

2019

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

RESPONSE TO CORONER'S REPORT INTO THE FIRE AT THE SYDNEY BUILDING

**Presented by
Mr Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Police and Emergency Services**

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The inquiry was into a fire that occurred at the Sydney Building, London Circuit, Canberra City on 17 February 2014.

On 11 October 2018, the Coroner wrote to the Commissioner of the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) to confirm actions taken since the fire occurred.

Coroner Morrison sought comment and advice from ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R) in relation to the content and efficacy of procedures for isolating or otherwise making safe gas supplies after a fire.

ACTF&R confirmed that a critical part of their risk mitigation activities at emergency incidents is ensuring the isolation of utilities, including gas and electricity supplies, to buildings. The ACTF&R operational doctrine regarding this was reviewed and updated, as part of their Standard Operating Guideline (Guideline) that details command and control procedures at incidents. This Guideline was first disseminated to all staff in April 2015.

To ensure the safety of firefighters and members of the community in relation to any gas or electricity that may have been impacted by a fire or other cause, ACTF&R Commanders have also been specifically briefed on the need to ensure appropriate isolation is undertaken at multi-tenancy buildings.

The process of isolating gas and electricity supplies to buildings is also practised in a simulated environment as part of the training syllabus for all Recruit Firefighters and is covered in ongoing development training undertaken at all rank levels.

Coroner Morrison also sought comment and advice on whether ACTF&R had reviewed and/or changed its processes in relation to release of multi tenanted premises.

ACTF&R advised Coroner Morrison that they have reviewed the template Release of Premises (ROP) form for single-tenant premises such as residences and found that it is appropriate for use in multi-tenanted properties. ACTF&R advised it has ensured that its Commanders will in future provide ROP forms to all affected tenants following structure fires.

On 7 November 2018 the Office of the Coroner wrote to the Attorney-General and myself to provide a copy of the Coroner's Report relating to the inquiry into the fire at the Sydney Building, pursuant to subsection 52(4)(a)(i) of the *Coroners Act 1997* (the Act).

Coroner Morrison's key findings in the Report were:

- a fire occurred at the Sydney Building, London Circuit, Canberra City on 17 February 2014
- the point of origin of the fire was in a part of the building occupied by the business known as Izakaya Coo 2 G 4 U and was caused by an unattended cooking wok on a gas stove which in turn ignited the cooking oil within the wok
- the cause and origin of this fire are sufficiently disclosed and a hearing is unnecessary.

The Coroner identified the following two matters of public safety arising from the evidence available for the inquiry:

- the content and efficacy of procedures for isolating or otherwise making safe gas supplies after a fire
- the content and efficacy of procedures for post-fire release of multi-tenanted building or complex tenancies.

In relation to the first matter of public safety Coroner Morrison noted that, in light of the advice from ACTF&R about the steps they took to address

the identified issue, no ongoing matter of public safety arises. The Coroner made no further recommendation in this regard.

In relation to the second matter, Coroner Morrison noted the difficulties related to coordinating post-incident release of premises in multi-tenanted buildings.

I thank Coroner Morrison for his findings and recommendations in this matter. In line with the position of the Coroner, I am satisfied with the action taken by all those within the ACT Emergency Services Agency who were involved and thank those members for their service.