



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – LEGAL AFFAIRS

MEDIA RELEASE

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18 July 2017

A recent Upper House inquiry was established in May to examine the prevalence of bullying, harassment and discrimination within a number of emergency services agencies, including the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Police Force, the NSW State Emergency Service and the Ambulance Service of NSW.

Submissions are being accepted until Sunday 23 July 2017. The Chair of the Committee, the Hon. Robert Borsak said: “We understand that some staff and volunteers of these agencies may be reluctant to make a submission. There may be concerns about being further bullied or reprisals for speaking out. Individuals should be aware that they can request that their submission be kept confidential, in part or in full. They can also request that their name be suppressed”.

The Chair added: “The committee has also written to each emergency service agency emphasising that it is essential that employees and volunteers be able to freely participate in the inquiry. Any adverse action taken against a person for making a submission will be a serious matter the committee will consider. Indeed it may be considered a contempt of Parliament”.

Individuals that have concerns about participating in the inquiry can contact the secretariat to discuss options. The inquiry webpage www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/emergencyservices has helpful factsheets about writing a submission and confidentiality concerns.

Under the terms of reference for the inquiry, the committee will also be examining the adequacy of support provided to victims of bullying, harassment and discrimination within these agencies, particularly in terms of the support provided to individuals with mental health issues resulting from workplace trauma.

The committee plans to commence hearings in September and October this year. The Chair stated: “The committee can consider having confidential hearings if necessary. This is not uncommon where we need to hear from people who have concerns about giving evidence in public. While confidential evidence cannot be referred to in our report, it can be used by the committee to identify systemic issues within these emergency services agencies”.

More information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference, can be found on the committee’s website. Interested individuals and stakeholders can contact the secretariat on (02) 9230 2895.

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Robert Borsak MLC, on 9230 2573.