



WHAKARONGĀ IWI

**FIRE  
EMERGENCY**

NEW ZEALAND



## **HANDS UP: ANYONE FOR A PROMOTION?**

Does Fire and Emergency have a challenge advancing firefighters into management roles?

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## **HANDS UP: ANYONE FOR A PROMOTION?**

Does Fire and Emergency have a challenge  
advancing firefighters into management roles?



## **ABSTRACT**

Anecdotal evidence suggests Fire and Emergency has a challenge advancing firefighters into management positions, specifically, transitioning Senior Station Officers to Executive Officer roles. Therefore, I sought to understand what the motivators, barriers and enablers to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer were. To enable this insight, a review of the organisations succession planning processes was carried out as well as an extensive literature review, in career theories and role variations between a firefighter and an emergency manager. Qualitative exploration was employed for this research through an online survey, involving both Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers with feedback from almost eighty respondents analysed.

Findings indicated that Fire and Emergency has a challenge converting Senior Station Officers into Executive Officer positions, with the greatest barriers being a lack of flexibility preventing work-life balance, remuneration and job design. Furthermore, the stage Senior Station Officers are at in their career lifecycle, is likely to impact their desire to progress, as is their high organisational commitment to their current role. For those respondents that had made the transition to an Executive Officer, the excitement and challenge of the position was the main reason to do so with secondment opportunities a clear enabler for this progression.

The majority of the organisation is driven by an internal labour market that provides comprehensive and effective succession planning processes from a recruit firefighter to a Senior Station Officer. The results of this research suggest there is a departure of the internal labour market model when progressing to an Executive Officer, as many Senior Station Officer respondents are not confident to advance, feeling underprepared to do so. Fire and Emergency will need to review human resource processes, training development programmes and consider alternate operating models to address concerns raised by Senior Station Officer and Executive Officers.

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## **CHAPTER 1 - RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Anecdotal evidence suggests Fire and Emergency has a challenge advancing firefighters from the Senior Station Officer level into management positions, in particular the Executive Officer role. Several reasons for this have been assumed such as remuneration, lifestyle, organisational culture and variation in the responsibilities between the Senior Station Officer and the higher position. The organisation has not undertaken research to date to substantiate these assumptions. As a corporate manager at Fire and Emergency, I have the privilege of engaging with brave women and men that have chosen careers that put themselves at risk to protect people, property and the environment. I have spent time with people at every level of the organisation and have been intrigued with conversations with Executive Officers that are considering shifting back to a Senior Station Officer and with Senior Station Officers who have no desire to progress into the ranks of an Executive Officer. These discussions sparked my interest to understand why this was the case, and prompted an exploratory study in preparation for my Major Research Project.

The exploratory study, involving seven Senior Station Officers, revealed the greatest barrier to transitioning from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer is remuneration. Other barriers included high workload, long and unsociable hours and a general lack of attraction to the role. Senior Station Officers stated they felt confident and competent to take on the positions and the level of training and development was rated highly.

While the exploratory study revealed some of the motivators, barriers and enablers for some Senior Station Officers to progress into Executive Officer roles, it did not reveal how wide spread their views are throughout the organisation, or explain what inspired and empowered those Executive Officers that had made the transition. The results also left me



questioning, that even though Fire and Emergency provides extensive training, development and support, why is it that Senior Station Officers still choose not to advance despite being qualified to do so. Consequently, in this research I will seek to understand the succession planning experience from the individual's perspective and do so by involving a larger number of Senior Station Officers, as participants from Fire and Emergency. Furthermore, I would like to gain the perceptions of Executive Officers as to why they chose to progress into the role. Accordingly, the following research aims, objectives and questions have been established to enable this insight.

## **1.2 RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

This study examines potential challenges faced by Senior Station Officers at Fire and Emergency, to progress to the Executive Officer role, which is traditionally the next step in their career path. The research aims to understand if there are significant barriers to this transition, which may cause the individual not to progress. Insights from Executive Officers will also be sought to determine their reasons for advancing into the position. This knowledge will allow Fire and Emergency to address some of the concerns, put in place initiatives to support the advancement of their Senior Station Officers and potentially avoid a shortage of Executive Officers in the future. To meet these research aims and objectives, the subsequent research questions have been developed:

- RQ1 - *What are the motivators, barriers and enablers to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer?*
- RQ 2 - *What motivated and enabled current Executive Officers to transition to this role?*
- RQ 3 – *What more could Fire and Emergency do to advance their Senior Station Officers into the Executive Officer position?*

### **1.3 CONCLUSION**

To achieve the research aims and objectives, Chapter Two will deliver the Fire and Emergency context by providing a brief history and current state of the organisation. This chapter will include succession planning practices and the typical career progression of an urban career firefighter. Additionally, I will discuss the potential impacts that internal labour markets may have on the decisions of Senior Station Officers, in respect to their career transitioning processes. In Chapter Three, learnings from the Fire and Emergency context and their succession planning practices, led to consider career theories to gain further insights into barriers of career progression. Furthermore, a review of literature on the differences between the role of a firefighter and the role of an emergency manager is undertaken. Chapter Four discusses the purpose and methods employed for the exploratory study and the research approach and method selection for the current study, with justification as to why I selected these approaches. In addition to the review and analysis of literature outlined in Chapter Three, the study conducts primary research through a confidential online qualitative questionnaire. Chapter Four provides the sample population, details of the research instrument and the data collection and analytical processes. Chapter Five and Chapter Six present the findings of the study, Chapter Seven the discussion and conclusions of these findings and Chapter Eight offers recommendations to address the research aims and objectives.

## **CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH CONTEXT: FIRE AND EMERGENCY**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

My interest to comprehend the motivators, barriers and enablers for Senior Station Officers to transition into the Executive Officer role, was initiated by appraising succession planning both theoretically and practically through the current practices of Fire and Emergency. The evaluation of the career progression of a career urban firefighter clearly demonstrated the organisation has elements of an internal labour market which is considered further in this chapter. This Chapter will also discuss the history of fire services in New Zealand, the current structure, roles and responsibilities of Fire and Emergency and impending changes to the organisation.

### **2.2 FIRE AND EMERGENCY: A BRIEF HISTORY**

#### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Although fire services have been functioning for many years in New Zealand, Fire and Emergency New Zealand was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, amalgamating both urban and rural fire services. Significant change has occurred in the first three years of its existence and the full unification of the organisation is expected to take several years. Thus, in this section I provide a brief review of New Zealand Fire Services.

#### **2.2.2 Fire and Emergency: Past**

Fire brigades first appeared in New Zealand in the 1850s with the formation of volunteer brigades, established by communities for communities. The model expanded over the years in New Zealand to a mix of volunteer and paid firefighters, which reflected international trends. For over 100 years, fire services were managed and funded locally which

resulted in noteworthy variations between the brigades' due to no central coordination. In 1947, 41 people lost their lives in the Ballantyne's fire in Christchurch. This event was the catalyst to improving fire safety and eventually changing legislation with the introduction of both the Fire Service Act 1975 and the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 (referred to as 'Acts'). These Acts remained in effect for more than 40 years and defined the responsibilities of the fire services. However, the kinds of duties performed by personnel and the types of incidents that the fire services responded to, changed exponentially, far beyond the mandate of these two Acts. Therefore, between 2012 and 2015, two reviews were undertaken to determine the appropriate funding model, structure and mandate fit for a modern fire and emergency service. These reviews led to the legislative reform constructing the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017. At this point, the New Zealand Fire Service, the National Rural Fire Authority and 38 rural fire districts and territorial authorities came together to create New Zealand's first urban and rural fire and emergency service (Fire and Emergency NZ, n.d.).

### **2.2.3 Fire and Emergency: Present**

In 2019, approximately 1800 career firefighters, 12,000 volunteers and 1000 management and support personnel served nationally at 652 fire brigades and offices across New Zealand (Fire and Emergency NZ, 2019). Career and volunteer firefighters respond to and manage emergency events and are considered 'operational' personnel, as are Executive Officers. All other staff are referred to as 'non-operational' or 'corporate personnel'. Five per cent of career firefighters are female and eighteen per cent of volunteer firefighters are female (Fire and Emergency NZ, 2019). The operational environment is predominantly male.

Section 10 under the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017 states that; Fire and Emergency's main objectives are to reduce the number of unwanted fires and to protect and preserve life, property, land and the environment. This is achieved as stipulated in Section 11, through:

- the promotion of fire safety;
- fire prevention and suppression;
- defending the safety of people and property in respect to hazardous substances;
- rescuing trapped persons in transport or other accidents;
- search and rescue operations.

If there is capability and capacity, Section 12 of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017, also allows the organisation to assist in the response of medical and maritime events, other rescues, to assist at traffic accidents and respond to weather and natural hazard incidents.

The amalgamation in 2017 brought together 40 entities which was a large-scale process, this occurred whilst needing to ensure emergency service response continued without interruption. For this reason, dual structures were implemented to enable a smooth transition to the new structure. For the first two years of operation, a separate structure existed for urban and rural personnel, which allowed new systems, tools and processes to be created for the new organisation. This resulted in a workforce comprising urban volunteer, urban career, rural volunteer, rural career and corporate personnel. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2019, a new Executive Leadership Team was established and on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 a new Service Delivery Leadership Team stood up which was the first unified structure for operational personnel. Under this new structure, there are five regions across New Zealand, which are headed by a Region Manager who sits on the Service Delivery Leadership Team. Executive Officers report to Region Managers and Senior Station Officers report to Executive Officers. By way of work patterns, Executive Officers work a typical five-day week; Monday to Friday with the expectation they will work both nights and weekends to support their volunteers. Conversely, Senior Station Officers engage in shift work where they work two day shifts, two night shifts (which they can sleep through if there are no incidents) and then have four days off. Both positions are represented strongly by their unions – Professional Firefighters Union for Senior Station

Officers and the Fire and Emergency Commanders Association for Executive Officers. It is important to note that Executive Officers is a rank not a role. The focus of this research is on the roles of Assistant Area Managers and Area Managers who hold the rank of an Executive Officer.

#### **2.2.4 Fire and Emergency: Potential future changes**

It is important to note at the time of writing, the restructure to unify the dual management arrangements were planned to continue throughout 2020 with Executive Officer tier appointments to occur during this time. The role and title of Executive Officers may change during this period however will be retained as such for this research. The outcomes of the unification process (amalgamating urban and rural structures) may also alter the succession planning practices which is discussed in the next section. It is equally significant to note that, a consultation document was released to all Fire and Emergency personnel on the 18 September 2019 and consultation closed on the 18 October 2019. This document outlined a proposal for organisational structure of Tier 3, Tier 4 and Tier 5 personnel as well as a proposed approach to rank structure. Both the Professional Firefighters Union and the Fire and Emergency Commanders Association raised concerns on aspects of this proposal, for this reason I expect to see references to this document within the survey responses as data collection for this research occurred in November 2019.

### **2.3 SUCCESSION PLANNING**

The makeup of the current workforce at Fire and Emergency includes urban volunteer, urban career, rural volunteer, rural career and corporate personnel, as identified earlier in this chapter. Both Executive Officers and Senior Station Officers are categorised as urban career personnel, which will be the focus of this research paper and reference going forward. Fire and



Emergency has a comprehensive succession planning process for urban career firefighters (refer Table 1.) which Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identify as typical for military type organisations. As personnel are required to undertake the skills and qualifications of the next rank prior to applying for a promotion, a cadre of people are trained and available to fill vacancies. Fire and Emergency's experience and expertise in succession planning allows them to recognise gaps in skillsets and competencies and to train accordingly. This Chapter will discuss the career progression of an urban career firefighter from a recruit to an Executive Officer.

The career journey of a firefighter is typically a long and progressive one with advancement in technical and leadership skills through specialist training and formal education. To progress to the next rank the individual must hold their current position for a certain period and meet the skills and qualifications of the following rank (refer Table 1). Once this has been achieved and a role becomes available, the employee may apply for a position. This process demonstrates an internal labour market which I will speak to in the next section. The long service nature and hierarchal structure often means it takes a significant time to advance, which becomes more challenging the higher the rank, as there are less roles available. Once a firefighter reaches the rank of Senior Station Officer, they can initiate the Executive Officer Training and Progression System (TAPS) which incorporates a 2-year postgraduate qualification at Otago University. Four modules are required to be completed prior to the postgraduate qualification which covers topics on leadership management, managing performance, strategy, finance and project management. The TAPS programme enables participants to spend a day with an Executive Officer to enhance their knowledge of the role. Executive Officer responsibilities include managing and leading volunteers however there is no specific volunteer management training provided. Senior Station Officers that complete the Executive Officer TAPS programme are given a pay rise to recognise the qualification. (J.

Braddock, personal communication, October 22, 2019). In addition to the TAPS programme, the organisation provided a Career Board framework in 2013 and 2016-2017. This programme provided further skills relevant to the Executive Officer positions and there was a level of expectation that those that completed the programme would step into an Executive Officer role. (J. Braddock, personal communication, January 7, 2020).

**Table I - Career progression of an urban career firefighter**

<b>RANK</b>	<b>ENTRY REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>TIME IN ROLE</b>
Trainee Firefighter	Meet recruitment intake pre-requisites	n/a
Trainee Firefighter to Firefighter	Subject to having successfully completed the Career Firefighter Recruit Course.	n/a
Firefighter to Qualified Firefighter	Subject to having successfully completed the career Qualified Firefighter Programme	After 2 years' continuous employment as a Firefighter and Trainee Firefighter
Qualified Firefighter to Senior Firefighter	Subject to having successfully completed the career Senior Firefighter Programme	After 2 years' continuous employment as a Qualified Firefighter
Senior Firefighter to Station Officer	Subject to having successfully completed the career Station Officer Programme	After 2 years' continuous employment as a Senior Firefighter
Station Officer to Senior Station Officer	Subject to having successfully completed the career Senior Station Officer Programme	After 2 years' continuous employment as an operational Station Officer
Senior Station Officer to Executive Officer	Subject to having successfully completed the Executive Officer Training and Progression System	After 2 years' continuous employment as a Senior Station Officer

Source: – Fire and Emergency NZ, (2018).

The occupation of an urban career firefighter in New Zealand always starts as a trainee firefighter and stays in the confines of the fire service which is demonstrated in the mere turnover rate of 6% per annum. The average age of recruitment at Fire and Emergency in the previous four years is 29 years of age. It takes on average 14.2 years to attain the position of Senior Station Officer and at least another three years to achieve an Executive Officer role

(D.Sim, personal communication, December 12, 2020). To become an Executive Officer, you must have first come through all firefighter ranks consequently recruiting these roles externally is not an option, unless the appropriate firefighter training has been met. This also demonstrates that Executive Officers are unlikely to have undertaken management positions in other public or private institutions.

Despite the organisations expertise in succession planning processes, the exploratory study highlighted effective training and support was not enough to warrant progression into an Executive Officer role. Consequently, I will review the impacts an internal labour market may have on Senior Station Officers career transitioning processes.

## **2.4 INTERNAL LABOUR MARKET**

Works by Althausser (1989) identified various concepts within internal labour market literature. The notion that best describes Fire and Emergency is that internal labour markets occur in subsets of the organisation. For example, there is clear evidence that an internal labour market applies to urban career firefighters, whom are the focus of this research, but seems less relevant among the corporate staff. The practices within the urban career environment that suggest an internal labour market exists, are; hierarchal career ladder as shown in Table 1., promotions are likely to occur internally which is supported by firm-specific training and the organisation is heavily unionised with salaries negotiated through collective bargaining (Althausser, 1989). There are approximately 1300 external applicants each year to become a recruit firefighter with an annual intake of 96. The technical capabilities required of a firefighter are significant and take time to embed through practical application. As identified in the previous section, recruitment is done at the entry level and due to the specialisation of skills required, they are not readily available outside of the organisation.

Doeringer and Piore (1976) believe there are three causes of internal labour markets, two of which have gained research interest, specificity of skill and on-the-job training (as cited in Althauser, 1989). In respect to specificity of skill, they suggest the concept of “bilateral monopoly” exists (as cited in Althauser, 1989, p.152). This concept proposes that firm-specific skills are valuable to the organisation however these skills are not easily transferred to other industries, thus may lack worth to other employers. This theory resonates with personal conversations I have had with urban career personnel, who have suggested that they cannot leave the organisation due to the specific nature of their required skill set. In contrast, the participants in the exploratory study perceived that their skill set gained through Fire and Emergency are transferrable to other industries and organisations. Therefore, I will explore this contradiction regarding the perception of transferable skills in the current study.

On-the-job training is considered further evidence of internal labour markets operating, with a requirement to put in practice theoretical learnings (Althauser, 1989). Fire and Emergency provides extensive on-the-job training which Doeringer and Piore (1971), Finlay (1983) and Carter and Carter (1985) suggest is caused by the need to have a renewable supply of highly-skilled workers (as cited in Althauser,1989). As the specialist skills of a firefighter are not on hand outside of the organisation, as discussed in the previous section, skill scarcity is created further emphasising the need for an internal labour market. The benefits of an internal labour market for the employee are that of job stability and feeling valued for their highly skilled expertise that is not easily attained externally. For Fire and Emergency, their succession planning processes create a stable environment with low turnover and a well-trained workforce lending itself to cost efficiencies (Diprete, 1987).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In this Chapter, I have reviewed the current succession planning process for urban career firefighters which is provided through a hierarchal career ladder and extensive training, thus upward movement is linked to increasing skills and responsibilities at each rank (Diprete, 1987). Although an internal labour market might help explain why the individuals choose to remain at Fire and Emergency, this does not clarify why there may be less people willing to progress to the top rung of the ladder and become an Executive Officer. Therefore, in the next Chapter, I explore career theories to gain greater insights into barriers of progressing from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer. Furthermore, a review of literature on the differences between the role of a firefighter and the role of an emergency manager is undertaken.

