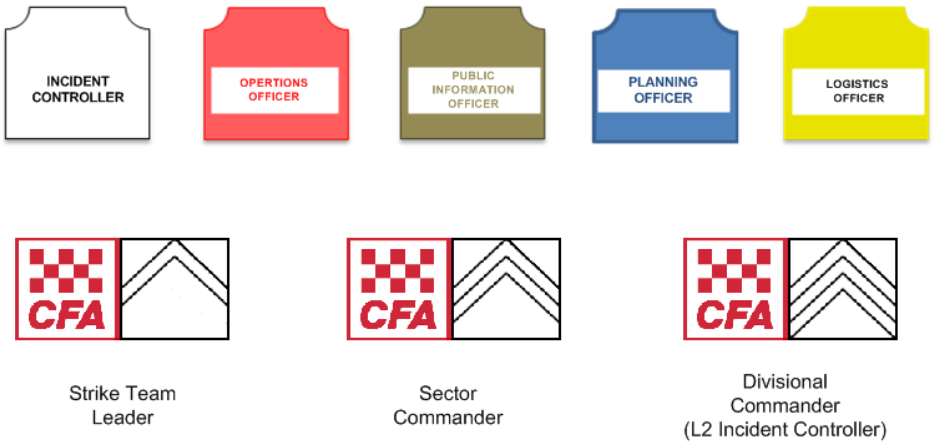
Functional roles in IMT structures are designated by the use of tabards. The appointment of any Group personnel to an IMT will be into a functional role for which they are appropriately qualified and not according to their rank or role within the Group structure. Therefore role identification will be consistent with the method used in the AIIMS Incident Control System and not by any other means such as helmet colour.

Group rank and role identification for use with field wear or other forms of uniform should remain consistent with other rank and role titles across CFA and be in the form of the title name indicated on an epaulette.

Consistent with the current practice of recognising fire ground competencies via helmet decal it is recommended that fire ground command and control competencies also be identified via helmet decal and/or emblem attached to the wildfire coat. Additionally, in acknowledgment of the work and commitment required to attain endorsement for fire ground command roles such as Strike Team Leader, Sector Commander and Divisional commander (Level 2 Incident Controller) the insignia in the form of a metal pin also be provided for Field or Dress uniform.

Note: The insignia shown in the following table is for conceptual purposes only and do not represent, at this point any preference or recommendation

6.10 Group Membership Classifications – Rank/Role identification

CLASSIFICATION	DESCRIPTOR
Group Commander	
Group Duty Officer	
Group Officer Functional	etc.
Group Member	

7. The Role of the Group in Relation to the 3 Levels of Control and Guidelines for Transfer of Control

There are three tiers of command and control under the AIIMS Incident Control System. Chief Officer's SOP 9.10 Incident Classification contains definitions of Level 1, 2 and 3 Incidents. In brief:

Level 1 – characterised by being able to be resolved through the use of local or initial response resources only.

Level 2 – are more complex in size, resource requirement or risk (either real or potential).

