



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

PUBLIC REPORT

**ON
THE RECOMMENDATION TO REVIEW THE VMF FIRE SERVICE
FOLLOWING
ITS INACTION TO STOP FIRE BURNING DOWN A DWELLING
AT ANAMBROU AREA, PORT VILA**



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PUBLIC REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATION TO REVIEW THE VMF FIRE SERVICE FOLLOWING ITS INACTION TO STOP FIRE BURNING DOWN DWELLING AT ANAMBROU AREA, PORT VILA

SUMMARY

On 31 March 2014 a fire burnt down a dwelling house at Anambrou Area at approximately 4.30 in the morning. Although the VMF Fire Service was given the alert they failed to respond and said that they have no petrol. The fire brigade later arrived at the scene but the house had already burnt down. This incident prompted the Office of the Ombudsman to carry out an investigation. Lieutenant Bomma Avia, the officer in charge of the VMF Fire Service was contacted by letter dated 19 February 2016. Lieutenant Boma replied on 15 June 2016 stating that the fire service brigade could not move to the scene because they had no funds to pay for petrol. He further stated that his department does not control the money but the office of the Commissioner does. This is one example of the many fire incidents that the VMF Fire Service failed to take control of.

Findings:

The Vanuatu Mobile Force Fire Service (VMFFS) has no fire Act and for this reason the fire service has to run its day to day operations from instructions coming from the superiors. Due to lack of a Fire Act, the VMFFS cannot provide safety as required or enforce the fire safety for all citizens residential and business houses. Further, for their safety and also to protect the fire fighters from injuries such as an insurance in case other causes may affect their lives due to chemicals and other operation claims.

Recommendations:

The Ombudsman recommends that:

- The Commissioner of Police do all it can to allocate sufficient funds from the Police budget to the Vanuatu Mobile Force Fire Service.
- In the alternative, the Police Commissioner may liaise with the relevant authorities to transfer the Vanuatu Mobile Force Fire Service to a ministry or department such as the Internal Affairs or NDMO. In such an event, the Minister may consider making it a separate Department pursuant to a review by the Vanuatu Law Reform Commission (VLRC) and other stakeholders.

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