## **CHAPTER 3 - BARRIERS TO CAREER TRANSITIONING**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter highlighted that Fire and Emergency operates according to an internal labour market and has expertise in succession planning. However, this internal labour market and proficiency does not explain why some Senior Station Officers choose not to advance to the next tier on their career ladder. For this reason, potential barriers to career transitioning will be considered in this chapter. Korsakiene and Smaliukiene (2014) argue that career transitioning is heavily influenced by the individual, the organisation and the industry. Given my research interest, this Chapter particularly focuses on individual and organisational factors that might influence career transition decisions of Senior Station Officers. Thus, I begin by reviewing the Age and Stage Theory and the Portfolio Career model to gain insights as to why Senior Station Officers may not pursue Executive Officer appointments, as presented in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 respectively. The insights from these perspectives in relation to Fire and Emergency, exposed restrictions on certain activities Senior Station Officers were accustomed to if they advanced to an Executive Officer. These limitations drove a review of research on the differences between the role of a Senior Station Officer and an Executive Officer to consider job design constructs, as presented in Section 3.4. The variation between the roles led to an exploration of Matching Theory, which attempts to explain why individuals align themselves to jobs, and Organisational Commitment Theory, which helps explain why individuals might align themselves to an organisation and to specific work groups within an organisation, as presented in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 respectively. I now turn to a discussion of career theory.



### **3.2 AGE AND STAGE THEORY**

As established in Chapter Two, Fire and Emergency provides a linear or organisational career structure for their operational personnel. Super (1957) proposes an “age and stage” theory that exemplifies a linear career which identifies typical age-related milestones (as cited in Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012). In the exploration phase (usually between 15-24 years), individuals develop self-awareness and consider career opportunities. Super suggests that during the establishment phase (generally between 25-44 years), individuals seek and obtain employment, and begin to incorporate work and family life, and settle into a pattern which is likely to last the remainder of his or her career. During the maintenance phase (generally between 45-64 years), people typically focus on lifestyle such as flexibility, family and leisure interests. The final stage known as the disengagement phase (generally over 65 years) is the shift between employment and retirement (Super, 1957, as cited in Lyons et al., 2012).

With 89 per cent of Senior Station Officer’s at Fire and Emergency over the age of forty-five (D.Sim, personal communication, December 12, 2020), Super’s model suggests that most staff are sitting in the maintenance phase and hence may be placing a strong emphasis on their lifestyle and family needs. Multiple studies also show that promotions are less important for older workers (Smola & Sutton 2002, Tolbert & Moen 1998, Wright & Hamilton 1978, as cited in Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010). Drawing on insights from Super’s Age and Stage Theory, the importance of lifestyle might help explain the reluctance of Senior Station Officers to transition to the Executive Officer role. Therefore, the construct of lifestyle will be considered further in the next section as will portfolio careers that offer greater flexibility to the individual than linear careers.

### 3.3 PORTFOLIO CAREERS

Fire and Emergency provides linear career progression which may not be satisfactory to those individuals wanting to create their own career path. Templer and Cawsey (1999) suggest the field of career development is largely focused on the organisations reality which may no longer exist. Senior Station Officer's undertake shift work, they are on-duty two days and two nights and then have four days off. This allows up to six days available in any eight-day period to pursue alternate work, family or leisure activities which Super suggests older workers may be interested in. Overtime at Fire and Emergency is also abundant, giving Senior Station Officer's the possibility to pick and choose days they would like to work extra shifts. Those extra shifts are paid at penal rates of time and a half and double time. As Senior Station Officers have considerable work flexibility when off-duty, which is contrary to characteristics of an organisational career, learnings may be taken from portfolio careers.

According to Handy (1989), a portfolio career is one where individuals develop a collection of skills and then sell them to a variety of customers (as cited in Templer & Cawsey, 1999). Templer and Cawsey (1999) also suggest a portfolio career can occur within an organisation where the typical hierarchal structure of role advancement does not occur, instead individuals are employed as contractors to deliver against a set of specific tasks. Indeed, through my personal discussions with Senior Station Officers, it appears that many of our staff are also self-employed and contract out their services on their days off. Thus, while this presents a variation on Handy and Templer and Cawsey's work, it does indicate some Senior Station Officers might favour a portfolio career in addition to their traditional career.

Templer and Cawsey (1999) provide assumptions between conventional and contemporary career models in respect to loyalty, career security and career progress. They suggest loyalty has shifted from the organisation to building authentic skill sets, that career security has transitioned from organisation to marketable skillsets and the 'onwards and

upwards' career progress has moved to more a focus on flexibility with intrinsic satisfaction. If we considered these theories from the viewpoint of Senior Station Officers; the concept of shifting loyalty from the organisation to building authentic skill sets could apply as these individuals are able to broaden their skills through alternate professions on their days off. This would increase their marketability, provide an increase in income and possibly offer employment opportunities as they move into retirement. In this respect, and as proposed by Super, there may be a shift in the desire for an upwards movement for career progression towards gaining greater flexibility.

There is limited research on both portfolio careers from an individual's standpoint and flexible working for those over the age of fifty. However, the construct of flexibility which portfolio careers offer is a reoccurring theme which is worth pursuing. Platman (2004) highlights the attractiveness of portfolio careers for older workers who gain of a sense of autonomy and independence to choose when and for whom they work for and the type of activity they engage in. Works by Fenwick (2006) agree with these benefits but caution against academics who portray a portfolio career as being a rewarding experience and who do not deliberate on the negative impacts of such a career. Many individuals suffer from the lack of stability, the competitive nature and the need to prove credibility. Findings from Fenwick's (2004) research emphasized a desire to have both constancy and contingency in their work in which Senior Station Officers can choose if they so desire (as cited in Fenwick, 2006). Senior Station Officers have the permanency of their full-time role, they can accept overtime at Fire and Emergency and work outside of the organisation on their days off which are a greater number of days than the typical worker. As an Executive Officer who works a minimum of five days a week and is required to work both weekends and in the evenings to serve their volunteers, this level of flexibility is not possible. This may prove to be a barrier to progress to the Executive Officer role which will be verified to address research question one. With such

a distinct difference between the working hours of a Senior Station Officer and an Executive Officer, a review of their areas of responsibilities is warranted to consider job design barriers.

### **3.4 ROLE VARIATIONS BETWEEN FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY MANAGERS**

The previous section on Age and Stage Theory and portfolio careers, highlighted that Executive Officers have less flexibility due to their work patterns than Senior Station Officers. This gives me reason to contemplate what other variations there may be between their roles. In this context, Senior Station Officers can be considered firefighters and Executive Officers, emergency managers. The focus of a firefighter is very operational, reducing the risk of and responding to primary emergencies where management roles are administratively heavy and require greater skills in collaboration and networking.

At Fire and Emergency, a Senior Station Officer attends almost all incidents whilst on duty however an Executive Officer does not respond to emergencies with exception of large-scale events, at which they may choose to take command. This significant reduction in response activities may challenge Senior Station Officers as they have responded to incidents their entire firefighting career, and is often what attracted them to the firefighting job in the first place. Chang and Neal (2019) and Schaefer (2012) highlight the substantial variations between the role of a firefighter and the role of an emergency manager. Contemporary emergency management has expanded from primarily response to include reduction, readiness and recovery activities (Wilson & Oyola-Yemaiel, 2001). Chang and Neal (2019) suggest that firefighters operate in the sphere of response and reduction with emergency managers overseeing all four phases. They also propose that this change in the scope of an emergency manager has widened the gap between the duties of a firefighter and the duties within management roles.

Executive Officers are charged with significantly more direct reports than that of a Senior Station Officer as well as managing Volunteer Chief Fire Officers. A range of leadership styles is required across both roles from directing staff on the incident ground to managing personnel on the fire station, to leading volunteers effectively and engaging appropriately with the community. Schaefer (2012) highlights a tension between leadership styles, identifying the difference between the command and control approach that firefighters use often as opposed to a more egalitarian style required by emergency managers. Chang and Neal (2019) and Schaefer (2012) also recognise a perception that competency on the fire ground equates to appropriate leadership traits at the management level which is not likely to be the case due to the large discrepancy in skillsets. An Executive Officer can spend a substantial amount of time on people management due to the large number of direct reports and the need to manage political requirements for their communities. Although the results of the exploratory study demonstrated participants felt confident and competent to progress to an Executive Officer, they may not desire the role specifications.

Given these vast differences in roles, I seek to understand if Senior Station Officers consider the job design of the Executive Officer to be attractive and what factors may make the position description more appealing. Increased understanding in these areas will support addressing research questions one and three. Chang and Neal (2019) raise the question: “Would a shift from a fire officer position to one in emergency management be considered a promotion in the same field or would it actually represent a transition in career fields?” (p. 1). They answered this by saying the roles and responsibilities are that distinct, that they could be considered as different professions. If this rationale is applicable to the Fire and Emergency setting, Senior Station Officers may not find the Executive Officer role appealing but it is also possible that their commitment to their current position may be high. I will therefore review

literature on matching jobs and people and organisational commitment which may shed more light on the impediments to advancing to the Executive Officer role.

### **3.5 THE MATCHING THEORY**

The previous section on role variations put forward the prospect that Senior Station Officers may prefer to remain in their current role. The Matching Theory suggest there are two explanations as to why a job is likely to match an individual. The first is the rewards the role provides such as financial payments or work-life balance and the second is the employees value proposition such as skills or knowledge (Heckman & Sedlacek, 1985; Jovanovic, 1979; Logan, 1996, as cited in Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010). From an organisational standpoint, the Senior Station Officer group would offer a similar skill-set to the employer as the employee's technical skills and knowledge have been developed from a recruit with comparable training. From an individual and rewards perspective, the construct of flexibility has been discussed. With respect to financial compensations, the exploratory study revealed that remuneration was the greatest barrier to transition from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer. Additionally, Senior Station Officers stated that they could earn more than an Executive Officer if they chose to undertake a certain amount of overtime. Ng and Feldman (2014) focus on understanding the factors that create negative perceptions which could lead to job dissatisfaction, this study was guided by the Resource Theory (Hobfall, 1989 as cited in Ng & Feldman, 2014). The Resource Theory predicts individuals will evade circumstances which could lead to a loss of resource for instance income or employee benefits (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002 as cited in Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019). This may be another reason why individuals are not interested in pursuing the Executive Officer role as they are avoiding actual or perceived loss of salary and or benefits. Moreover, if the variations between the role of an Executive Officer and Senior Station Officer are that great, what additional motivations may Senior Station Officers have to stay in their



role? To address this question, the next section discusses the Organisational Commitment Theory.

### **3.6 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT THEORY**

While the Matching Theory offers explanations as to why a person would prefer one job over another, Organisational Commitment Theory (OC) provides insight in to why an individual may feel committed to a specific organisation, and indeed reflecting the interest of this research, to a specific work group within an organisation. The OC theory is described as an alignment to team or organisational objectives and values which generates a level of devotion and a longing to remain a part of it (Vigoda-Gadot, Baruch & Grimland, 2010). Academics have established multiple foci of OC, the one that seems most applicable to Fire and Emergency is that of Meyer and Allen (1997). They express three components, “affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment” (as cited in Gade, 2003 pp.163-164). Affective commitment describes the emotional connection to the establishment or the crew you work with. Continuance commitment refers to the need to stay in a company as tenure is long and it is difficult to find another job and normative commitment is a feeling of moral duty as the role is considered a ‘calling’ not a job. If Chang and Neal’s (2019) suggestion that a shift from a firefighter to an emergency manager is not a promotion but a change in career fields is relevant to this context, Senior Station Officers may feel a sense of responsibility to continue with their role. The camaraderie created amongst their peers, solid union representation which they may not want to face on the other side of the fence and the safety net during restructures may be factors that limit their desire to shift into any other role.

Researchers have proposed multiple influences on organisational commitment including job fulfilment, role characteristics, leader behaviour and the individual feeling their interests are being protected by the company (Bateman & Strasser,1984; Mowday, Steers &

Porter, 1982 as cited in Jans, 1989). Jans (1989) endorses research undertaken by Schein (1978) that considers alternate individual influences such as; individual standards and career and life stages, family interests and career prospects (as cited in Jans, 1989). Senior Station Officers are in an environment that creates camaraderie amongst their peers and direct reports as they work and live, often with the same individuals for a long period of time. Processes and values are customary to protect one another when entering dangerous situations. It is therefore likely individuals build a sense of loyalty to one another and their union who defends them in challenging circumstances also. Moreover, the current organisational restructure affects all Executive Officers. At the time of writing, their roles had been disestablished which is a common occurrence during restructures at Fire and Emergency in which firefighters to date have been sheltered from. It is common in unionised establishments, that a ‘them’ and ‘us’ culture exists, if this is strong in Fire and Emergency, Senior Station Officers may feel obligated and influenced by the union to remain in their cohort. Career security may also feel higher in the Senior Station Officer role as these roles have been protected from historical organisational restructures. The current research will seek to understand if organisational commitment for Senior Station Officers is high and what the contributing influences may be.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This Chapter considered potential barriers to career transitioning for Senior Station Officers, discussing factors from both the individual and organisational perspective. Career theories highlighted that the life and career stage of our Senior Station Officers may influence some, in their decisions to progress to an Executive Officer. The work pattern of a Senior Station Officer provides greater flexibility than the ‘typical’ five-day week experienced by many. This allows more time to be spent on family or leisure interests or alternate income earning activities, which may be desirable for some individuals. This level of flexibility is also

demonstrated in portfolio careers which Senior Station Officers may favour in addition to their organisational career provided by Fire and Emergency. The disparity between the role of an Executive Officer and the role of a Senior Station Officer was also reviewed and exposed the potential to significant variation which will be validated in this current research. If the differences between roles are that great, Senior Station Officers may have high commitment to their present role and not find the job design of an Executive Officer appealing. The camaraderie created amongst their peers and their union may provide further barricades to shift into an Executive Officer role. These elements will be tested in this current study to address the aims, objectives and research questions.

## **CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this Chapter, I discuss the purpose and methods employed for the exploratory study and the research approach and method selection for the current study, with justification as to why I selected these approaches. This Chapter provides an overview of the exploratory research and how it informed the current project, to apply qualitative research methods and descriptive cross-sectional research design. Participant selection criteria is provided, as is the process for selecting the population sample. I put forward my data collection procedures and reasons for electing an online qualitative questionnaire as a research instrument tool. The sample population is discussed, highlighting the key demographics of the respondents. Finally, I offer the analytical framework applied to examine the data, drawing on criteria extracted from literature to support thematic analysis. I begin by summarising the exploratory study.

### **4.2 EXPLORATORY STUDY**

As preparation for my Major Research Project, an exploratory study was conducted at Fire and Emergency to examine the facilitators and barriers experienced by Senior Station Officers in relation to their succession to Executive Officer roles. This exploratory study had the dual aims of gauging the level of interest within the organisation, with regards to my research topic and to assess what type of information would need to be gathered in an in-depth study examining succession planning from Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers. The exploratory study involved a survey (with a mixture of continuous, categorical and Likert scale with several open-ended questions) and interviews. All seven individuals invited to complete the survey did so and two of these participants agreed to an additional interview. Significantly, six of these participants expressed their personal interest in participating in the larger project

and supported the need to extend the research across the whole of Fire and Emergency. Importantly, the exploratory research also revealed many important insights regarding the type of information required for the larger project. These insights included remuneration barriers, job design constraints and concerns with the lack of flexibility an Executive Officer has. The respondents identified effective organisational training and development as an enabler to progression. As seen in the following section, these insights were drawn upon to design the current research and frame the methods used.

### **4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD**

As discussed in section 4.2, the exploratory study revealed insights into potential facilitators and barriers for Senior Station Officers to progress into an Executive Officer role. As the greatest perceptions from the exploratory research were generated through the qualitative data and because this research topic is subjective and in need of interpretation, a qualitative research method has been chosen. A qualitative enquiry allows the researcher to draw upon people's experiences and gather a holistic view in the participants own words, providing rich data to analyse (Skinner, Tagg & Holloway, 2000). This method is particularly useful to address research question three, to determine what more Fire and Emergency could do to entice their Senior Station Officers to Executive Officer roles. Potential improvements to organisational policy and practices can be suggested by the respondents, identifying issues that may not be revealed through quantitative techniques. As an employee of Fire and Emergency, I can interpret organisational terminology that arises through qualitative data, this ability reduces one the risk of interpreting ambiguous responses that is possible with a qualitative approach (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015).

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The insights from the exploratory study also informed my decision to base the current study on descriptive cross-sectional research design principles (Hair, et. al., 2015). Descriptive studies focus on variables not hypothesis which permitted me to explore some of the themes that evolved from the exploratory study. Furthermore, cross-sectional design delivers a “snapshot” (p. 35) of the rate of recurrence and characteristics of the population at the time of survey, providing Fire and Emergency with insights of the current circumstances (Aggarwal, & Ranganathan, 2019). Descriptive cross-sectional research design is an inexpensive and simple approach, appropriate for a Major Research Project that is time bound versus an alternate method such as a longitudinal study that involves multiple interventions with the population. One of the risks with this type of research design, is that the results do not represent the true population through selection or measurement bias, this risk has been reduced through inviting the entire population to participate (Aggarwal, & Ranganathan, 2019).

