

## **INQUIRY INTO VIOLENCE AGAINST EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL**

**Organisation:** Department of Fire and Emergency Services - WA  
**Name:** Ms Leah Parlour  
**Position:** Director Health and Safety Services  
**Date Received:** 19 July 2016



Our Ref: 24447  
Your Ref: LAC16/140

To the Committee Chair, Geoff Provest MP

### **Inquiry into Violence against Emergency Services Personnel**

Thank you for your correspondence to Commissioner Gregson inviting the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) to provide a submission into the above inquiry.

DFES has in place a policy for managing violence and aggression in the workplace that stipulates a no tolerance approach to violence and aggression against our employees or volunteers when carrying out duties under the direction of DFES. DFES does not have a training program or public education campaign specifically in relation to violence or aggression against our members however would welcome the development of such in support of policy.

DFES has not had any experience with sentencing options for people who assault or murder emergency services personnel however would obviously advocate for these to be at the higher end of the penalty range.

The table attached provides information as to the incidences of violence and aggression against DFES personnel and volunteers by external parties reported through our online reporting system over the last five financial years. Please note that not all incidences have necessarily been reported using this system.

I hope that this is of some assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

Leah Parlour  
Director Health and Safety Services.

Att:

Date	Description	Severity
26-Mar-16	Whilst passing the pedestrian bridge from the station into the City an object was thrown at the vehicle hitting the bottom of the windscreen and wiper blade. It was believed to be a drinking bottle. No injuries and no damage to the vehicle. Incident number 329815 To be recorded as an assault on Firefighters	High
7-Jan-16	Trying to evacuate persons from residences along the highway as the main fire front approached. Single male resident refused to evacuate and wanted to return to his house. I advised we could not defend the site and he needed to follow us to safety immediately. At this point he reversed and turned his car suddenly, clipping me and pushing me sideways before he drove off back to his residence. Lower back immediately sore. We were cut off from any help by the fire front and had no communications with the IMT so continued duties for the night. Back sore all night and next day. Believe it is muscular but will monitor it.	High
03-Jul-15	During the evening a former DFES employee parked at the rear of the station and abused the staff through the fence which is only a cyclone wire fence. This has affected all staff due to the risk involved with the person's mental health.	High
19-Jul-15	On arrival prior to appliance, approached driver who was out of vehicle and asked if anyone else was in the vehicle and could we check his injuries. After this I was struck on the left side of the chin from driver throwing a punch. The driver then ran off and was arrested by police down the road. Ambulance officers assessed wound and applied first aid.	Moderate
24-Mar-15	At approx. 0050 woke to noises on station and discovered a heavily drug affected offender had gained access to the station and was proceeding to ransack the office. I have woken the crew and approached the offender requesting he sit down on the floor. I have requested police through ComCen (Communications Centre). The offender has the taken the opportunity to stand up and arm himself with a standpipe from the office. He has outlined his recent release from prison and threatened harm to the crew and himself. The crew have acted promptly and physically restrained the offender allowing me to remove the standpipe. I have contacted ComCen and requested urgent assistance from Police. The offender gained access through the front door.	High
20-Oct-14	An incident involving a "camp fire" situation involved a group, who were asked to put out a fire. An elderly gentleman became involved, he proceeded to "invade my personal space while behaving aggressively". I moved back, he continued in his aggressive manner and again approached me. I put my arm out to prevent his advance. A female in the group at this stage had placed herself between myself and the male to protect me. The male struck my arm with force causing my right hand it to strike the female in the teeth with force, knocking the female over.	Medium

20-Oct-14	Admin Officer was in the office alone and left her workstation to go to the bathroom. On her return she noticed a female intruder in the Superintendent's office. When the Admin Officer challenged the intruder, she claimed she was in the office for a meeting. The Admin Officer directed the intruder to reception to wait for the Superintendents return. The intruder asked for a glass water and when the Admin Officer returned she found the intruder had taken her purse and left the building. The Admin Officer called the Police and subsequently spotted the intruder loitering in the car park. The Admin Officer chased the intruder down and recovered her purse minus a small quantity of cash. The Police attended and has since been provided with CCTV footage of the intruder entering and leaving the building along with footage of the Admin Officer chasing her down and recovering her purse.	Medium
26-Jan-14	VFRS crews turned out to report of backyard fire in Geographe. Crews found lounge on fire in rear yard, residents were happy to allow crews access initially to extinguish fire, once crews started pump residents became aggressive, crew relocated to front yard, one member assaulted by having gate pushed into her. Crew got into appliances called for police and removed themselves from the area. Police arrived and apprehended residents. One resident slapped another VFRS member in the face and tried to remove his glasses. Police backup arrived and more residents were taken into custody. Both members of VFRS do not wish to take this further; the residents involved were taken into custody by police after scuffles with police.	High
24-Nov-12	Whilst filling the appliances with water at a bush fire the crew including myself came under attack from youths using rocks and gings. This resulted in having to take cover in the appliance and donning additional PPC. The appliances sustained damage including a broken windscreen. This was reported to police who were on scene shortly after the situation occurred.	Medium
30-Oct-11	At approx. 0050 on Sunday morning, a man rang the station door bell. I have opened the door and asked what the problem was. The man came up to the door, wedging it open with his foot. He then started ranting. It has become obvious that he is intoxicated. During the course of the conversation he has made his way into the station continuing his ranting. He has become increasingly agitated and has started making verbal threats to the staff. He has also made threatening movements including standing up in staff members faces. We have been unable to move him from the station.	High