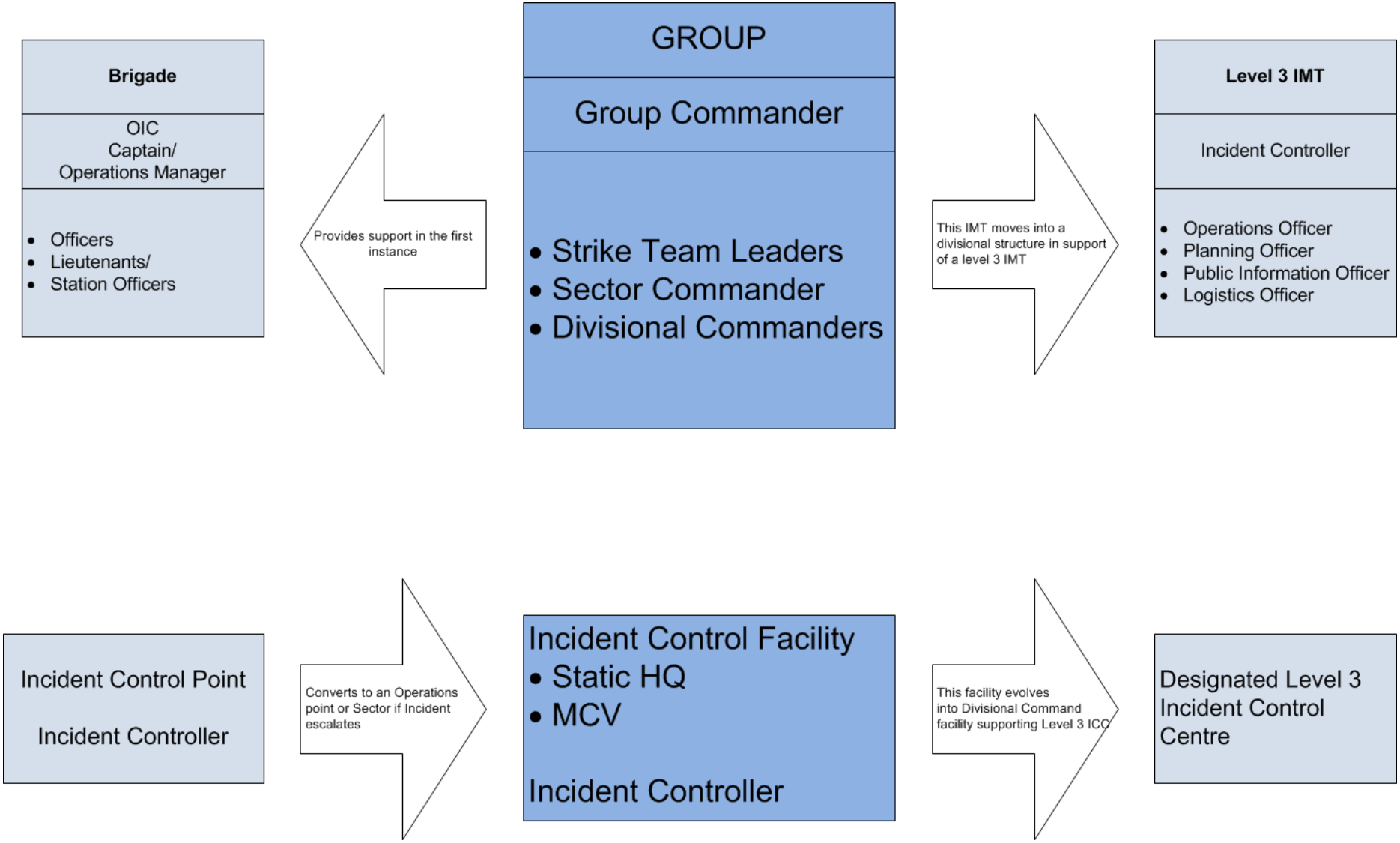
Level 3 – are characterised by degrees of complexity that may require the establishment of Divisions. These incidents will usually involve delegation of all functions.

These definitions provide guidance and are not prescriptive. It is not possible to delineate exactly a point between each level that mandates transition. Each situation will vary in circumstance and it is the Incident Controllers ability to maintain effective management and control over all aspects of incident management that determines the requirement to transfer control.

The following sections provide guidelines to the role of the Group in relation to the 3 Levels of Control and Guidelines for Transfer of Control