#### **4.5 PURPOSEFUL SAMPLE PARTICIPATION SELECTION CRITERIA**

The results from the exploratory study, demonstrated that Senior Station Officers were knowledgeable and well placed to contribute to the research topic and had the desire to do so. Senior Station Officers could express their perceptions in a coherent and communicative manner which gave me the confidence to include this group in the current study. Senior Station Officers could address Research Questions 1 and 3, but not Research Question 2, therefore Executive Officers were included in the sample selection to contribute to Research Questions 2 and 3. This sampling technique is an example of purposeful sampling which is an effective method when using qualitative data when there are limited resources (Patton, 2002 as cited in Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Selecting these participants

through purposive sampling, allows a more targeted approach and ensures the respondents have a study variable in common (Wrench, Thomas-Maddox, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2016).

Once the Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer sample was established, selection criteria were determined to ensure the most effective selection process. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Assistant Area Managers and Area Manager positions are the Executive Officer roles I have focused on for this research. At the time of writing, the organisation had 91 Executive Officers, of which 64 were Assistant Area Managers and Area Managers and 129 Senior Station Officers. The selection criteria were current Senior Station Officers and current Assistant Area Manager or Area Managers (referred to as Executive Officers). The amalgamation of urban and rural services as discussed in Chapter Two, brought about acting-up opportunities for both Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers. For this reason, I have targeted those currently in the role as they may have been acting up for two-three years and can provide a perspective on the research topic.

#### **4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The decision to utilise a survey as a research instrument was informed by the literature and the understandings gained from the exploratory study, as was the decision to use an online medium for the survey. For example, the exploratory research revealed significant interest from Senior Station Officers, Executive Officers and Fire and Emergency Management in the outcomes of the research. As such, an online survey enabled all Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers to be invited to participate in the research, and therefore provide rich data to shed light on the facilitators and barriers experienced by Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers in the succession process. Importantly, results from the exploratory study suggested that having a large sample size would strengthen the results obtained, an issue that is also supported by Wrench et al. (2016). Moreover, an online survey addressed the time and

financial constraints typically associated with other qualitative methods, such as face-to-face and one-on-one interviews. These time and financial constraints affected both the research process and Fire and Emergency. For example, from the researcher perspective, the project needed to be completed within a strict time frame, and from the organisations perspective, one-on-one data collection methods, such as interviews or focus group, would require paying overtime to participants. Hence, an online survey provided a relatively inexpensive and timely option that simultaneously had the potential to reach many participants, which in turn significantly reduces the chance of sampling bias (Wrench et al., 2016).

As the participant groups of Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers offer different perspectives, two questionnaires were developed to capture these varying views and to address the research questions. For instance, similar questions were posed to both groups focused on potential motivators, barriers and enablers for Senior Station Officers to advance to an Executive Officer position. Additionally, specific questions were designed for each participant group, for example, the Senior Station Officers were asked “What factors would make the Executive Officer role more appealing?” and the Executive Officers were questioned what they enjoyed most about their role and what could be improved. The questions developed for the survey, were based on the outcomes of the exploratory study and abstract constructs drawn from literature. Questions that provided insight in the exploratory study were used again in the current research to investigate with a larger audience. Once designed, the questionnaires were tested with four individuals within the population, to ensure the questions and language was suitable.

The survey encompassed three sections; introductory, core and demographic questions. The introductory questions were designed to ease the respondents into the survey which Alreck and Settle (1994) suggest should be short and simple to answer. These questions were applicable to all, such as “How long have you been with Fire and Emergency?” The core



questions were asked in two formats, firstly through a set of structured questions where participants could select multiple responses and secondly, open-ended questions. These options allowed me the opportunity to analyse a degree of comparable data through the reporting mechanism in Qualtrics and to undertake thematic analysis of the open-ended questions. Demographic details, such as age, ethnicity and gender were collected to determine key characteristics of respondents. Alreck and Settle (1994) recommend these types of questions are left until the end of the survey where trust should be at a maximum, increasing the chance of the individual completing them and doing so accurately. The full questionnaires are provided at Appendix C and D.

#### **4.7 DATA COLLECTION**

As noted above, the online survey enabled all Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers to be invited to participate in the research. This invitation process involved the organisations Senior Research Advisor sending out an e-mail Participant Information Sheet and survey link to both participant groups on my behalf. This procedure complied with the Ethics Approval obtained for this research and ensured the confidentiality of respondents. The survey was emailed to 91 Executive Officers and 129 Senior Station Officers on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019, with the Qualtrics survey software tool used to obtain the data. The survey was open for two weeks, a reminder email was sent on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and closed on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

This form of data collection is low cost, provides the means to engage many participants and gives my population the ability to complete at a convenient time and location. Coderre, Mathieu, & St-Laurent (2004) discuss drawbacks to web-based survey instruments; respondents find it difficult to express their feelings in writing, the researcher is unable to capture non-verbal cues and that the drop-out rate may be higher if the participant is not

confident of their anonymity. From my standpoint, the benefits of reaching the entire population and in an inexpensive and simple manner, outweigh these disadvantages. Furthermore, the outcomes of the exploratory research gave me confidence that there was a high-level of interest in the research topic, ensuring an adequate sample size and the data collected in the initial study was articulate and expressive.

In addition to the surveys, data was collected from the Human Resource department (refer Appendix E), requested on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and received on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The request included gender and age of career Senior Station Officers, Area Managers and Assistant Area Managers, average time for a Qualified Firefighter to progress to a Senior Station Officer and time in role for Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers. Data excluded names to ensure anonymity of the respondents and total population.

#### **4.8 SAMPLE**

The survey was sent to 91 Executive Officers and 129 Senior Station Officers, of which 27 individuals did not meet the participant criteria. The rank of Executive Officer encompasses my sample group of Area Managers and Assistant Area Managers but also other roles within the organisation. Of the 27 Executive Officers that did not meet the participant criteria, 12 responded. This error was identified within the survey responses and those that did not meet the criteria were removed. Of the 64 Executive Officers that met the participant criteria, 39 responded, providing a 61 per cent response rate. Of the 129 Senior Station Officers that met the participant criteria, 36 responded, giving a 28 per cent response rate.

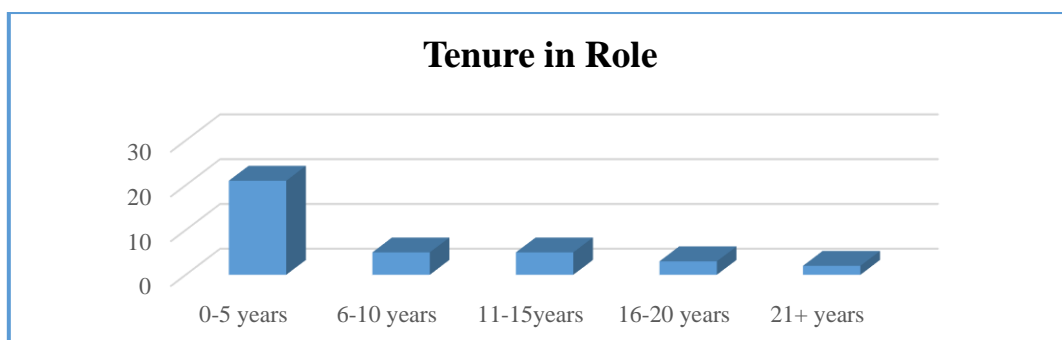
As shown in Table II, all Senior Station Officer respondents were male which is a fair representation of the total sample population as there is only 1 female Senior Station Officer. All Senior Station Officers provided their age which was an average of 51 years with an age range of 36-68 years, like the total population averaging 53 years of age with an age range of

35-70 years. Some Senior Station Officers associated with multiple ethnicities with 97 per cent (n=35) of respondents considering themselves New Zealand European, 11 per cent (n=4) stating they were Maori and 14 per cent (n=5) other ethnicities.

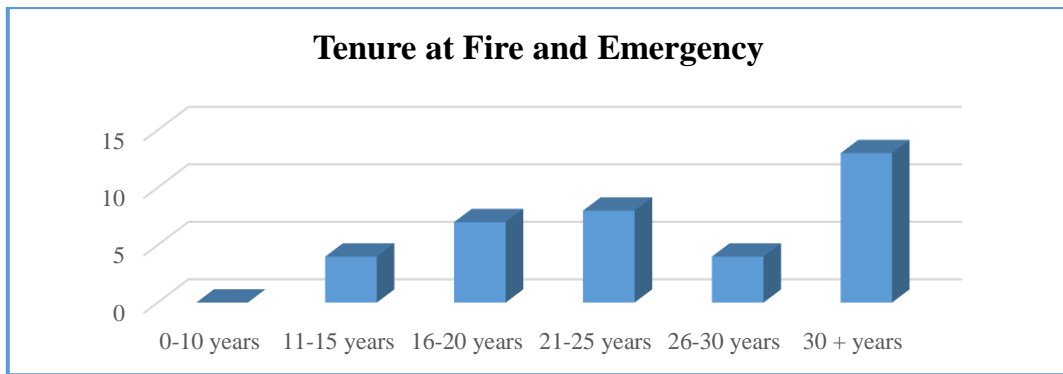
**Table II - Key demographics: Senior Station Officer respondents and total population**

Respondent demographics		Total population	
Male	36	Male	128
Female	0	Female	1
Average age (years)	51	Average age (years)	53
Age range (years)	36-68	Age range (years)	35-70
Average time in role (years)	7.5 years	Average time in role (years)	15
Time in organisation (years)	26	Time in organisation (years)	21
Ethnicity	NZ European 97% Maori 11% Other 14%	Ethnicity	Inconsistent data

Figure I. demonstrates time spent in role ranged from 1 year to 26 years with the average 7.5 years which is a stark contrast to the total Senior Station Officer population that averages 15 years in the role. The average time employed by the organisation is 26 years compared with 21 years for the total population (refer Figure II).

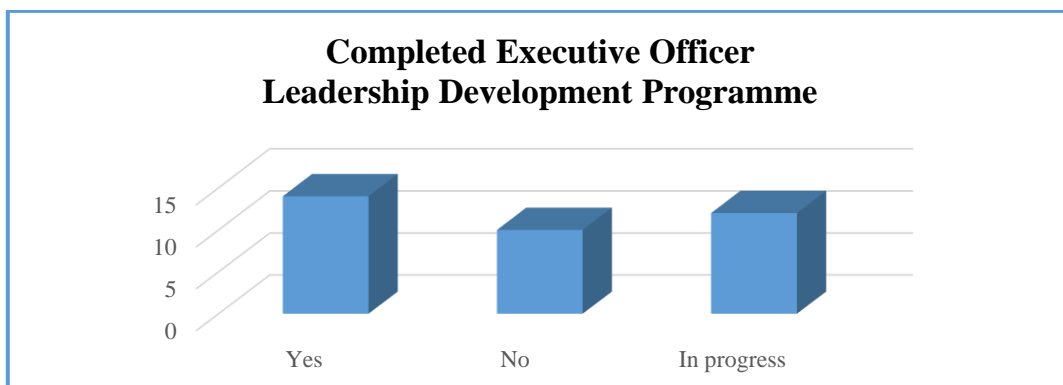


**Figure I. Tenure in Senior Station Officer Role**



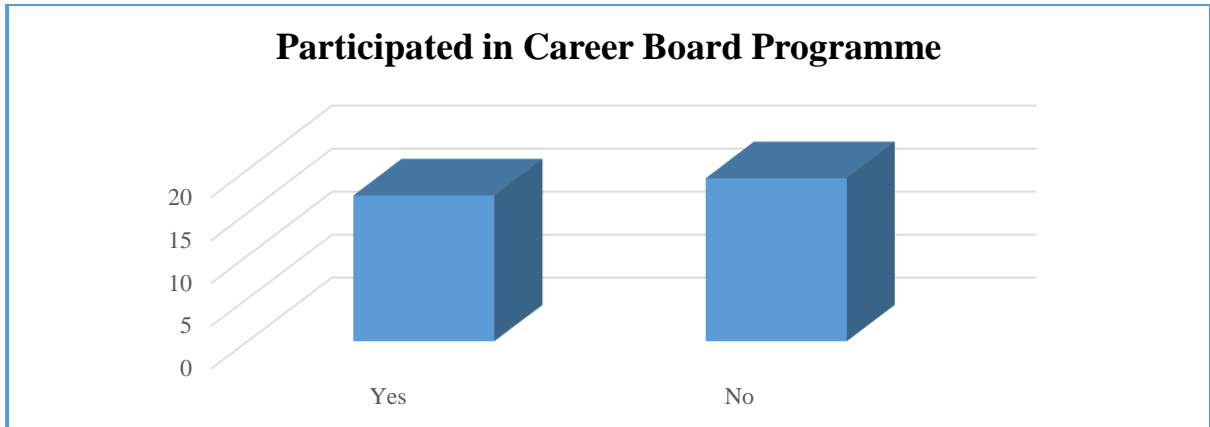
**Figure II. Tenure of Senior Station Officers at Fire and Emergency**

It is a pre-requisite for Senior Station Officers to complete the Executive Officer Leadership Development Programme to advance to an Executive Officer role (refer Table I). The results as shown in Figure III, highlight that 72 per cent of the respondents have completed or are in the process of completing this level of training.

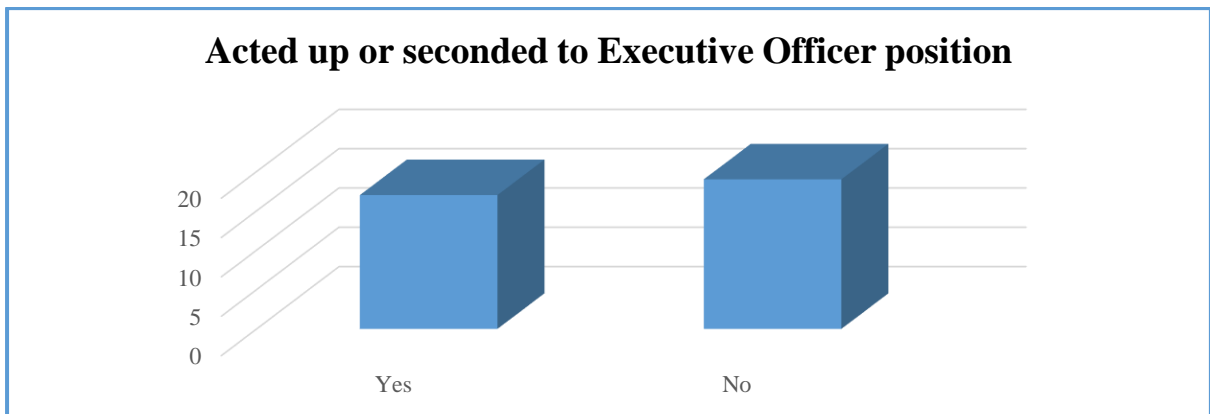


**Figure III. Executive Officer Leadership Development Programme completion**

There is an expectation that individuals that complete the Career Board programme, will advance into an Executive Officer role. Almost 50 per cent of survey respondents have participated in this programme (refer Figure IV). Furthermore, almost 50 per cent of respondents have had the opportunity to act up or be seconded into an Executive Officer role as seen in Figure V.



**Figure IV. Career Board participation of Senior Station Officers**



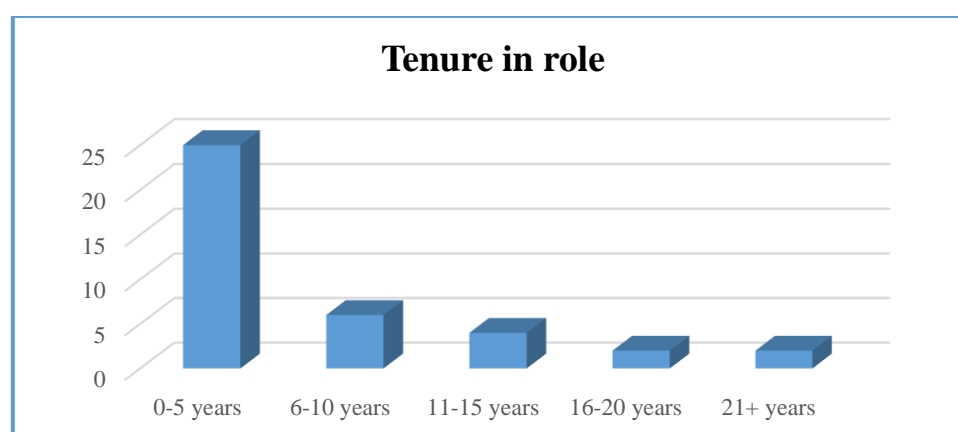
**Figure V. Senior Station Officer respondents whom have acted up or been seconded to an Executive Officer role**

As demonstrated in Table III, all Executive Officer respondents were male which is true of the total sample population. Of the 39 Executive Officer responses, 33 individuals provided their age which was an average of 54 years with an age range of 41-68 years. Age is a fair representation of the total population that averages 55 years of age with an age range of 40-68 years. Most respondents (79.5 per cent), considered themselves New Zealand European, with 5 per cent (n=2) stating they were Maori and 15.5 per cent (n=6) associated with other ethnicities.

