



Metropolitan Fire and
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6 September 2019

Ms Rosemary Carlin
Coroner
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006

By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Carlin

COR 2018 004614 and COR 2018 004615

Investigation into the deaths of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Thank you for your findings without inquest into the deaths of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] dated 29 May 2019, which the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) received on 6 June 2019.

MFB offers its sincere condolences to the family of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for their tragic loss of two young lives. MFB is grateful for the opportunity to consider your findings, including recommendation 4 directed to MFB. Community safety is at the core of MFB's values and its work and it is committed to contributing to the ultimate goal of eliminating preventable loss of life in circumstances such as these.

Recommendation 4 is that MFB consider:

- (a) working with Geelong Fire Services, other regional fire services, and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to expand their migrant education programs among multicultural organisations and other like community groups; and
- (b) regularly publishing fire safety advice in ethnic newspapers and other like publications.

MFB supports this recommendation and is in the process of implementing both sub-recommendations.

MFB's current work to protect Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

Your findings refer to two of MFB's existing programs: Flames for Teens and Flames for Adult Migrants. Both are examples of important MFB programs designed specifically for CALD community audiences, and are part of a broad suite of measures that MFB takes to protect CALD communities from fire.

MFB also runs a range of other fire safety education programs which it presents to CALD communities with the assistance of interpreters. For instance, on average almost one fifth of the Seniors Fire Safety program sessions MFB delivers are to CALD community groups.

In the past, these programs have been promoted by placing advertisements in community language newspapers. Specific MFB staff are also designated Multicultural Liaison Officers

and, as part of that role, give regular presentations to CALD community groups to raise awareness of the importance of fire safety and of MFB services.

MFB provides translated fire safety education materials to CALD community groups at no charge. These materials include:

- the Home Fire Safety Handbook, which is a brand new publication soon to be published under joint Country Fire Authority (CFA) and MFB logos, in hard copy in 22 languages and in audio format in English;
- information about smoke alarms and how to maintain them, written in 26 languages reflecting recent immigration trends; and
- High Rise Building Fire Safety materials in six specifically targeted languages.

All of these initiatives are funded by MFB's Community Education budget, which is currently set at \$1,579,847 per annum. We draw your attention to pages 34 and 35 of the *MFB Annual Report 2017-2018*¹ for further information about MFB's community resilience initiatives and would be pleased to respond to any queries.

Consistent with Victorian government requirements,² MFB spends a minimum of 5% of its campaign advertising budget on multicultural media. On 22 August 2019 the Honourable Lisa Neville, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, launched the most recent joint MFB and CFA campaign highlighting the importance of interconnected smoke alarms in bedrooms. MFB translated advertisements on social media platforms into four targeted languages, and radio advertisements into three targeted languages. Translated radio advertisements are broadcast on corresponding CALD community radio stations.

MFB recently also contributed a further \$40,000 in in-kind support as the lead agency in a research program into preventable residential fire fatalities in Australia. The research culminated in the release of the report *Preventable residential fire fatalities in Australia July 2003 to June 2017* at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council conference on 27-29 August 2019.

Implementation of recommendation 4(a)

MFB has taken steps to work with CFA, the statutory authority which responded to the fire the subject of your investigation. CFA provides fire protection services outside the Metropolitan Fire District (MFD), including in Geelong. Pursuant to sub-recommendation (a), MFB has provided CFA with your findings, a summary of MFB's current programs, MFB's Recommended Practice for Translation and Interpreter Services³ and a list of the languages in which different MFB programs and resources are available. MFB also offered to provide program costing information to CFA on request.

¹ Accessible through the 'Annual reports' page of MFB's public website, at <http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au/News/Publications/Annual-reports.html>.

² Victorian Government Multicultural Communication Policy, accessible at <https://www.vic.gov.au/ensuring-we-reach-all-Victorians-with-our-communications#communicating-with-multicultural-victorians>.

³ This sets out MFB's recommended approach for MFB staff to engage translators and/or interpreters both in emergency and non-emergency scenarios. It aligns with the Victorian Government Guidelines on Policy and Procedures: Using Interpreting Services, accessible at <https://www.content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Vic-Gov-Using-interpreting-services-guidelines.pdf>.

MFB further proposed a tripartite meeting between CFA and CAV to discuss:

- expanding MFB's fire safety programs beyond the MFD;
- possible amendments to the flyer you refer to in paragraph 23 of your findings, which may improve its effectiveness in light of the deaths of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]; and
- publishing fire safety advice in ethnic newspapers and other like publications throughout Victoria.

By letter dated 21 August 2019, CFA's Executive Manager Fire Prevention and Preparedness wrote to MFB to describe CFA's own fire safety programs and activities targeting the CALD community outside the MFD. A copy of this letter is attached for your information.

CFA's programs and activities include CFA's engagement work with specific CALD communities in Geelong following several fire fatalities in 2018. This involves multicultural home fire safety sessions, targeted door knocking, installation of 130 smoke alarms in targeted areas and replacement of a further 50 smoke alarms. CFA has also recently partnered with MFB to undertake research into current community awareness and understanding about residential smoke alarm installation, surveying CALD audiences to establish a baseline to inform future campaign strategies.