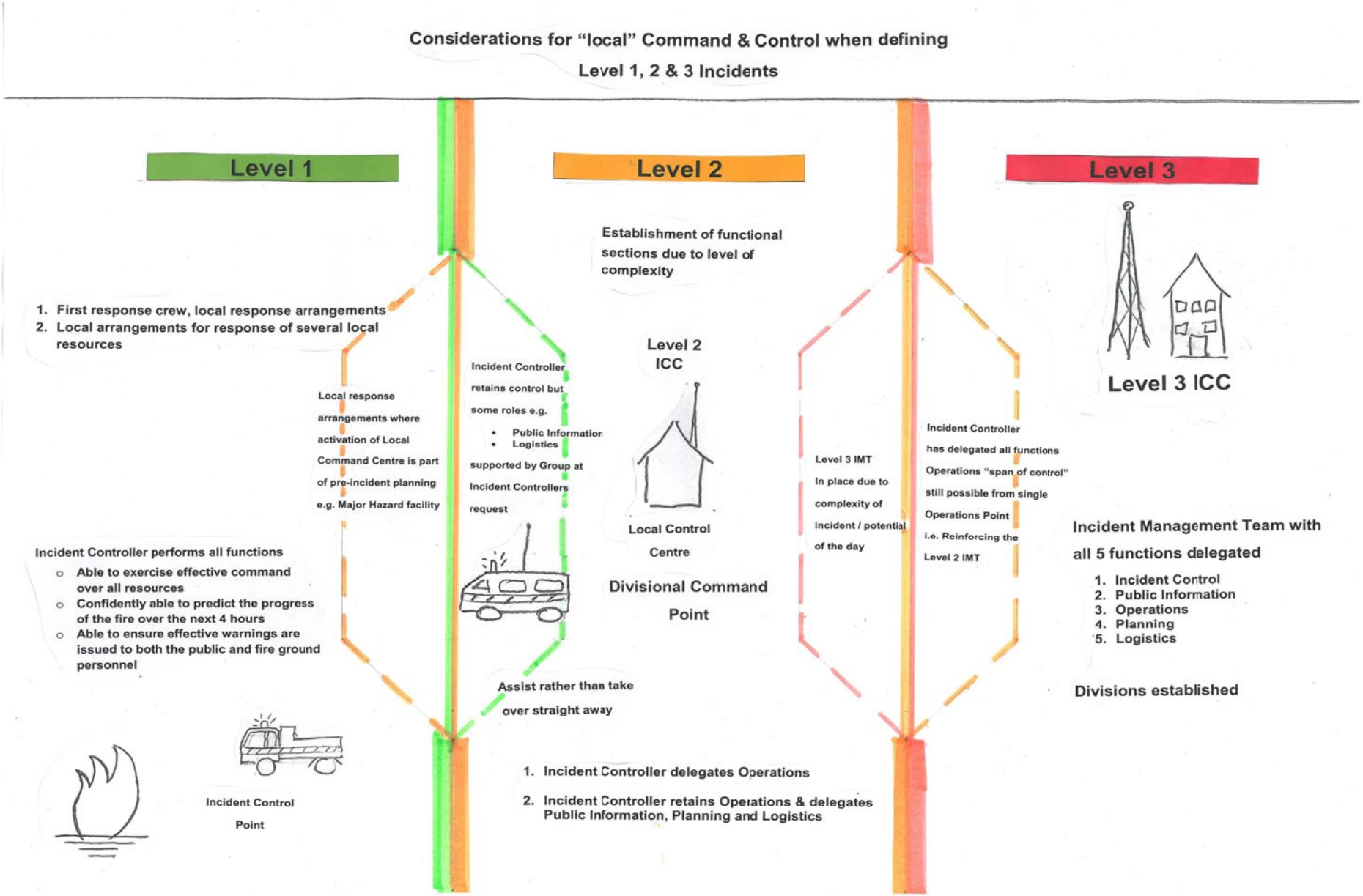
7.1 The Role of the Group in the three Tiers of Command & Control
7.2 Questions / Triggers for Transfer of Control
7.3 Considerations for Local Command & Control when defining Level 1, 2 and 3 Incidents

7.1 The Role of the Group in the 3 Tiers of Command and Control



7.2 TRANSFER OF CONTROL

KEYS	Level 1 to Level 2
• **Information flows** • **Assist rather than take over straight away** • **Transfer control when despite assistance answer is still no.**	i. Are you able to exercise effective command over all resources? ii. Are you confidently able to predict the progress of this fire over the next 4 hours? iii. Are you able to ensure effective warnings are issued to both the public and fire ground personnel?
If the answer to any of the 12 Questions is either no or I don't know then we need to either think about: • **Reinforcing the Level 2 IMT or** • **Transfer control to a Level 3 ICC**	**Level 2 to level 3** i. Do the Incident Controller and IMT have a grasp of what's happening? ii. Do the IC and IMT have a confidence about predicting incident progression in the future? iii. Is there a likelihood of sustained extreme fire behaviour and/or significant community impact? iv. Are warnings to the community and fire ground personnel being issued? v. Do the IC and IMT have a plan for the current and next work period? vi. Does the incident structure enable satisfactory prioritisation, allocation and tasking of resources? vii. Are partner agencies and stakeholders engaged and involved appropriately? viii. Are there any unresolved issues (now or in the next work period) with Firefighter health, safety, welfare and morale? ix. Are there any unresolved issues around sensitive social, media, environmental or organisational policy matters? x. Are media being managed proactively and do we have an appropriate spokesperson? xi. Does the number of resources or the duration of the personnel deployment warrant an increase in the level of logistical planning and support? xii. Is the Incident Controller confident in their role?