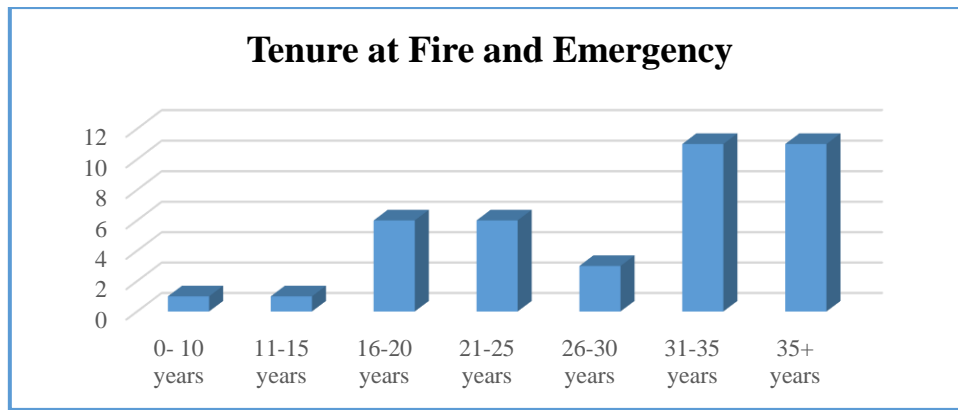
**Table III - Key demographics of Executive Officer respondents and total population**

Respondent demographics		Total population	
Male	39	Male	39
Female	0	Female	0
Average age (years)	54	Average age (years)	55
Age range (years)	41-68	Age range (years)	40-68
Average time in role (years)	6.7	Average time in role (years)	17
Time in organisation (years)	31	Time in organisation (years)	29
Ethnicity	NZ European 79.5% Maori 5.0% Other 15.5%	Ethnicity	Inconsistent data

Time spent in role ranged from 6 months to 24 years with the average 6.7 years (refer Figure VI) which is a significant variation from the total population at 17 years. The average time employed by the organisation is 31 years (refer Figure VII) compared with 29 years for the total Executive Officer population. Of the 39 responses, 6 individuals were seconded to the Executive Officer position.



**Figure VI. Tenure in Executive Officer Role**



**Figure VII. Tenure of Executive Officers at Fire and Emergency**

#### **4.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

When discussing the research instrument in Section 4.6, the core questions within the survey, are described as incorporating both structured questions and open-ended questions in which I chose to analyse in different ways. The Qualtrics tool provides automated analyses through its reporting function that I utilised for the structured questions. I drew on Lecompte’s framework to examine the open-ended responses, this framework and how I applied it is explained forthwith.

Lecompte’s analytical framework involves a 5-step process, the first step involves getting to know your data by reviewing it multiple times, I did so ensuring I had collected adequate information for each of the research questions. Lecompte (2000) recommends tidying and arranging your information which Qualtrics, the survey software automates, providing multiple reporting options. At this point, I analysed the Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer data independently. As is common with qualitative research processes, new theories develop during the gathering and analysing of data which provide new constructs for consideration (Wrench, et al., 2016). Section 4.6 highlighted that theoretical constructs were established through both reviewing literature and emerging themes from the data obtained in the exploratory study. These elementary ‘working ideas’ were used as labels to initiate the

coding of the data as I looked for evidence that these themes were relevant. Simultaneously, as new codes emerged, they were added to coding tables, which Lecompte describes as identifying units of analysis in Step 2. A data coding table was established for both the Senior Station Officer group and the Executive Officer group, an extract of this table with actual data from the Senior Station Officer responses is presented in Table IV.

**Table IV - Data Coding – Senior Station Officers**

Senior Station Officer Responses	Preliminary constructs			
	Flexibility	Job Design	Security	Challenge
I am still keen for a new challenge but the current role of executive officer is unappealing due to poor work / home life balance	●			●
Excessive workload means less time and opportunities to interact with operational staff and therefore perform a LEADERSHIP role rather than a predominately administrative management role		●		
Lack of certainty. Current treatment in terms of potentially making Execs reapply for their roles			●	
The challenge involved in stepping into a management role				●
There seems to be a lack of flexibility in the role. For the last 20 years I have able to choose to work the hours that best suit my family and I	●			

To guide the thematic analysis, criteria developed by Owen (1984) were applied, these criterions are; “recurrence, repetition and forcefulness” (p.275). Owen’s used ‘recurrence’ when identifying words and phrases that had the same meaning within individual scripts, however I reviewed the data across all scripts (given the large data set) and discovered multiple recurrences across the individual responses. An example of recurrence within my data is “*I do overtime when it suits and I get the freedom to do my USAR work*” and “*I have additional*



*opportunities (within FENZ) that allow me to continue to develop*". Both statements are related to the theme flexibility, having the opportunity to engage in activities outside of their typical work, however different words are used to describe this. Key words and phrases that were repeated with a frequency of greater than 5, were highlighted as repetitive words within the coding table. For instance, the word 'challenge' is used twice in Table IV, however this word has not been deemed as repetitive as it only stated three times in the Senior Station Officer scripts. While 'repetition' is a simple criterion to follow, forcefulness required deeper examination. Words in bold or capitalised were considered forceful as suggested by Owen's, but I also found words where respondents emphasised adjectives such as 'excessive', 'extreme' or 'very consuming' to be forceful in context and therefore included these in the extraction process. Table III reveals two illustrations of forceful language. Firstly, the word LEADERSHIP which is capitalised and secondly the word 'excessive' that emphasises the respondents point around workload.

Lecompte (2000) describes Step 3 as "creating stable sets of items" and suggests generating a taxonomy of items to support this procedure (p.148). Through applying Owen's criteria in Step 2, I recognised multiple items with similar relationships thus creating a catalogue. For example, "*contribute positively to our people*" is like "*make a meaningful change to the firefighters in my care*" appropriate under the theme 'making a positive difference'. Comments were analysed within the context of the sentence by comparing and mixing and matching the responses to enable similar items to be organised into groups. This process led to Step 4 of recognizing patterns by testing combinations of the taxonomies that fitted well together (Lecompte, 2000). Sub-themes identified in Step 2 were modified and amalgamated to create new constructs. For instance, at Step 2 Family, Work-life Balance and Flexibility were codes. The patterns within these codes demonstrated that time with family was important to achieve work-life balance, that could be attained by having a role with flexibility.

Therefore, the code Family was integrated into the sub-theme of Work-life Balance, within the theme of Flexibility. Scripts that demonstrated recurrence, were analysed and the number of comments within the theme were tallied to establish frequency. Once patterns, linkages and frequency were determined, prevalent constructs transpired to create theme structures to help explain the research findings. An illustration of this process is provided at Table V that Lecompte defines in Step 5, as assembling structures.

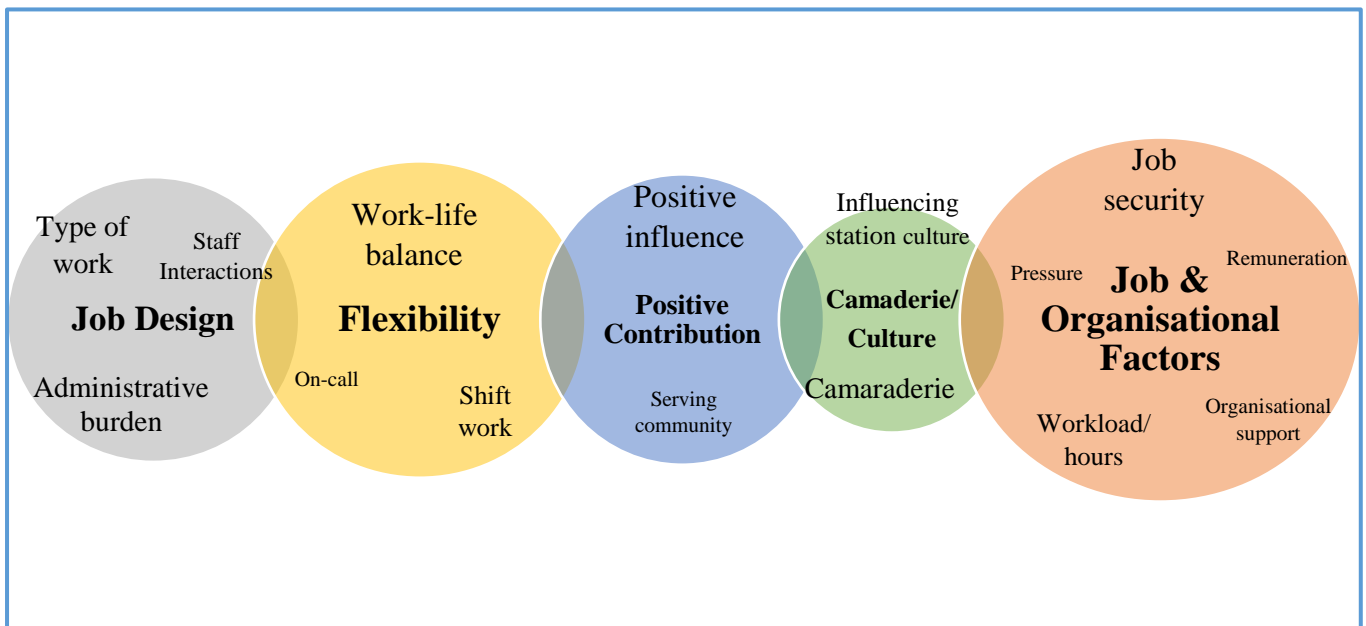
**Table V - Theme Structure: Flexibility**

Change in lifestyle	Work-life Balance
Achieve better life balance	
Unappealing due to poor work / home life balance	
Family and living location	
Having a young family and coming off shift work	
Being on call with limited pool times	Restricted freedom (caused by on-call)
Amount of on-call work - it's sometimes worse than being on shift – restricted freedom to move around	
Move some of the 'decision-making' requirements to reduce amount of on-call work	

Thematic analysis was iterative, testing combinations of taxonomies, codes and structures to ensure a robust analytical method. The results of this analysis are provided in a visual format (refer Discovery Maps at Figure VIII and Figure IX) to assist the reader with interpretation of importance. The theme balloons and sub-theme headings are sized according to the number of responses for each of the concepts, placing greater significance on the larger balloons and text.

The Senior Station Officer response to the open-ended questions, provided 154 sentences of content of which 140 sentences were relevant to the research topic. Applying Owen's criteria, uncovered recurring codes that generated six themes and fifteen sub-themes,

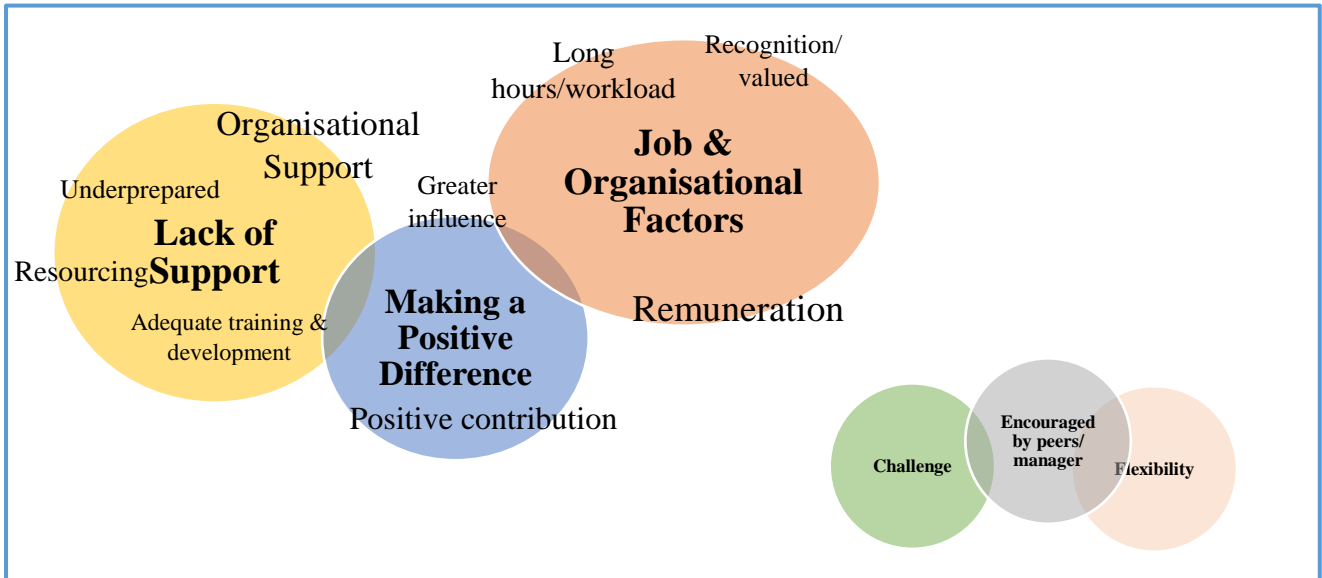
in which five of the six constructs are presented in Figure VIII In respect to the sixth theme, as expected, there was noteworthy reference to the organisational restructure and rank structure proposal raised in Section 2.2.4. I will consider this feedback separately as it out of scope of the research project, however may provide some insight into the respondents rational at the time of completing the questionnaire.



**Figure VIII. Discovery Map: Senior Station Officer themes and sub-themes**

The Executive Officer responses to the open-ended questions provided 153 sentences of commentary, in which all remarks were relevant to the research topic. Applying Owen’s criteria, uncovered recurring codes that generated the themes and sub-themes as demonstrated in the discovery map in Graph IX. Three key themes of *Job Design*, *Support* and *Making a Positive Difference* emerged from the Executive Officer responses incorporating nine sub-themes. In addition to these three main constructs, three concepts of significance arose, being; *Challenge*, *Encouragement by Peers and Manager* and *Flexibility*, 11 comments were received

in each and will be deliberated within the findings chapters. *Job and Organisational Factors* and *Support* received the greatest commentary with 46 and 43 remarks respectively.



**Figure IX. Discovery Map: Executive Officer themes and sub-themes**

#### 4.10 CONCLUSION

This research sought to understand the facilitators and barriers experienced by Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers in relation to succession to the Executive Officer role. A qualitative descriptive cross-sectional study design was deemed appropriate, as the research topic is subjective, in need of interpretation and the research was required to be undertaken in a time and cost-effective manner. An online survey tool provided time and cost benefits and the ability to capture both comparable data through structured questions and additional perspectives through open-ended questions. In total, 36 Senior Station Officers and 39 Executive Officer respondent’s data was analysed through the Qualtrics tool and thematic analysis. The results of this examination are presented forthwith in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER 5 - RESEARCH FINDINGS: Senior Station Officers**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

As outlined in Chapter Four, qualitative data to address my research questions was gathered through an online survey and sent to current Senior Station Officers, Assistant Area Managers and Area Managers (Executive Officers) at Fire and Emergency. The findings in this Chapter deliver the results and analysis of 36 Senior Station Officer survey responses. I provide these results in two formats, firstly the outcomes of the structured questions are presented in graphical form and secondly the outputs of the open-ended questions are discussed in a narrative context. The Chapter is organised under these two headings and I begin by summarising the responses to the structured questions.

### **5.2 STRUCTURED QUESTIONS**

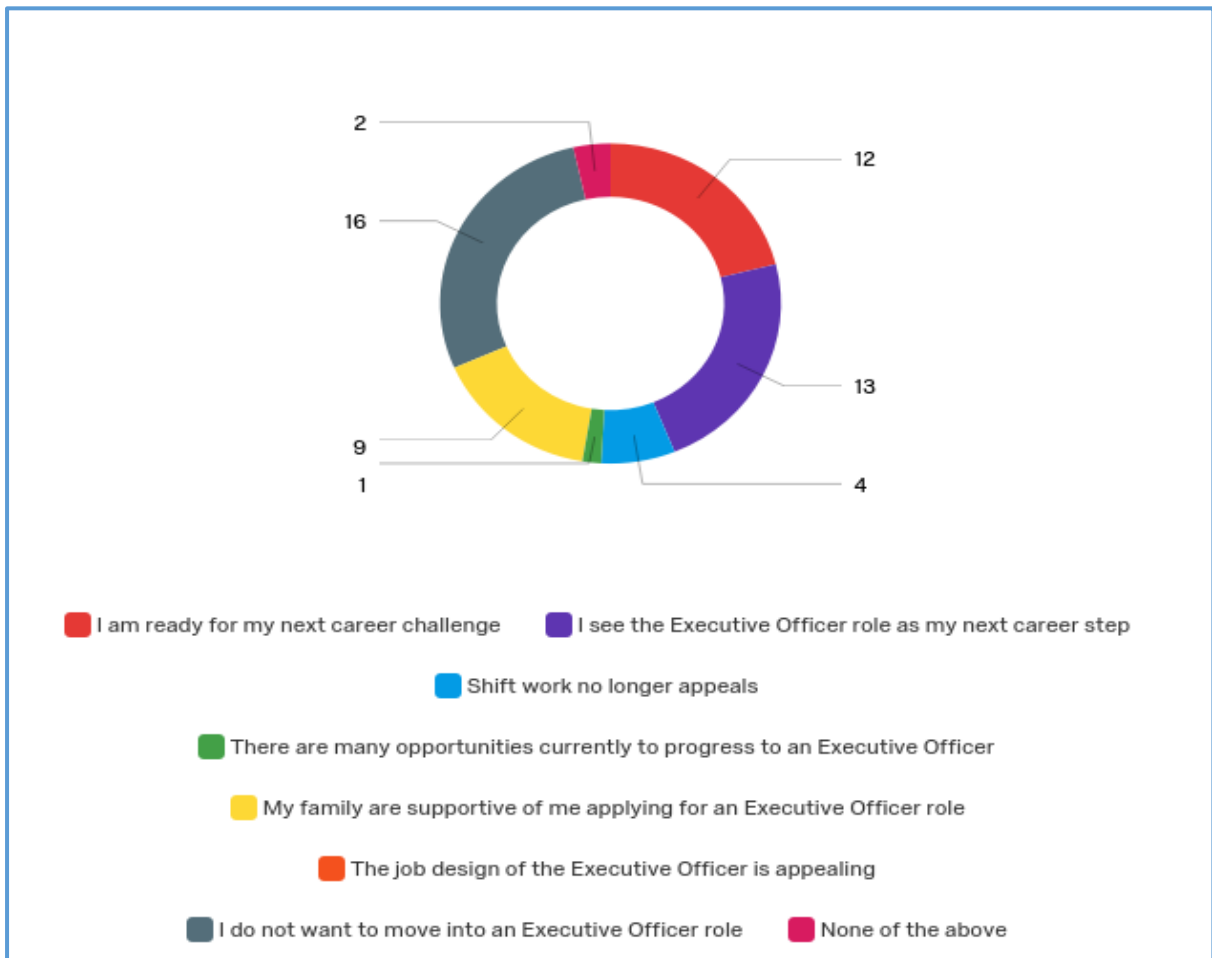
#### **5.2.1 Introduction**

For each of the structured questions, participants were given multiple options to select and could choose more than one answer. These inquiries were explicitly aimed at addressing the research questions and to provide comparable data to analyse. The results are presented forthwith.