CFA has performed a desktop assessment considering the MFB program summary material, the Flames program manual and CFA staff experience. Based on that assessment CFA expressed the view that its own program 'Fired Up English' is the equivalent of Flames. CFA is proposing to evaluate both Flames and Fired Up English in detail in the next 18 months.

MFB and CFA have recently established a joint working group which will meet regularly to collaborate on matters of mutual importance to both organisations. CFA has requested that further discussion about expanding MFB programs into CFA areas take place in this forum. MFB will seek to use the working group to expand MFB's community resilience programs into regional areas and/or to enhance CFA's existing programs.

MFB will progress a meeting with CAV and CFA to review the MFB/CFA smoke alarm flyer and plan publishing fire safety advice in CALD community newspapers.

MFB is separately progressing discussions with CAV to enhance the number of participants in MFB's fire safety education programs among CALD communities.

Implementation of recommendation 4(b)

In the past MFB has placed advertisements in ethnic newspapers and like publications to raise awareness of MFB education programs among CALD communities. More recently MFB raises awareness among CALD communities through translated materials on social media and through CALD community radio stations.

The MFB Community Resilience team is formulating an action plan to commence publishing fire safety advice according to recommendation 4(b), in addition to current practices. It aims to include fire safety advice in publications from 1 November 2019 to align with the commencement of the 2019/2020 summer fire season.



To maximise the impact of this recommendation MFB has, as mentioned above, invited CFA and CAV to discuss extending the publication of fire safety advice beyond the MFD.

Community safety and resilience is at the core of MFB's work and its purpose, and MFB welcomes the opportunity to respond to your recommendation. MFB will continue to work with CFA and CAV to maximise the positive impact of your findings. No parents deserve to suffer the tragedy [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have endured.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "GL", is positioned below the "Yours sincerely" text.

Greg Leach
Acting Chief Officer and Chief Executive Officer



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21 August 2019

Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
Mr Trent Curtin
456 Albert St
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Trent,

RE: CORONER'S RECOMMENDATIONS, ■ AND ■■■■■■■■■■

Thank you for your letter dated 13 August 2019 regarding your request of CFA to review information on MFB's CALD-focussed programs.

CFA have been delivering and supporting fire safety information and education to CALD groups in the country area of Victoria for over 20 years. Across the State, delivery of residential fire safety programs and activities targeting the CALD community vary based on local risk, population, resources available and regional priorities. Delivery includes, but is not limited to:

- Fired Up English program (English as an Additional Language [EAL] classes with fire information targeted to adult migrants)
- general home fire safety education sessions to new arrivals
- fire safety training to local council tutors for newly arrived migrants
- Next Generation youth program for EAL secondary students
- door-knocking programs targeted to at risk areas, and
- displays at various multicultural events and celebrations.

Following the Coroner's recommendations regarding the deaths of ■ and ■■■■■■■■■■, an audit of community education and engagement service delivery was conducted by CFA which identified an array of residential fire safety education programs and information delivered by CFA that is targeted to the CALD community. Significant CALD community engagement work in District 7 (Geelong) is occurring following several fire fatalities in 2018. This includes but is not limited to:

- Diversitat collaboration
- Karen-supported playgroup sessions
- multicultural home fire safety sessions to EAL TAFE classes
- targeted door-knocking, with property advice visit services (782 properties this year)
- installation of 130 smoke alarms in targeted areas; replacement of 50 alarms
- pull up banners in various locations across the Geelong and surrounding areas.
- CFA has also partnered with MFB to undertake research into current community awareness and understanding about residential smoke alarm installation, surveying CALD audiences to establish a baseline which will inform future campaign strategies.



In your letter to me you invited me to consider if the MFB programs are suitable for CFA to deliver in the country area of Victoria. A desktop assessment based on the information enclosed in your letter to me, the content from the 'Flames' manual and our staff's experience with the program suggests CFA's equivalent program - Fired Up English - offers updated and relevant content, including updated smoke alarm messaging, additional lessons and information, and supports teacher-led delivery (which may be supported by firefighters). I note that neither Flames nor Fired Up English have been evaluated, and we are seeking to undertake evaluation of our program over the next 18 months. CFA has determined that expanding the 'Flames' program in Geelong and other country areas of Victoria would not be demonstrably better for either CFA or CALD communities than CFA's existing arrangements.

Regarding the other programs listed in your letter to me, CFA has undertaken a comparative assessment based on the information we have available and are of the view that there is no advantage to the community in adopting MFB programs in CFA areas.

I welcome your proposal to instigate a meeting between CFA, MFB and Consumer Affairs in order to progress publishing robust fire safety information throughout Victoria and to discuss the content and style/layout of publications. I would be interested in discussing the idea of expanding MFB's fire safety programs beyond the metropolitan fire district, however I think this discussion is better placed to occur at the newly formed CFA-MFB working group, whose first meeting will be held at CFA headquarters on 26 August 2019.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Lucy Saaroni', is positioned below the closing text.

Lucy Saaroni
Executive Manager Fire Prevention and Preparedness
Country Fire Authority