Considerations for "local" Command & Control when defining
Level 1, 2 & 3 Incidents
Level 1
Level 2
Level 3
1. First response crew, local response arrangements
2. Local arrangements for response of several local resources
Local response arrangements where activation of Local Command Centre is part of pre-incident planning e.g. Major Hazard facility
Incident Controller performs all functions
Able to exercise effective command over all resources
Confidently able to predict the progress of the fire over the next 4 hours
Able to ensure effective warnings are issued to both the public and fire ground personnel
Incident Control Point
Establishment of functional sections due to level of complexity
Incident Controller retains control but some roles e.g.
Public Information
Logistics
supported by Group at Incident Controllers request
Level 2 ICC
Local Control Centre
Divisional Command Point
Assist rather than take over straight away
1. Incident Controller delegates Operations
2. Incident Controller retains Operations & delegates Public Information, Planning and Logistics
Level 3 IMT In place due to complexity of incident / potential of the day
Incident Controller has delegated all functions
Operations "span of control" still possible from single Operations Point i.e. Reinforcing the Level 2 IMT
Level 3 ICC
Incident Management Team with all 5 functions delegated
1. Incident Control
2. Public Information
3. Operations
4. Planning
5. Logistics
Divisions established

8. Additional Considerations

8.1 “Operationalising” Group Meetings

The role of Groups and their capability to strengthen local command and control are two of the most important interrelated issues that we currently face in CFA to:

- Enhance our capacity to respond to medium (Level 2) and escalating incidents.
- Support the State Command and Control Arrangements

A shared understanding of the doctrine around the principles of operations and how they can be most effectively applied locally are critical to operational efficiency. It is also fundamental equally to;

- to the philosophy of Mission Command as it enables decision making to be implemented as close as possible to the incident scene
- a principle of the State Command & Control Arrangements that “local problems should be subject to local solutions”

How we consolidate this doctrine across the organisation and work out the strategic and tactical (read practical) aspects of this will take a lot of time and effort but are important to establish a common understanding of how we will operate and apply local command and control into the future.

Background

The best performing Groups have the following points in their constitution:

- Membership is focussed on senior leadership – Brigades and experienced personnel attend from each brigade.

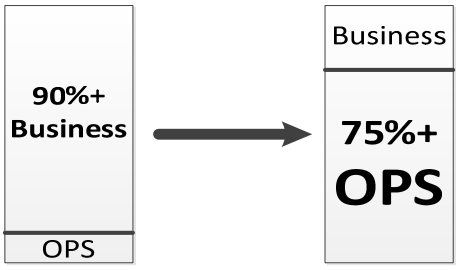
They are higher performing because they:

- Meet regularly
- Communicate well
- Regularly exercise
- Know who is nominally doing what and when even before a fire starts
- Play a leadership role in:
    - District operations
    - DPC’s
    - IFMP and MFPCs
- Strong emphasis on training
- Disciplined chairmanship

Moving the majority of meeting time from business to operations

Group meetings were originally held to discuss the affairs and running of the Group as well as discussing how operations would be carried out. Over the years the challenges that have been presented to CFA and the increase in corporate considerations has meant that most if not all of brigade/group meetings are now non-operational.

It is now time to refocus and operationalise Group meetings. Operationalisation of Group meetings can be achieved by:



Group meeting business should include the issues and activities around:

- Fire and emergency management (including community safety issues)
- Training
- Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP)

Business in meetings should:

- Go no longer than 30 minutes
- Concentrate on what is going to happen (future training, exercises, events etc)
- Feedback on what has happened to be in written reports that are not spoken to e.g.
  - Financial reports are in writing.
  - Minutes to be distributed before the meeting
  - Important decision papers to be distributed before the meeting to allow time for thinking and questioning.
  - Strong and precise chairmanship to reduce time on discussion

A lot of our meetings have far ranging discussions which may be interesting for many but rarely contributes to our core responsibilities and our mission (protect life and property).