#### **5.2.2 Motivators**

Senior Station Officers were asked what factors may motivate them to progress to an Executive Officer role, the results are presented in Figure X. A third of respondents were ready for their next career challenge, with 36 per cent (n=13) considering the Executive Officer role their next progression step. A quarter (n=9) of respondents had the support of their family to

advance and no one considered the job design a motivator to progress. Of significance, 44 per cent (n=16) of respondents did not want to become an Executive Officer.

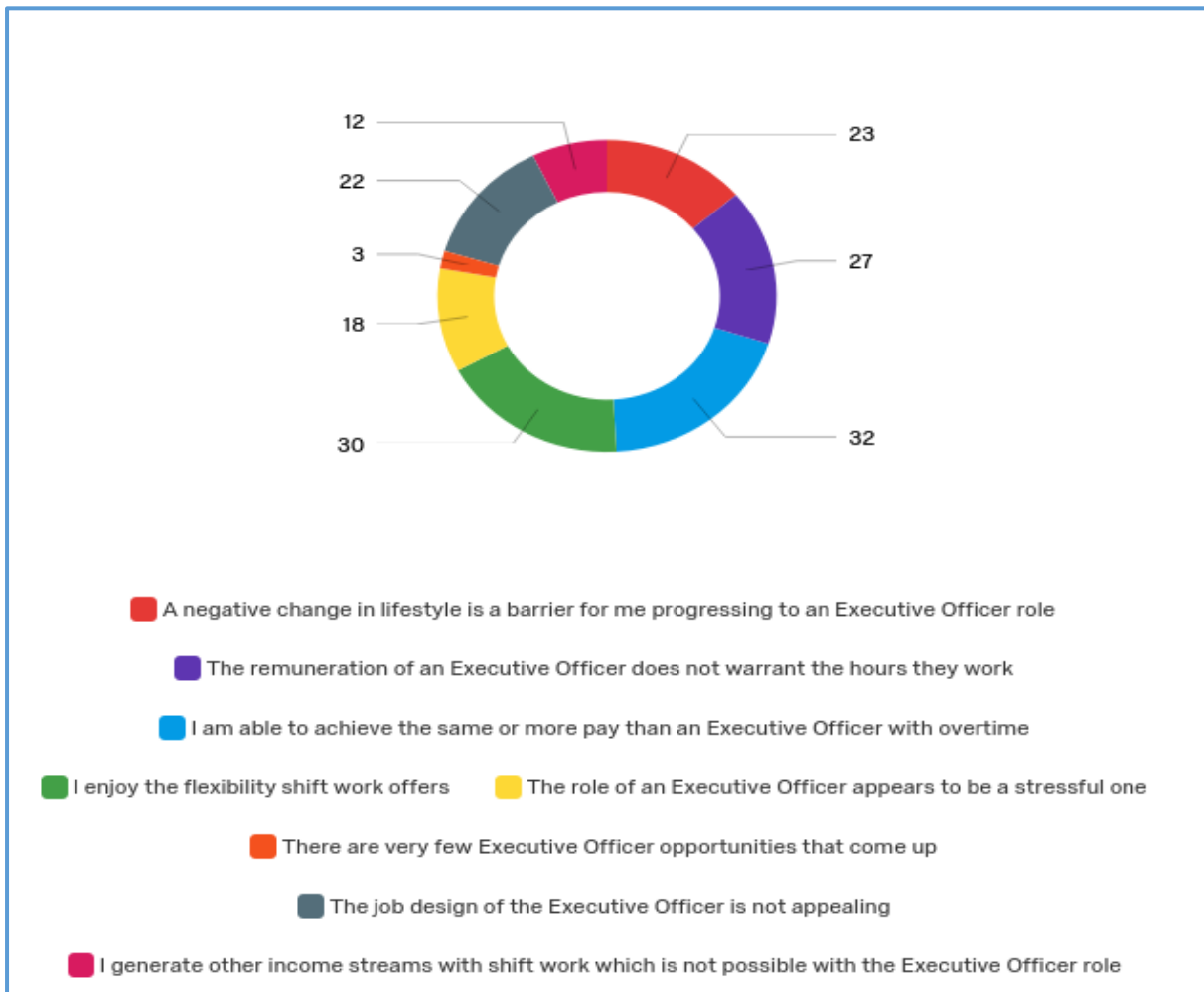


**Figure X. Motivators for Senior Station Officers to progress to an Executive Officer role**

### 5.2.3 Barriers

When questioned on the barriers to progressing to an Executive Officer, 89 per cent (n=32) of respondents identified remuneration, stating they could achieve the same or more pay than an Executive Officer and 75 per cent (n=27) agreed that the pay of an Executive Officer does not warrant the hours they work. Not surprisingly, 83 per cent (n=30) enjoy the flexibility shift work offers a Senior Station Officer and 64 per cent (n=27) consider a change in lifestyle a barrier to advancing. Once again, the job design of an Executive Officer is not appealing with 61 per cent (n=22) affirming this as a barrier. 12 respondents generate alternate

income streams as a Senior Station Officer, which is not possible to achieve as an Executive Officer (refer Figure XI).

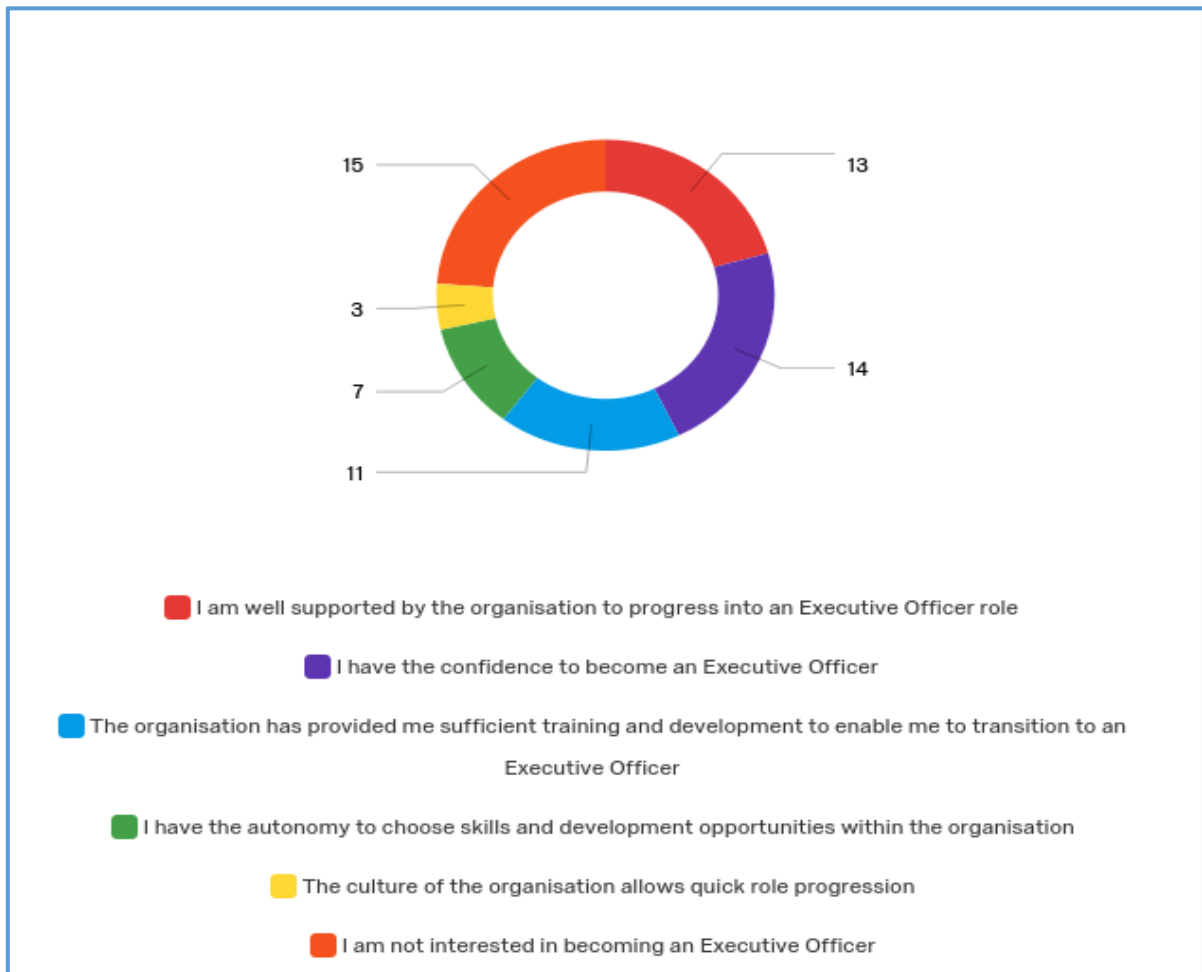


**Figure XI. Barriers for Senior Station Officers to progress to an Executive Officer role**

### 5.2.4 Enablers

When Senior Station Officers were asked what would enable them to become Executive Officers (refer Figure XII), 42 per cent (n=15) of respondents specified that they are not interested in becoming an Executive Officer, despite 72 per cent completing or progressing the Executive Officer Leadership Development programme. This result is similar as seen in Figure X where 16 individuals stated they did not want to move into the Executive Officer role. Moreover, 39 per cent (n=14) are confident to become an Executive Officer, 36 per cent (n=13)

feel well supported by the organisation to do so and 31 per cent (n=11) believe the organisation has provided sufficient training and development to enable this progression.



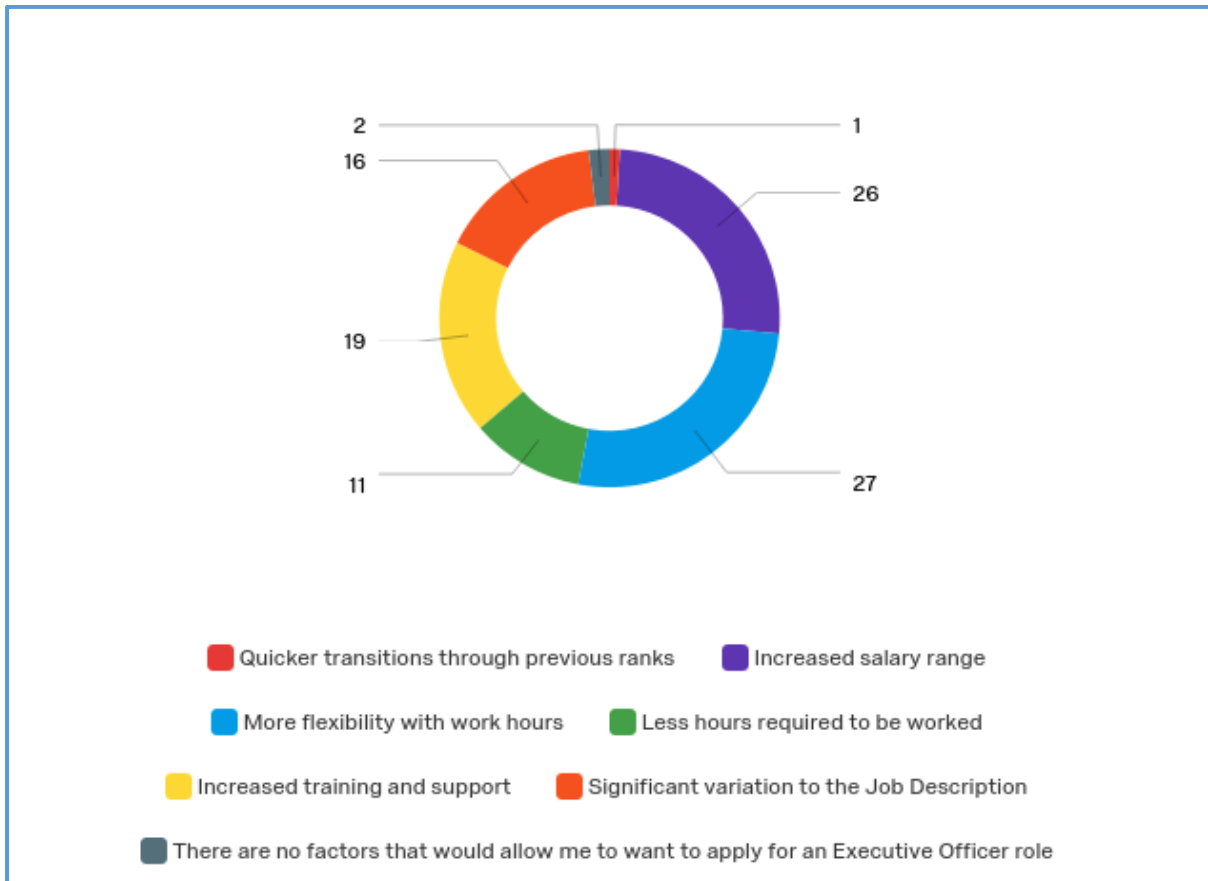
**Figure XII. Potential enablers for Senior Station Officers to progress to an Executive Officer role**

### 5.2.5 Factors to make the role more appealing

When individuals were asked what would make the Executive Officer role more appealing (refer Figure XIII), 72 per cent (n=26) stated an increased salary range, however this was second to greater flexibility with work hours. 44 per cent (n=16) would like to see a significant variation to the job description and 31 per cent (n=11) considered a reduction in the hours worked to be important. 53 per cent (n=19) of respondents identified a need for increased training and support in the Executive Officer role. Interestingly, only 2 individuals stated that



there were no factors that would make them to want to apply for the Executive Officer role even with a high percentage of respondents not interested in progressing (refer Figure X and XII).



**Figure XIII. Factors that would make the Executive Officer role more appealing**

### 5.2.6 Career satisfaction

Senior Station Officers were questioned on what factors enable career satisfaction in their current role. The respondents were provided a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, neutral, somewhat disagreed, strongly disagreed) and were asked where they placed themselves for each statement. As demonstrated in Table VI, the key findings are that almost all Senior Station Officers surveyed, believe their role provided them good work-life balance, with 75 per cent (n=27) agreeing that their remuneration and employee benefits are superior to that of Executive Officers. 56 per cent (n=20) of respondents prefer to work with

communities than in an office-based role and 17 per cent (n=6) suggest they are at an age where career progression no longer excites them.

**Table VI - Factors leading to career satisfaction within the Senior Station Officer role**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Senior Station Officer role provides me good work-life balance	22	13	1	0	0
I have never wanted to be in middle management	1	8	15	10	2
The remuneration and employee benefits are superior in the Senior Station Officer role versus the Executive Officer	11	16	6	3	0
I am at an age where career progression no longer excites me	1	5	4	17	9
I prefer to work with communities than an office-based role	6	14	13	2	1
There are no factors that would enable me to apply for an Executive Officer role	1	4	7	16	8

### **5.3 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

As discussed in Section 4.9, six themes and fifteen sub-themes arose from the analysis of the open-ended questions within the Senior Station Officer data. These constructs will be discussed in this section under the headings of each key theme. I will also discuss the desire for Senior Station Officers to progress to an Executive Officer role as this was a significant finding within the structured questions.

### 5.3.2 Job and Organisational Factors

With 22 per cent (n=31) of total comments associated with *Job and Organisational factors*, this theme is the most prominent and includes the sub-themes; *Job Security, Workload/hours, Organisational Support, Remuneration and Pressure*. The words ‘lack of security’ and ‘uncertainty’ were repeated on 12 occasions, many with forceful commentary such as;

*Job security is a big thing for me, and I have seen middle management come under attack x3 times in my 24 years’ service - there seems to be a pattern.*

Furthermore, this concept included concerns of high workload for Executive Officers, with one respondent stating;

*Excessive workload means less time and opportunities to interact with operational staff and therefore perform a LEADERSHIP role.*

Similar comments were received around a lack of organisational support for the Executive Officer role. Four remarks were made about pay, two examples of these are;

*I just wanted to emphasise the hours they work and the pay they get. They work 60+ a week for the salary. I would earn \$40k more if I worked the same amount of hours and The actual \$\$ is also a factor. I probably earn about the same as a AAM if I do overtime.*

There were three observations that the Executive Officer role was a stressful one, for example;

*The exec role, from the outside, looks like a hiding to nothing. It appears that there is intense pressure to meet short term targets.*

### 5.3.3 Flexibility

Within the construct of *Flexibility*, *Work-life Balance* dominated with 11 comments such as;

*I am still keen for a new challenge but the current role of executive officer is unappealing due to poor work / home life balance*

*There seems to be a lack of flexibility in the role. For the last 20 years I have been able to choose to work the hours that best suit my family and I.*

Table VI. highlights that almost all Senior Station Officers identify work-life balance as a reason for career satisfaction in their present role. Executive Officers on-call arrangements and a five to seven day working week versus shift work, emerged as barriers to achieving a desired level of flexibility. Individuals described that being on call restricted Executive Officers ability to have appropriate levels of time off to engage in activities with family and friends, which impacted their work-life balance. Eight individuals specified the benefits of shift work that included the flexibility to earn alternate income or take overtime, spend more time with family and engage in further opportunities at Fire and Emergency.

