

Media Release

GOING BEYOND 'IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO':

Gender balance in Fire and Emergency Services

19 November 2020

Male Champions of Change (MCC) Fire and Emergency Group and The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) have jointly produced a compelling report demonstrating the case for gender balance in the fire and emergency sector.

MCC Fire and Emergency Group and AFAC members have been collaborating since 2017 on gender equality initiatives. Over the past three years, there has been progress in terms of an increase in women's leadership, but across the sector the overall pace of change has been slow and gender and other diversity gains remain difficult to achieve.

The new report *'Gender Balance in Fire and Emergency, Going Beyond 'it's the right thing to do' – the case for change'* explores the benefits and rationale in addressing key risk factors including health and safety, reputational and political risk and community engagement, through improving gender balance and other diversity in the sector.

The past year has brought into sharp focus the importance and evolution of the roles of firefighter and emergency service responders. As their responsibilities expand and the work extends to include prevention, preparedness, incident response and recovery fire and emergency teams require new and different skills and capabilities.

Stuart Ellis AM, Chief Executive Officer, Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, says the sector needs to recruit and develop diverse talent to meet the future demands.

'The increasing demands on fire and emergency service personnel and the shifting nature of their work requires a broader talent pool. We firmly believe that attracting more women and tapping into new and different skills will be fundamental to meeting Australia's fire and emergency prevention, preparedness, incident response and recovery needs into the future.' says Ellis.

In the report, leaders from across the Fire and Emergency sector together explore and address the common FAQ's: 'Why does the gender composition of our workforce matter?' and 'Why should we dedicate time to this issue in particular?'

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM, Resilience New South Wales says in all aspects of fire and emergency there should be no impediments to women playing a meaningful role.

'As industry chiefs, and Male Champions of Change we are sending a message to the fire and emergency services sector that women are a part of our life, and women are part of the fire and emergency services. There should be no impediment to women playing a meaningful role – and taking up leadership roles – in any aspect of the work we do,' says Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

The report also demonstrates that to meet the needs of the future the Fire and Emergency sector must be equipped and resourced to represent, support and engage the diverse communities that it serves.

Commissioner Andrew Crisp APM, Emergency Management Victoria, says everyone across the entire sector must take action to accelerate change.

'An emergency management sector that reflects the community we serve will benefit us all. It is critical that we commit to working with everyone across our emergency management sector to advocate for and champion gender equality and diversity,' says Commissioner Crisp.



Kristen Hilton, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, and group Convenor says both the sector and the community will benefit.

‘Fire and Emergency services play a vital role in keeping our community safe. The sector and the community will benefit from organisations that are fairer, more diverse and great places for everyone.’

Members of the MCC Fire and Emergency Group and AFAC will use *“Gender Balance in Fire and Emergency, Going Beyond ‘it’s the right thing to do’ – the case for change”* to accelerate progress in their organisations and share the case for change across their sector.

[Download Gender Balance in Fire and Emergency, Going Beyond ‘it’s the right thing to do’ the Case for Change.](#)

For more information please contact:

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About AFAC

AFAC is the facilitator and custodian of contemporary fire and emergency service knowledge and practice, for the benefit of our members and through them, the community.

About Male Champions of Change Fire and Emergency

Male Champions of Change Fire and Emergency was established in April 2017 with support from the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC).

The group is convened by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Kristen Hilton. It includes Chief Executives, Commissioners and Chief Fire Officers leading 30 agencies responsible for fire, emergency and land management services across Australia and New Zealand.

Involvement in the Male Champions of Change strategy supports and strengthens AFAC’s wider focus on diversity and inclusion.

About Male Champions of Change

Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders. Male Champions of Change believe gender equality is a major business, economic, societal and human rights issue. Established in 2010, by Elizabeth Broderick AO, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve gender equality and increase in the representation of women in leadership.