To assist in turning into an action orientated organisation - consider:

- Do you really need to verbalise the minutes from previous meetings.
- Running an action sheet is more productive – review the actions from the last meeting (completed, pending, not started) and ensure someone is accountable to ensure that actions are completed.
- Circulating proposals and motions by email or have them printed and distributed before the meeting commences.
- Setting a time for concluding the business part of the meeting and only extend in special circumstances

Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWTS) are the answer

Each Group should obtain an area of operations map which can be the base for operational TEWTS and fire prevention planning. A properly run TEWT can

- Provide answers to questions that people may be afraid to ask
- Draw out experience from previous fires and campaigns
- Ensure every person has an understanding of their role and the role of others.
- Practically demonstrate operability between agencies
- Clearly show how incident management and all the functions of incident management grow with the fire
- Show how other agencies, combat and support, can integrate into operations.
- Show where staging areas and best located and pre-planned.
- Test current operational plans

TEWTS and practical exercises can be themed on:

- Four types of fires
    - Forest
    - Interface (Guerrilla)
    - Fast running grass and scrub
    - Static i.e. Structural, HAZMAT and Specialist Response scenarios etc.
- Communications plans
- Location and deployment of resources to Control and Operations Points
- Fire prevention planning
- Catering plan
- Water supplies
- Community warnings and information
- Rerunning previous large (and small) fires. See if you can do better next time based on experiences.
- Etc.

8.2 Group Boundaries

The Emergency Management Manual Victoria, Part 3 – State Emergency Response Plan refers to "Tiers of Control".

The following excerpts are taken from the section on Tiers of Control. "*The 3 tiers of incident control are established to guide agencies to provide commonality to emergency response and to multi-agency understanding. The incident control tiers also contribute to determining the establishment of the next tier control points where appropriate.*

The three tiers of agency command and/or control are shown in the table below.

Preparation	***Response and Recovery***	***Tier***
State	*State*	*3*
Regional	*Regional or Area of Operations*	*2*
Municipal	*Incident*	*1*

To further strengthen the role of the Group in local command and control as well as consolidating participation on Municipal Fire Management Planning Committees and in Municipal Emergency Management planning there would be advantage, in the majority of circumstances, to an alignment of Group and Municipal boundaries consistent with the principles contained in the State Emergency response Plan.

8.3 Group Support Membership Category

Section 17 A. of the CFA Act provides for: "*The secretary of a brigade (other than an industry brigade) or the secretary of a group of brigades may from time to time appoint any person as a volunteer auxiliary worker with respect to that brigade or group"* notwithstanding the above provision there may be some scope for the creation of a Group Support Membership Category.

The purpose of this membership category would be to enable the creation of a Group administration and support team, similar in concept to a District Headquarters Brigade. The functions of this team would be to provide management support and facilities unit assistance at the Group HQ/Divisional Command Point. This membership category would enable the recruitment of suitable people who may not be, nor wish to be, a member of a Brigade. This membership arrangement would not preclude existing members of Brigades from participation in Group roles if willing and available to do so.

8.4 Group Access to CFA IT Systems

In order to effectively function as a genuine level within the CFA structure it is seen as essential that Group Officers are provided with their own particular access to CFA IT systems.

WebTRAIN: Access to WebTRAIN will enable Officers of the Group to check competencies for roles when preplanning IMT and Strike Team roles. Will also enable the entry of skills maintenance and exercise participation in command and control roles which currently largely goes unrecorded.

IMS: Would enable entry and alteration to Group specific data e.g. Group Duty Officer, Strike Team details.

FIRS: Would enable the recording of personnel participating in IMT, Divisional Command Point and Staging Area roles who may not be picked up via a Brigade fire report.

8.5 Minimum Standards for Group Resources

In order to enable efficient delivery of this function, both in the context of escalating and intermediate (Level 2) incidents as well as the Divisional Command role there is a requirement to ensure that suitable “tools of trade” are provided. A current minimum facilities standard exists for Divisional Command Points. Further consideration needs to be given to the requirements beyond the static facility to enable readiness arrangements to be put in place and to support fire line command and control roles.

The requirement for resources such as;

- Forward Control Vehicles
- Communications: Dedicated pager cap codes, portable radios and mobile phones etc.
- IT e.g. Portable Field IT Kits (PFIT Kits), GPS

should be considered and preferred minimum standards developed accordingly.