

# **Shire of Denmark – Bush Fire Service**

## **Submission for Command and Support Vehicle**

It has been evident for some time to senior officers in the Shire of Denmark Bush Fire Brigade structure that the ability to travel to, from and around a fire ground or incident in order to manage and support fire crews is difficult to achieve with existing resources.

The Shire of Denmark BFBs comprise seventeen brigades located at fourteen stations with a total of twenty three appliances, and a membership of approximately six hundred volunteers of whom more than two hundred are active fire fighters. At the moment command, control and support is undertaken with senior officer's private vehicles or by removing an appliance from fire fighting duties, with neither of these options providing a vehicle that is suited or equipped for the task.

A command and support vehicle would fulfil a different function to an Incident Control Van (ICV). An ICV would be useful for the management of larger incidents however a command and support vehicle would assist with management of almost all incidents. The command and support vehicle would be mobilised and onsite more quickly than an ICV and would assist in the establishment of control and command functions in the critical early stages of an incident. On balance Denmark senior BFS officers believe that a command and support vehicle is a higher priority asset than an ICV.

Over the last five years the level of volunteer training has greatly increased thanks to the efforts of the CESM and the DFES Great Southern Region and an emphasis has been placed on developing incident command and control procedures. The CESM and senior officers have also worked hard to integrate the volunteers into a single operational unit rather than a series of individual brigades. Volunteer fire fighters now willingly cross-crew appliances or turn out an appliance that is not nominally assigned to their home brigade, and also readily assist with large incidents out of district. Under the Shire of Denmark Call-Out Procedure SOP a minimum of two and up to five appliances initially respond to an alarm, dependent upon the fire danger index.

The ability for a senior officer to command and control crews on the ground is an essential component of the training and effort that has been put into ensuring effective incident outcomes. A suitable vehicle will allow senior

officers to build on the better practices that have been developed without removing an appliance from fire fighting duties.

A Command and Support vehicle would assist in the functions listed below:

- Transport for senior officers to establish a forward control point.
- Be equipped to function as a forward control point, or Incident Control base for smaller incidents.
- Able to carry four people safely.
- Does not remove an appliance from fire fighting duties.
- Allows safe travel around a fire ground for officers managing and supporting an incident.
- Able to transport smaller items to, from and around the incident including food, drinks, fast fill pumps, etc.
- Fitted with appropriate communications equipment to allow better coverage across the Shire including radios, mobile phone and data.
- Provide limited transport for fire crews on and off the fire ground without removing appliances.
- Allow transport for senior officers between a fire ground and an Incident Control Centre.
- Faster mobilisation than appliances to reported incidents to assess resource requirements and direct incoming assets.
- During days where the forecast indicates adverse fire weather the vehicle could be garaged with the on-call senior officer to facilitate faster reaction and at other times garaged at a fire station.

A clear policy on the rules of use and garaging has been developed to ensure that the vehicle is always available for its primary function and well maintained. Because it will only be used for command and control functions it is anticipated that the vehicle will travel less than 10,000km per annum.

A dual cab 4X4 vehicle with an integrated alloy canopy would allow the body to be relocated to a new cab chassis vehicle at the end of its service life thus making considerable savings on replacement vehicles. Similar to a Light Tanker it is expected that the vehicle would have a service life of ten years.

### **Indicative Capital Costs**

Vehicle –4X4 Dual Cab Chassis	38,000
Body to DFES Specification	18,000
Emergency Equipment	5,000
Safety Equipment	1,000
Shade Structure, folding chairs, boards and table	1,000
Sign writing	1,000
Communications incl WAERN Radios and Mobile phone	6,000

**Total including GST                    \$70,000**

### **Indicative Annual Running Costs**

Insurance (Shire Brigade Register)	300
Registration (Concessional)	100
Fuel (based on 7,500km, 10l/100km, \$1.5/l)	1,200
Servicing (Shire Workshop)	500
Repairs and Maintenance	400

**Total Annual Costs                    \$2,500**

Note: The running costs can be borne within the existing budget with a reasonable percentage off-set by not using an appliance.

### **Summary**

As the Volunteer Bush Fire Service Brigades in the Shire of Denmark have become more professional in their approach to incident management it is apparent that we are not suitably equipped to work in the most efficient manner.

To date fire ground command, control and support has been carried out with private vehicles or by taking an appliance from fire fighting duties. Neither of these solutions provides a vehicle which is safe, suited nor equipped for the task.

We believe that an investment of half the cost of a Light Tanker will provide a vehicle which will build on the work that has been undertaken locally developing sound incident command and control procedures. Because senior officers will be better placed to interact with volunteers at an incident we believe that this will have benefits in the retention and recruitment of volunteers. This in turn will ensure that the investment in time, effort and funds in training and developing volunteers is maximised.

## **Policy for Use, Garaging and Maintenance of Command and Support Vehicle**

### **Vehicle Call Sign: “Denmark Fire Command”**

- The primary use of the vehicle is to provide senior Bush Fire Service officers the means to more effectively command, control and support volunteer fire-fighters at an incident.
- The vehicle must not be used for a purpose or in a manner that would be unacceptable for any other Shire or DFES fire appliance.
- Drivers need to consider that they are operating a high visibility vehicle and that they will be under public scrutiny. The public will be aware that the vehicle represents the Bush Fire Service, Shire of Denmark and DFES. As such drivers must operate the vehicle in such a manner so as not to bring disrepute to those entities.
- In order to be available to undertake the primary role the location of the vehicle needs to be known by senior officers, being the CBFCO, DCBFCO and CESM, at all times.
- The vehicle will nominally be garaged in a fire shed that is convenient to the CBFCO, DCBFCO or another relevant senior officer and connected to power to maintain the batteries in a charged condition, and ready for immediate use.
- On days that are forecast with a very high or greater FDI and other days that are considered by the CBFCO to present adverse fire conditions the vehicle may be garaged at the property of a senior officer ready for immediate mobilisation. On these occasions the vehicle shall be housed in a shed or garage or at the least under cover and connected to a battery charger.
- Whenever the vehicle is deployed or off station a radio call shall be placed by the driver or crew to Denmark Chief, Fire2 or the CFM to advise destination and purpose. And a similar radio call placed when returned to station.
- If approved by the CBFCO or in his absence the CBFCO or CESM, the vehicle may be used to support other normal brigade activities such as

training or fuel reduction burns however not to the detriment of the primary function at active incidents.

- The driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle is returned to its garaging location in a clean and tidy state and washed if necessary and with a minimum three quarter full fuel tank. If returned too late at night to refuel then the CBFCO is to be advised so that refuelling can be arranged as soon as practical.
- The driver is required to ensure that in line with the DFES requirements a VPOWER check is undertaken before use. If the vehicle is garaged with a senior officer because of adverse fire weather the VPOWER check shall be performed at the start of each day to ensure that it is ready for immediate mobilisation.
- The vehicle shall be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations with an annual service at the very minimum. Any faults or damage to the vehicle will be immediately reported to the CBFCO, DCBFCO or CESM and arrangements made for the fault to be corrected or damage repaired.