### 5.3.4 Job Design

It was clear Senior Station Officers found the responsibilities and *Type of Work* Executive Officers undertook undesirable with statements such as;

*I see no point in sitting in countless pointless protracted meetings*

*Often the decisions are already made, and it is a 'rubber-stamping' exercise in responsibility.*

*Administrative Burden* was raised as a concern with 10 individuals making remarks such as;

*The role needs to be more appealing to those of us who do not want to be stuck behind a computer terminal.*

*Mainly I see the role being caught up in a vast amount of administrative work.*

Additionally, there were multiple responses stating the design of the role does not allow effective engagement with their key people, for instance;

*The role description does not allow me to create the environment to get the best out of our personnel.*

### **5.3.5 Camaraderie/Culture and Making a Positive Difference**

*Camaraderie/Culture and Making a Positive Difference* to the lives of those around them and their communities presented as reasons for Senior Station Officers to remain in their role. The following statements suggest it is not possible to achieve the same outcomes as an Executive Officer;

*I can maintain face to face time with staff to influence positive results for individuals.*

*I am still able to be connected to the personnel and the work we do that is actually judged by the people we serve*

A strong sense of camaraderie and station culture was apparent with forceful remarks such as;

*The people I currently work with genuinely care for each other. I felt work at Area HQ there was more individually driven agendas. The Area HQ culture felt fake and corporatised with a pretence*

*The crew that I am on is a good crew and I know they will have my back if things go pear shaped as I would have theirs in the same situation.*

### **5.3.6 Desire to progress to an Executive Officer role**

Of 154 comments, only 12 remarks were positively geared towards the Executive Officer role despite asking the respondents what would motivate and enable them to make this transition. Of the 12 encouraging comments, 3 were motivated to become an Executive Officer for the challenge and variety of stepping into management, 2 for reasons of personal growth and 3 to make a positive contribution to individuals. For two respondents, a shift to an Executive Officer role, would only occur if it suited their family needs and two individuals would make this progression if they no longer could maintain the physical competencies required to be a Senior Station Officer.

### **5.3.7 Organisational and rank structure proposal**

Many Senior Station Officers used the survey as an opportunity to comment on the organisation and rank structure proposal (refer Section 2.2.4), receiving 22 pieces of feedback such as;

*Depends also on future management positions from FENZ with civilians being appointed or non-qualified can determine if I wish to proceed to an executive role.*

Apprehensions were raised in respect to the recruitment and selection processes for appointment to the proposed new positions and working for and alongside ‘unqualified personnel’. These perceptions are frequent in internal labour markets, where individuals have been exposed to a framework for a significant period, trust the skills and experience of those people around them and therefore can be challenged by newcomers. Despite linkages to the *Camaraderie/Culture* concept, the comments received in respect to this theme are out of scope for the current study, nevertheless the content within the organisations consultation document, has clearly impacted the enthusiasm of some Senior Station Officers to progress to an Executive Officer role.

### **5.3.8 Conclusion**

In summary, the feedback received from the Senior Station Officer group is driven towards a desire to remain in their current role, or to consider an Executive Officer position only if substantial changes are made. A high percentage of fears were centred around job and organisational factors and the lack of flexibility it provides, in comparison to their current position. The job design of an Executive Officer is not appealing due to the type of work, the heavy administrative burden and the perceived inability to interact adequately with personnel. With two-thirds of respondents not prepared for their next career challenge and only 25 per cent stating they have the support of their family to advance to the Executive Officer role, Fire and Emergency is likely to have a challenge advancing their Senior Station Officers to Executive Officer positions. With the views of Senior Station Officer respondents analysed, in Chapter Six, I seek to understand what inspired and empowered those Executive Officers to make the transition.

## CHAPTER 6 – RESEARCH FINDINGS: Executive Officers

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings in this Chapter deliver the results and analysis of 39 Executive Officer survey responses. I provide these results in two formats, firstly the outcomes of the structured questions are presented in graphical form and secondly the outputs of the open-ended questions are discussed in a narrative context. I combine these results and deliberate them under key elements of the research questions.

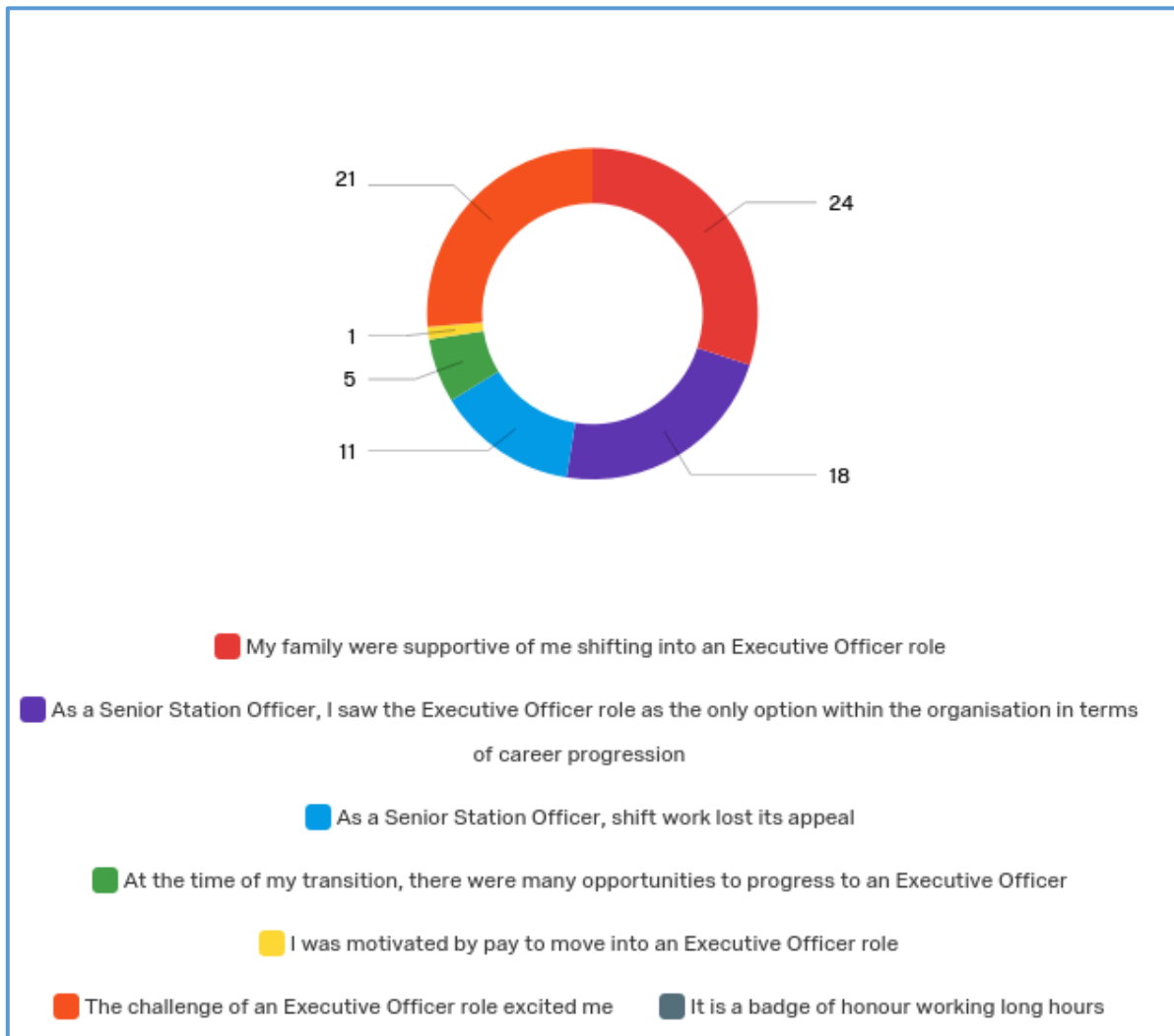
As presented in Section 4.9, three main themes of *Job and Organisational Factors*, *Lack of Support* and *Making a Positive Difference* emerged from the open-ended questions within the Executive Officer data. These three themes incorporated nine sub-themes and in addition three concepts of significance arose; *Challenge*, *Encouragement by Peers and Manager* and *Flexibility*. These constructs will be considered together with the responses to the structured questions to discuss the potential facilitators, barriers and enablers for Senior Station Officers to transition to an Executive Officer.

### 6.2 MOTIVATORS TO PROGRESS TO AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Executive Officers were questioned on their motivators to transition into their current role. Figure XIV reveals that many respondents (62 per cent) had the support of their family to pursue an Executive Officer role, with 46 per cent (n=18) considering the role as the only option in respect to career progression. For 28 per cent (n=11) of individuals, shift work had lost its appeal and was a motivator to advance and more than half of the respondents were excited by the challenge the new role presented. Despite the exploratory study revealing Executive



Officers may consider long hours a badge of honour, no one agreed with this statement. Only one individual considered pay a motivator.



**Figure XIV. Motivators to progress to an Executive Officer**

When Executive Officers were asked to provide further reasoning as to what inspired them to advance to the role or what they enjoyed most about their present position, the theme *Making a Positive Difference* dominated the response. These comments were focused on a *Positive Contribution* to their people and their communities (15 comments) and having *Greater Influence* (10 comments). A few commentaries depicting this theme, are;

*Personal growth and ability to influence others and achieve greater objectives through others.*

*I transitioned into the role based on my drive to help people and our communities. I loved being on the trucks and loved the working environment and culture. On the trucks I felt I could influence at a real grass roots level, however I wanted to reach further and give more.*

*Changing and impacting positively on people's lives. Being able to make a difference and help people.*

For eleven individuals, the perceived *Challenge* of an Executive Officer position was a motivator to transition, and for some, the challenge was the most enjoyable aspect of the job. Moreover, the word 'secondment' was repeated on 14 occasions with many references complimenting the opportunity and describing a secondment as an instigator to progression, for instance;

*Was fairly happy as SSO but the opportunity for a secondment was presented so I took it and enjoyed the role.*

Of further interest, the notion of *Flexibility* was highlighted in 11 comments with three individuals motivated by the lifestyle the Executive Officer role provides.

### **6.3 BARRIERS TO PROGRESS TO AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Executive Officers were asked to describe any barriers they faced when transitioning to an Executive Officer. *Remuneration* was the most prominent code to arise from the *Job and Organisational Factors* concept, with 19 remarks implying pay is not adequate and often related to the number of hours worked. The following statements clearly highlight compensation as a barrier;

*I was aware of the sacrifice when I took on this role. Namely financial with a substantial reduction in remuneration due to the loss of the overtime available to SSO.*

*The pay drop and the long hours that are necessary to do the role properly. The role is all consuming 24x7 it never stops.*

Long hours/workload reoccurred 15 times in the responses, often associated with pay, for example, “*Lack of remuneration for what is a job with extremely long hours*”. Forceful words such as “*substantial*”, “*sacrifice*” and “*extremely*” were received within the Remuneration and Long hours/workload codes.

The construct of *Lack of Support* includes four sub-themes, two of which relate to readiness for the role and two that reference the level of support received whilst in position. Some individuals felt *Underprepared* to step into their Executive Officer role with 9 comments such as;

*I was woefully underprepared for the report writing and business case prep I needed to do. Understanding contractual arrangements for the NZPFU was also a barrier*

*The EO programme doesn't prepare you for the role and I found I relied on other secondees in a similar role that helped.*

Respondents emphasised that there were good role models around them, however these role models did not have the time to provide adequate support and therefore there was a lot of self-on-the-job learning. These observations extended into a lack of training and development when transitioning, with commentary such as;

*The organisation provided generic training and education, however very little for the role itself, all self-learning on the job once appointed. There does not seem to be any induction, upskilling prior to appointment, similar to other officer roles in the organisation.*

Conversely, five individuals claimed the level of training and development was an enabler to their progression with an Executive Officer stating;

*The Otago programme was hugely beneficial for my role as an Exec officer and the 1-day assessment centre was extremely challenging, but incredibly insightful.*

Respondents raised that once in the role of an Executive Officer, resourcing was not satisfactory (10 comments) nor was the support received from the organisation (19 comments). These two codes were often entwined, for example “*More support. We are stretched far too thin*”. Several comments requested more support however did not articulate what type of support was needed such as;

*FENZ could provide support from NHQ. Support is not provided in a timely or effective way. Major disconnects affect outcomes.*

Remarks that provided explicit support requirements, noted the need for greater administrative and human resource support with a desire to remove barriers to spend more time with their people.

Three respondents determined a lack of flexibility as a barrier to progression and five stated that improvements to the Executive Officer role should be made to gain a work-life balance, for example;

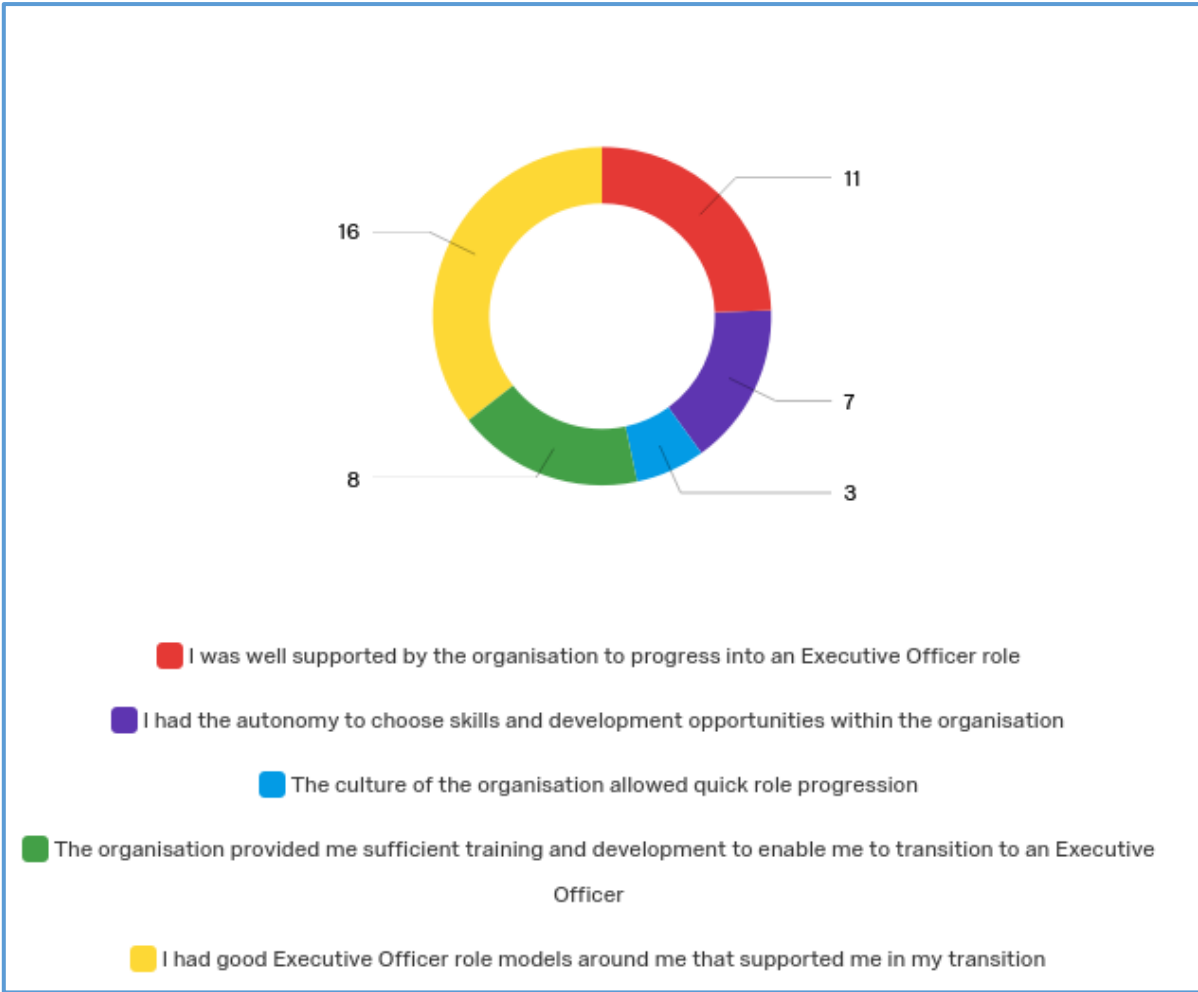
*We are stretched far too thin and this takes an enormous toll on work life balance, family and personal health.*

Included within the *Job and Organisational Factors* theme, is the code *Recognition/valued*, the context frequently related directly to their role not being valued or recognised by the organisation, for the type and scale of work that they undertake. The ensuing statement highlights this theme and summarises several barriers identified within the data;

*I Don't believe the organisation understands or appreciates the sacrifices staff make when they move to Exec role. Lips service is given to work life balance but the workload is such that to do a reasonable job in the role a lot more hours must be expended. It is not unusual to work 60-70 hour weeks. The demands of staff, both paid and volunteer if they are to be met means that in some instances excessive hours have to be worked with no reward other than personal satisfaction of doing the best job possible.*

#### **6.4 ENABLERS TO PROGRESS TO AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Executive Officers were probed on what factors enabled them to make the transition, this question was not well responded to in either the structured or open-ended questions. The strongest factor was that 41 per cent (n=16) of respondents stated they had good Executive Officer role models around them, that enabled them to make the transition. Less than a third specified that they were well supported by the organisation to progress and less than a third stated that they were provided with an adequate level of training and development to do so. These results are shown in Figure XV.



**Figure XV. Factors that enabled the transition to an Executive Officer role**

In addition to the above enablers, 11 comments arose regarding the encouragement individuals received from their peers or manager to seek an Executive Officer role. For example, the following remarks supported their decision to progress;

*I was also encouraged by my Area manager to apply as he believed in my ability and the range of skills and experience that I brought to the role” and “I was persuaded to help the organisation out.*

## **6.5 CAREER SATISFACTION**

Executive Officers were asked what factors enable career satisfaction in their current role. The respondents were provided a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, neutral, somewhat disagreed, strongly disagreed) and were asked where they placed themselves for each statement. The results offered in Table VII demonstrate that work-life balance continues to be a prominent theme in the Executive Officer responses. The majority of Executive Officer's (82 per cent) disagreed that work-life balance was healthier than that of a Senior Station Officer, with most of those responses strongly disagreeing with this. Equally, there is the same number of individuals who do not believe there is an acceptable pay gap between a Senior Station Officer and an Executive Officer. The majority have found the role to be more stressful than they imagined, however more than 50 per cent believe they have made the right decision to move to an Executive Officer role with 10 individual's neutral on this statement. Consistent with the response in Figure XIV, many respondents have the support of their family to be an Executive Officer. Interestingly, 54 per cent (n=21) enjoy the flexibility of no longer being on shift work and of concern, only 5 individuals agreed that they are well supported by the organisation in the role.

**Table VII - Factors leading to career satisfaction within the Executive Officer role**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My work life balance is better as an Executive Officer than it was as a Senior Station Officer	0	5	2	7	25
There is an acceptable gap between my current remuneration and that of a Senior Station Officer	0	5	2	12	20
I enjoy the flexibility of no longer being in shift work	5	16	10	7	1
The role of an Executive Officer is more stressful than I imagined coming into the role	15	16	6	1	1
I made the right decision to transition into an Executive Officer role	13	7	10	7	2
My family are supportive of me in the Executive Officer role	11	19	5	4	0
I am well supported by the organisation in the Executive Officer role	1	4	10	15	9

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

Largely, the Executive Officer responses were constructive and positive with 2 respondents stating there were no barriers to progressing to an Executive Officer role. Surprisingly, despite Executive Officers directly impacted by the impending restructure and proposed changes to rank (refer Section 2.2.4), commentary was minimal with 3 remarks, compared to 22 comments from Senior Station Officers. The main reason for these Executive Officers to progress into their position, was the excitement and challenge the role offered. Many respondents felt they had made the right decision to advance into the role and more than half enjoyed the flexibility they experienced by no longer being on shift. A perceived drop in pay was the greatest barrier when making the decision and there were numerous concerns



raised about the lack of organisational support provided, both at the time of transition and during their time as an Executive Officer. In Chapter Seven, I will draw upon my research questions to discuss the findings from both Chapter Five and Chapter Six, which will be deliberated in relation to literature review insights.

## **CHAPTER 7 - DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I discuss my findings from Chapter Five and Chapter Six in relation to addressing the research questions, drawing upon learnings from the literature review. Common themes arose from both the Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer responses, which is not surprising given almost 50 per cent of Senior Station Officers have experienced being an Executive Officer, through secondment or by way of acting up. The representation of the survey sample to the total population for both participant groups, is a good reflection in respect to age, gender and tenure of service, however interestingly, time spent in role does not reflect the total population. Whilst I cannot determine why those that responded had not been in their role for a long period, this is helpful in terms of the relevancy of feedback. For example, Executive Officers were asked to reflect on their experiences when making the transition to their current role, individuals are more likely to recall the specifics the less time they have been in position. The structure of this chapter is led by the research questions.

### **7.2 RQ1 – WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATORS, BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO PROGRESS FROM A SENIOR STATION OFFICER TO AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER?**

#### **7.2.1 Introduction**

As concluded in Chapter Five, the responses from the Senior Station Officers reflect a strong desire to remain in their present role, therefore, the data does not present many motivators and enablers to progress to an Executive Officer. The few examples of motivators that presented, are; challenge, variety and making a positive difference to a wider network. Consequently, this section will emphasise the barriers to transition and discusses potential

reasons for these hurdles, as identified within the literature deliberations. This section will be organised under the Barriers to Career Transitioning theories discussed in Chapter Three, I begin with the Age and Stage Theory.

### **7.2.2 Age and Stage Theory**

Super's Age and Stage Theory claims individuals in the maintenance phase, generally between 45-64 years of age, focus on lifestyle such as flexibility, family and leisure interests (Super, 1957, as cited in Lyons et al., 2012). Most respondents (86 per cent) are in this age range and the theme of flexibility came through as a key barrier. Only a quarter of Senior Station Officers had the support of their family to progress into the role which was influenced by the lack of flexibility and therefore work-life balance the respondents desire. With the average recruitment age of firefighters at 29 years and the average time to progress to a Senior Station Officer 14 years, Fire and Emergency will always have a significant number of Senior Station Officers in the maintenance phase of their career lifecycle. To address this, the organisation would need to consider the advantages and dis-advantages of recruiting at an earlier age, to determine if younger recruitment was a viable option. This would enable younger Senior Station Officers, that may be more motivated to continue their career progression to an Executive Officer.

### **7.2.3 Portfolio Career**

Senior Station Officers have considerable work flexibility, which is why the characteristics of a Portfolio Career were considered. Despite the fact Fire and Emergency provides an organisational career structure, the work pattern of a Senior Station Officer allows individuals to partake in extra-curricular activities, accept overtime or have the flexibility to spend time with family or friends. This insight was validated through the responses from the Senior Station Officers, with significant feedback highlighting the preference to shift work.

Only four individuals claimed shift work was no longer attractive and three quarters of Senior Station Officer respondents stated that more flexibility with work hours, would make the Executive Officer role more appealing. Furthermore, shift work enables a third of respondents to generate alternate income streams, this number could be higher as some individuals may not want to disclose this. The Age and Stage and Portfolio Career Theory support the finding that Senior Station Officers desire to have high levels of flexibility in their role, to achieve greater work-life balance. For Senior Station Officers, work-life balance was the number one reason for career satisfaction, with all but one respondent stating so. Executive Officers voiced similar concerns in respect to a lack of work-life balance, however this was caused by high work-load and the antisocial hours they are required to work as opposed to a desire to be on shift work. In fact, over 50 per cent of Executive Officers stated they enjoyed the flexibility of no longer being on shift work. With such contradictory views between Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers on what flexibility means to them, role variations are discussed forthwith to consider additional differences.

#### **7.2.4 Role Variations**

When reviewing the variations between the role of a firefighter and an emergency manager, I turn to the work of Chang and Neal (2019) that claim the change in scope of an emergency manager has widened the gap between the duties of a firefighter and the responsibilities within management roles. They suggest that these duties are now so distinct, that the role of firefighter and the role of an emergency manager could be considered as different professions. Accordingly, I wanted to understand if Senior Station Officers considered the job design of an Executive Officer to be attractive. The responses stress that this is not the case, with 61 per cent of respondents recognising job design as a barrier to progression. Reasons for this can be surmised into concerns of administrative burden, being office bound and a lack of time to spend with personnel. Additionally, a reduction in response activities has

come through as undesirable. In contrast, Executive Officers are less concerned about the type of work they do, compared to the sheer volume of work, creating long and unsociable hours. Consequently, a review of the Area Manager and Assistant Area Managers (Executive Officer) position descriptions seems necessary, with emphasis on a reduction in responsibilities. A reduction in responsibilities is likely to alleviate both Senior Station Officer and Executive Officers concerns around flexibility and high-workload, however will not address the differences in opinion of the desirability of the Executive Officer tasks. Senior Station Officers do not consider the type of work appealing although Executive Officer feedback suggest they enjoy the work they do. For this reason, further research will be suggested in the Recommendations Chapter to consider alternate operating models.

### **7.2.5 Matching and Resource Theory**

Deductions to date, suggest Senior Station Officers may prefer to remain in their existing role due to the stage in their career lifecycle, their desire to have a role that provides work-life balance and the fact they prefer the job design of their current position. Heckman & Sedlacek, (1985), Jovanovic, (1979) and Logan, (1996) verify these assumptions through the Matching Theory, suggesting rewards such as financial payments or work-life balance are reasons to remain in a role (as cited in Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010). Furthermore, the Resource Theory predicts individuals will evade circumstances which could lead to a loss of resource for instance income or employee benefits (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002 as cited in Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019). Almost all Senior Station Officers identified remuneration as a barrier with many Executive Officers stating their pay is not adequate which often related to the number of hours they worked. Senior Station Officers claimed they could earn the same as an Executive Officer if they took overtime and they had the freedom to make this decision. Therefore, the Resource Theory helps explain why some Senior Station Officers choose not to progress an Executive Officer appointment, as they are avoiding a perceived loss in income. It is an ideal time with

the impending restructure, for Fire and Emergency to review the job specifications, hours worked of an Executive Officer and accordingly, understand the remuneration market value for these responsibilities.

### **7.2.6 Organisational Commitment Theory**

Evolving the concept that Senior Station Officers may prefer to remain in their current position, the Organisational Commitment Theory provides further considerations to authenticate this notion. Meyer and Allen (1997) express three components of the Organisational Commitment Theory; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (as cited in Gade, 2003). These elements would suggest Senior Station Officers have a strong emotional connection to the crew they work with, they are likely to stay at Fire and Emergency as their tenure is long and therefore it may be problematic to find another role and they consider the position of a Senior Station Officer a ‘calling’ not a job. Senior Station Officer responses confirm these assumptions with camaraderie and station culture a reason to remain in their role. Moreover, the theme *Making a Positive Difference* emphasised a desire to positively support communities through their reduction and response activities. It is likely Senior Station Officers do not perceive the ability for Executive Officers to have the same level of impact and therefore meet their moral duty.

I sought to understand if the commitment to their present role, extended to feeling obligated and influenced by the union to remain in their cohort. Whilst some comments received, indicated this to be the case, there was not sufficient feedback to verify this theory. Related to the strength of the union, was the attractiveness of job security that the Senior Station Officer position offers versus that of an Executive Officer whose roles are currently being restructured. These factors lead me to believe organisational commitment for the Senior Station Officers is high, presenting Fire and Emergency with challenges to make the role of an Executive Officer more appealing.

### **7.2.7 Conclusion**

The position of a Senior Station Officer is an attractive one, which makes leaving the role a difficult decision. The survey results show a lack of desire to advance, with only a few individuals motivated to do so with reasons of challenge, variety and making a positive difference to a wider network. The key barriers as identified by the Senior Station Officers, are the lack of flexibility, the type of work Executive Officers undertake and remuneration compared to their own package. Additionally, literature learnings combined with data results would suggest the stage Senior Station Officers are in their career lifecycle, influences their desire to progress, or not. Moreover, Senior Station Officers have high organisational commitment to their current role. Research question 1 investigated into the perspectives of Senior Station Officers and the following research question sought to understand the reasons why existing Executive Officers made the shift.

### **7.3 RQ2 – WHAT MOTIVATED AND ENABLED CURRENT EXECUTIVE OFFICERS TO TRANSITION TO THIS ROLE?**

Despite commonality between Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer feedback, there was a stark variation when discussing the support of family. Almost two-thirds of Executive Officers had the backing from their family to pursue the role, with less than a third of Senior Station Officers in a similar position. This is a strong influencing factor in the decision of individuals to apply for Executive Officer jobs. Given the diverging feedback received from Senior Station Officers of the Executive Officer role, it is possible these views are shared with their family which may lead to a lack of support, however there is likely to be additional reasons that this research has not captured. Future research is recommended for Fire and Emergency to increase their understanding of the family support barriers that have presented within this study.

As presented in Chapter Six, the main reason for advancing to an Executive Officer, was the excitement and challenge the position offered. Key enablers to progression, included good Executive Officer role models and positive encouragement from their peers or managers. Many respondents had undertaken a Career Board programme, this programme offered participants an Executive Officer mentor and the data would suggest this is an effective model to continue.

Half of the respondents had experienced being an Executive Officer, solidifying their impressions of the role. For some, this opportunity confirmed they were not interested in pursuing the position, for others it changed their perception of the role and was the catalyst to seeking an Executive Officer appointment. It is recommended to continue secondment opportunities and to consider a structured process in doing so. Secondments tend to be given in response to a temporary vacancy, Fire and Emergency could include secondments in a transitional process. For instance, this opportunity could be embedded into the Executive Officer TAPS programme, enabling individuals to learn the Executive Officer role whilst retaining the security of their substantive role.

Several recommendations emerged when addressing research questions 1 and 2, the following section will provide further recommendations for Fire and Emergency to contemplate.

#### **7.4 RQ3 – WHAT MORE COULD FIRE AND EMERGENCY DO TO ADVANCE THEIR SENIOR STATION OFFICERS INTO THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER POSITION?**

Facilitators and barriers have been measured from the viewpoints of both Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers. These factors created themes in which many have been



deliberated in Sections 7.2 and 7.3, consequently, research questions 1 and 2 have contributed to addressing research question 3. This section will therefore focus on those constructs that are yet to be discussed in this chapter, I start with the *lack of support* concept.

A lack of organisational support came through strongly from both participant groups in relation to readiness for the role and the level of support received whilst in position. Some Executive Officers felt underprepared in areas of strategic and administrative tasks such as report writing and union negotiations, equally, Senior Station Officers identified similar concerns. Conversely, there were several remarks complimenting the level of training and development which supported their advancement into an Executive Officer role. I understand improvements had been made to the Career Board programme and the Executive Officer TAPS programme in the areas of strategy, finance and project management. It is possible that those that participated in earlier programmes did not experience these topics and therefore found it more challenging to step into an Executive Officer role. It is recommended Fire and Emergency not only evaluates their development programmes post completion, but again once individuals can fully embed their learnings, for instance once they become an Executive Officer. This additional evaluation may provide insights to the effectiveness, if there is a delay from completing the programme to becoming an Executive Officer.

In terms of feeling underprepared for the role and not well supported once appointed, Fire and Emergency could establish an Executive Officer induction programme. This can include the shadowing of other Executive Officers, formal peer-support and mentorship provisions. Additionally, respondents expressed a need to have increased levels of support with administrative tasks and their human resource workload, this feedback should be thought through when designing the new region structures alongside the review of Executive Officer positions descriptions.

Regarding the attractiveness of the role, the organisation may consider additional responsibilities (with the removal of others), to entice Senior Station Officers into the role and to increase satisfaction for Executive Officers. If responsibilities were reduced, Executive Officers might be provided a flexible working week to engage in opportunities that are of interest and of benefit to both the individual and the organisation. For some this may be personal development, for others it could be engaging in alternate areas of the business such as Urban Search and Rescue. Current job requirements would need to be reduced to enable this proposal.

## **7.5 CONCLUSION**

Fire and Emergency has an extensive succession planning process in place to help prepare Senior Station Officers for promotions to the more senior Executive Officer positions. In this research, I have examined this succession planning process from the perspective of Senior Station Officers and Executive Officers. The research was inspired by personal conversations and anecdotal evidence suggesting that many Senior Station Officers are reluctant to move to an Executive Officer role. Therefore, in this study I have examined the motivators, barriers and enablers that facilitate the progression from Senior Station Officers to Executive Officer. In addition, I examined the features that current Executive Officers felt motivated and enabled them to make this transition. Based on this, I sought to uncover what Fire and Emergency might do to improve the succession rate of Senior Station Officers to Executive Officer positions. The answer to these questions are presented below:

*What are the motivators, barriers and enablers to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer?*

The findings revealed that the Senior Station Officers were motivated by the challenge the role presents, job variety and the positive difference they can make. However, they also

identified several barriers including; the lack of flexibility, the type of work Executive Officers undertake and remuneration. Additionally, the stage individuals are at in their career lifecycle, influences their desire to progress, as does their high organisational commitment to their current role. In terms of enablers, respondents identified encouraging feedback from their peers or manager and secondment opportunities.

*What motivated and enabled current Executive Officers to transition to this role?*

For many of the Executive Officer respondents, secondments were the catalyst to shift to an Executive Officer role. Family support was a key enabler and individuals were motivated by the challenge the role offered. Furthermore, Executive Officers felt well supported by their peers whom many acted in a mentor capacity.

*What more could Fire and Emergency do to advance their Senior Station Officers into the Executive Officer position?*

To convert a greater number of Senior Station Officers to Executive Officers, Fire and Emergency will need to increase the attractiveness of the Executive Officer role, addressing organisational and job factors, work-life balance and remuneration. Furthermore, earlier recruitment of entry level firefighters should be considered.

As identified in Chapter Two, Fire and Emergency operates under an internal labour market, whereby recruitment occurs at entry level, due to the specialisation of skills and tacit knowledge required and obtained through on-the-job training. Moreover, succession planning practices from a recruit firefighter to a Senior Station Officer, provide the individual with the skills, knowledge and experience of the next position on their career ladder. It would seem there is a departure of the internal labour market model when progressing to an Executive Officer, as many Senior Station Officer respondents are not confident to advance, feeling

underprepared to do so. Fire and Emergency will need to review the success of their Executive Officer TAPS programme, not only post-completion but also when the individual obtains an Executive Officer position. Additionally, transitional support is required when advancing to an Executive Officer; both an induction programme and secondment opportunities would improve their transition.

This chapter discusses similarities between the Senior Station Officer data and the Executive Officer responses, but also identifies significant differences, predominantly within the themes *Job Design* and *Flexibility*. The evolution of emergency management has changed the landscape for fire services and therefore highlighted the fact the shift from a firefighter to management, is no longer an organic transition. For this reason, I provide recommendations in the next chapter to review alternate operating models.

The insights of this chapter are expanded upon in the proceeding Recommendations Chapter for Fire and Emergency to consider with their partner agencies and union representatives.

## CHAPTER 8 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

As revealed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, and as discussed in the previous chapter, the Senior Station Officer respondents identified many organisational features that resulted in their reluctance to advance from their role, to an Executive Officer. At the same time however, the Senior Station Officer respondents also revealed that if the role was more attractive they might consider such promotions. Moreover, insights from the Executive Officers supported a number of the Senior Station Officer perceptions regarding the Executive Officer positions. These insights lend themselves to several possible recommendations that Fire and Emergency might consider, to improve the attractiveness of the Executive Officer role for the current incumbents as well as for those who might move to this position in the future. Conversely, this study identified significant differences between the Senior Station Officer data and the Executive Officer responses in relation to the *Job Design* and *Flexibility* themes and family support. For this reason, I promote future research that may address these variances. These recommendations are grouped into recruitment, transitional support, organisational support and future research headings and presented forthwith.

### 8.1 RECRUITMENT

**Recommendation One** - Review recruitment policy regarding the average age of new recruits.

Research question 1, looked at the Age and Stage Theory, that suggested a reluctance to move up is based on the stage an individual is at in their career lifecycle, hence these might differ if the Senior Station Officers were younger. Consequently, it is recommended to review the viability to recruit firefighters at an earlier age.

**Recommendation Two** -Review Executive Officer roles, responsibilities and remuneration.

The findings would suggest, to increase the attractiveness of the Executive Officer role, the workload and long and unsociable hours must be addressed. A reduction in responsibilities through job sizing would provide the Executive Officer with more time, the ability to engage in new and possibly more enticing opportunities and provide greater flexibility in their working week. Once a new position description is determined, remuneration market value will need to be reassessed.

## **8.2 TRANSITIONARY SUPPORT**

**Recommendation Three** – Establish a secondary review of development programmes.

Findings within research questions 1 and 3, identified a lack of confidence in Senior Station Officers to progress into the role of an Executive Officer. Also, Executive Officers identified a lack of support when transitioning into their current position. To ensure the effectiveness of the Executive Officer TAPS programme and if relevant, the Career Board programme, evaluation should continue to be carried out post completion and again when the individuals are in an Executive Officer role to embed the learnings. It is therefore recommended to establish a secondary review of development programmes to assess their effectiveness in preparing Executive Officers for their role.

**Recommendation Four** – Establish a secondment opportunity programme.

With secondments the key enabler to advancing to an Executive Officer, it is recommended to continue these opportunities and to formalise the process. The proposed approach could be embedded into the Executive Officer TAPS programme. If at any point the organisation reviews their operational staffing numbers, an increase at the Senior Station Officer level could provide more secondment opportunities. This action could enable Executive

Officers to mentor the Senior Station Officers into the role and provide Executive Officers with more support within their role, reducing their workload.

**Recommendation Five** – Implement an Executive Officer Induction programme.

An Executive Officer Induction programme would increase support to individuals transitioning into the role and alleviate some of the concerns raised in this study. This might include the shadowing of Executive Officers, formal peer-support and mentorship provisions.

### **8.3 ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT**

**Recommendation Six**– Review supporting structures.

Sub-themes emerged in the *lack of support* construct, relating to not being adequately prepared for the Executive Officer role and a lack of support whilst in position. The above section provides recommendations to improve readiness for the role and this recommendation addresses feedback that organisational support as an Executive Officer is not considered suffice. Both Executive Officers and Senior Station Officers noted the need for greater administrative and human resource support with a desire to remove barriers to spend more time with their people. Reviewing Executive Officer responsibilities in Recommendation Two may inadvertently reduce the human resource and administrative requirements of the Executive Officer role, however this recommendation to review supporting structures is put forward in the current context.

### **8.4 FUTURE RESEARCH**

**Recommendation Seven**– Review international operating models.

If the variations between the Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer roles are that great as identified within literature and findings within the data, Fire and Emergency might contemplate changes to their operating model, such as lateral entry at the Executive Officer level, which other international fire services may employ. Future research is therefore recommended to increase the organisations understanding of various operating models across the global context and to consider if a change to ways of working is viable at Fire and Emergency.

**Recommendation Eight**– Review international Executive Officer position descriptions.

Due to the change in the role of an emergency manager, job design should be studied further including practices recognised in international fire services. Ideally this would be achieved prior to undertaking Recommendation Two of reviewing the position descriptions of Executive Officers.

**Recommendation Nine**– Undertake further analysis on the family support variances.

Despite commonality between Senior Station Officer and Executive Officer feedback, there was a stark variation when discussing the support of family as raised in Section 7.3. Family support is a strong influencing factor in the decision of individuals to apply for Executive Officer jobs. Future research is recommended, so Fire and Emergency can increase their understanding of the family support barriers that have presented within this study.

## **8.5 CONCLUSION**

The above recommendations are provided to Fire and Emergency to consider with their partner agencies and union representatives, to improve the future conversion rate of Senior Station Officers to advance to Executive Officer positions.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A - Participant Information Sheet for Senior Station Officers

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

#### **Hands up: Anyone for a promotion?**

*Does Fire and Emergency NZ have a challenge advancing Senior Station Officers into Executive Officer roles?*

Dear Senior Station Officers

I am currently undertaking the final year of a Master in Business (MBA) programme with The University of Waikato in Hamilton. As part of this programme, I am required to undertake a Major Research Project on a topic of my choice. My personal interactions with both Senior Station Officers (SSO) and Executive Officers (EO) has sparked my interest in understanding the motivators, barriers and enablers for individuals to transition from the SSO role to the EO role. The aim of my research is to improve the understanding of the challenges faced by SSO who might be considering transitioning to an EO. This knowledge will allow Fire and Emergency to develop initiatives to support the advancement of their SSOs to EOs in the future.

My research has been approved by Fire and Emergency NZ (Brendan Nally – Deputy Chief Executive, People) and endorsed by the Professional Firefighters Union (PFU), Fire and Emergency Commanders Association (FECA) and the Waikato University Management Ethics Committee.

As an SSO, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation requires filling out an online questionnaire involving a series of open-ended questions. This should take approximately 10 minutes, and considerably less in many cases.

You can access the survey by following this link (to be added). The link to this survey has also been provided in the body of the email distributed by Zoe Mounsey; Principle Advisor - Research.

The survey is anonymous and no identifying features, such as your name, will be collected in the survey. The main themes to arise from the data will be presented in aggregate in the final report or any publications arising from this research. Where quotes are used, I will assign a pseudonym to ensure your identity remains anonymous.

My final report will be seen by my Supervisor, Dr Suzette Dyer and the MBA Director – Dr Heather Connolly, both from the Waikato University. The research may also be presented in a journal article and at conferences. In addition, the Report will be made available to the following individuals/agencies and outlets:

- Fire and Emergency Commander’s Association and Professional Firefighters Union
- Fire and Emergency Executive Leadership Team
- Sponsor – Brendan Nally
- Posted to the research page of the Fire and Emergency internal portal

Participation in this study is optional. However, your insights about the barriers to advancing from SSO to EO will be invaluable to Fire and Emergency. If you do choose to participate, please be assured that you will remain anonymous throughout the research process. Moreover, you do not need to answer all the questions, and if you wish, you do not need to submit your survey responses. Once you choose the ‘submit’ option on the survey, you are giving your consent to allow me to use your responses for the purposes as set out here. However, as I am not collecting identifying information, it will not be possible to withdraw your survey once you have submitted it.

Only I and my supervisor, Dr Suzette Dyer will see your survey responses. The data you provide will be kept on a password secure computer for five years. After this time, the data will be destroyed. If you would like more information about this research, please contact me or Dr Suzette Dyer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance of the receipt of your completed questionnaire as without your involvement I would not be able to complete either my research or the final stage of my studies.

## Appendix B - Participant Information Sheet for Executive Officers

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Wāikato*

#### **Hands up: Anyone for a promotion?**

*Does Fire and Emergency NZ have a challenge advancing Senior Station Officers into Executive Officer roles?*

Dear Executive Officers

I am currently undertaking the final year of a Master in Business (MBA) programme with The University of Waikato in Hamilton. As part of this programme, I am required to undertake a Major Research Project on a topic of my choice. My personal interactions with both Senior Station Officers (SSO) and Executive Officers (EO) has sparked my interest in understanding the motivators, barriers and enablers for individuals to transition from the SSO role to the EO role. The aim of my research is to improve the understanding of the challenges faced by SSO who might be considering transitioning to an EO. This knowledge will allow Fire and Emergency to develop initiatives to support the advancement of their SSOs to EOs in the future.

My research has been approved by Fire and Emergency NZ (Brendan Nally – Deputy Chief Executive, People) and endorsed by the Professional Firefighters Union (PFU), Fire and Emergency Commanders Association (FECA) and the Waikato University Management Ethics Committee.

As an EO, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation requires filling out an online questionnaire involving a series of open-ended questions. This should take approximately 5-10 minutes, and considerably less in many cases.

You can access the survey by following this link (to be added). The link to this survey has also been provided in the body of the email distributed by Zoe Mounsey; Principle Advisor - Research.

The survey is anonymous and no identifying features, such as your name, will be collected in the survey. The main themes to arise from the data will be presented in aggregate in the final

report or any publications arising from this research. Where quotes are used, I will assign a pseudonym to ensure your identity remains anonymous.

My final report will be seen by my Supervisor, Dr Suzette Dyer and the MBA Director – Dr Heather Connolly, both from the Waikato University. The research may also be presented in a journal article and at conferences. In addition, the Report will be made available to the following individuals/agencies and outlets:

- Fire and Emergency Commander’s Association and Professional Firefighters Union
- Fire and Emergency Executive Leadership Team
- Sponsor – Brendan Nally
- Posted to the research page of the Fire and Emergency internal portal

Participation in this study is optional. However, your insights about the barriers and motivators that you encountered when advancing from SSO to EO will be invaluable to Fire and Emergency. If you do choose to participate, please be assured that you will remain anonymous throughout the research process. Moreover, you do not need to answer all the questions, and if you wish, you do not need to submit your survey responses. Once you choose the ‘submit’ option on the survey, you are giving your consent to allow me to use your responses for the purposes as set out here. However, as I am not collecting identifying information, it will not be possible to withdraw your survey once you have submitted it.

Only I and my supervisor, Dr Suzette Dyer will see your survey responses. The data you provide will be kept on a password secure computer for five years. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

If you would like more information about this research, please contact me or Dr Suzette Dyer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance of the receipt of your completed questionnaire as without your involvement I would not be able to complete either my research or the final stage of my studies.

## Appendix C – Questionnaire for Senior Station Officers

How long have you been a senior station officer?

0-2 years      2-5 years      5-10 years      10 years+

How long have you been with Fire and Emergency/NZ Fire Service?

5-10 years      10-15 years      15-25 years      25+ years

Have you completed the Executive Officer Leadership Development programme?

Yes                  No                  In progress

Have you participated in a Career Board programme?

Yes                  No

Have you acted up or been seconded into an EO position?

Yes                  No

### Construct #1: Motivations

In relation to **motivators** to progress to an Executive Officer, please tick any of the below boxes that are relevant to you:

- I am ready for my next career challenge
- I see the Executive Officer role as my next career step
- Shift work no longer appeals
- There are many opportunities currently to progress to an Executive Officer
- My family are supportive of me applying for an Executive Officer role
- The job design of the Executive Officer is appealing
- I do not want to move into an Executive Officer role

Describe any other motivating factors you have to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer:

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### Construct #2: Barriers

In relation to potential **barriers** of progressing into an Executive Officer position, please tick any of the below boxes that are relevant to you:



- A negative change in lifestyle is a barrier for me progressing to an Executive Officer role
- The remuneration of an Executive Officer does not warrant the hours they work
- I am able to achieve the same or more pay than an Executive Officer with overtime
- I enjoy the flexibility shift work offers
- The role of an Executive Officer appears to be a stressful one
- There are very few Executive Officer opportunities that come up
- The job design of the Executive Officer is not appealing
- I generate other income streams with shift work which is not possible with the Executive Officer role

Describe any other **personal or organisational barriers** for you to progress from a SSO to an Executive Officer:

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**Construct #3: Enablers**

If you are interested in becoming an Executive Officer, what would enable you to do so (you may tick multiple boxes):

- I am well supported by the organisation to progress into an Executive Officer role
- I have the confidence to become an Executive Officer
- The organisation has provided me sufficient training and development to enable me to transition to an Executive Officer
- I have the autonomy to choose skills and development opportunities within the organisation
- The culture of the organisation allows quick role progression
- I am not interested in becoming an Executive Officer

Describe any other factors that would **enable** you to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer:

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**Construct #4: Organisational factors**

Highlight by ticking the appropriate boxes, what factors that would make the Executive Officer role more appealing or easier to apply for:

- Quicker transitions through previous ranks
- Increased salary range
- More flexibility with work hours
- Less hours required to be worked
- Increased training and support
- Significant variation to the Job Description
- There are no factors that would allow me to want to apply for an Executive Officer role

Describe other factors that would make the Executive Officer role more appealing to you:

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**Construct #4: Career satisfaction**

In relation to career satisfaction of your current role as a Senior Station Officer, please highlight the circle that is closest to your views on each statement below:

**Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree**

- The SSO role provides me good work-life balance
- I have never wanted to be in middle-management
- The remuneration and employee benefits are superior for the Senior Station Officer role versus the Executive Officer role
- I am of an age where career progression no longer excites me
- I prefer to work with communities than an office-based role
- There are no factors that would allow me to want to apply for an Executive Officer role

Describe any other reasons as to why you are satisfied with your Senior Station Officer role:

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If there is any other information you would like us to know about the motivators, barriers or enablers to transition to the Executive Officer, role, please provide detail below:

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**Demographic Details:**

What age range are you in?

15-24 years \_\_\_\_\_ 25-44 years \_\_\_\_\_

45-64 years \_\_\_\_\_ 65+ years \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:    Male                  Female                  Other

Highest Education attained:

None    School certificate    Undergraduate    Post Graduate    Other

What is your ethnic group?

New Zealand European    Māori    Samoan                  Cook Island Maori    Tongan                  Niuean

Chinese                  Indian    other \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D – Questionnaire for Executive Officers

How long have you been an Executive officer?

0 months-1 year 1-3 years 3-5 years 5-10 years 10-15 years 15+years

How long have you been with Fire and Emergency/NZ Fire Service?

5-10 years 10-15 years 15-25 years 25+ years

Have you completed the Executive Officer Leadership Development programme?

Yes No In progress

Have you participated in a Career Board programme?

Yes No In progress

### Construct #1: Motivations

Reflecting on when you were a Senior Station Officer, highlight motivators for transitioning to an Executive Officer role:

- My family were very supportive of me shifting into an Executive Officer role
- As a Senior Station Officer, I saw the Executive Officer role as the only option within the organisation in terms of career progression
- As a Senior Station Officer, shift work lost its appeal
- At the time of my transition, there were many opportunities to progress to an Executive Officer
- I was motivated by pay to move into an Executive Officer role
- The challenge of an Executive Officer role excited me
- It is a badge of honour working long hours

Describe any other reasons for your decision to progress from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer:

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Describe any barriers you faced when considering a transition from a Senior Station Officer to an Executive Officer

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**Construct #2: Enablers**

Reflecting on when you were a Senior Station Officer, highlight factors that **enabled** you to transition to the Executive Officer role:

- I was well supported by the organisation to progress into an Executive Officer role
- I had the autonomy to choose skills and development opportunities within the organisation
- The culture of the organisation allowed quick role progression
- The organisation provided me sufficient training and development to enable me to transition to an Executive Officer
- I had good Executive Officer role models around me that supported me in my transition

**Construct #3: Satisfaction of new role**

In respect to the **satisfaction** of your current role as an Executive Officer, please highlight the circle that is closest to your views on each statement below:

**Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree**

- My work life balance is better as an Executive Officer than it was as a Senior Station Officer
- There is an acceptable variance between my remuneration and that of my Senior Station Officers
- I enjoy the flexibility of no longer being in shift work
- The role of an Executive Officer is more stressful than I imagined coming into the role
- I made the right to decision to transition into an Executive Officer role
- My family are supportive of me in the Executive Officer role
- I am well supported by the organisation in the Executive Officer role

What do you enjoy most about the Executive Officer role?

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What could be improved about the Executive Officer role?

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If there is any other information you would like us to know about the motivators, barriers or enablers to transition to the Executive Officer role, please provide detail below:

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**Demographic Details:**

What age range are you in?

15-24 years \_\_\_\_\_ 25-44 years \_\_\_\_\_

45-64 years \_\_\_\_\_ 65+ years \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male Female Other

Highest Education attained:

None School certificate Undergraduate Post Graduate Other

What is your ethnic group?

New Zealand European Māori Samoan Cook Island Maori Tongan Niuean

Chinese Indian other \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E – Request for secondary data**

- Annual turnover for operational personnel, 2-year average
- Annual turnover for non-operational personnel, 2-year average
- Gender and age of **career** Senior Station Officers, Area Managers and Assistant Area Managers (**no names** to be provided)
- Time in role for **career** Senior Station Officers, Area Managers and Assistant Area Managers (**no names** to be provided)
- Average time for incumbent Senior Station Officers to progress from a Qualified Firefighter to a Senior Station Officer
- What is the annual recruitment intake of firefighters, 3-year average
- Average age of firefighters at recruitment, 3-year average