

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 30 June 2017

Partially
Confidential

**Submission to the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL into emergency services agencies by _____ ,
_____, Fire and Rescue NSW. 30/6/2017**

I have been employed by the Fire and Rescue NSW since _____. I commenced as a Retained Firefighter and have progressed to Deputy Captain in _____ and was appointed to Captain at the _____ Station on _____. I can only talk about my personal experience over the past _____ years of working for Fire and Rescue NSW.

From my personal experience I wasn't aware of any bullying or harassment in the workplace, until approximately 10 years ago. The situation slowly deteriorated after the appointment of Mr Mullins to the role of Commissioner.

I was first subjected to bullying and harassment 10 years ago. The situation has only continued to deteriorate since then and now inappropriate behaviour and bullying is now at its worst. It has become the norm within the workplace of FRNSW. The situation is so bad and entrenched, that I feel there will be reluctance for people to contribute to this enquiry for fear of retribution. I know of a number of good people that have been bullied to the point of leaving the organisation. I know of at least eight people in this situation and can provide names if needed.

I personally, have been subjected to upward bullying (Staff to Station Management) and in the last few years I have also been subjected to downward bullying (Zone Management to Station Management).

It appears to me that after the appointment of Commissioner Mullins, various senior roles within the organisation were filled with people who seem to fit a certain mould where bullying was an acceptable form of behaviour. This has also been compounded by the increase in power and influence of the Fire Brigades Employees Union (FBEU), whose representatives also participate in bullying behaviour. There appears to me, to be an inbred unhealthy relationship within FRNSW Management and FBEU.

The Workplace Standards Section of Fire and Rescue (set up to deal with the issues within the workplace) is a sham and due to their incompetence they have created the situation where the culture is worse than ever.

In my role as Captain I have to manage the performance of the Station and the Crew. That performance management has been in accordance with the policies and procedures of Fire and Rescue NSW. I have been asking for mentoring, support and training from Zone Management only to be turned away. I have been given directions from Zone Management on performance management and I have followed the directions given. I have now had malicious false allegations made against me in retaliation for me performing my role as Captain.

While reports and complaints made by Station Management have been continuously ignored, a complaint lodged against me resulted in my immediate suspension from duty. Procedural fairness has not been applied in my case and FRNSW has chosen to ignore parts of their own procedures and the Fire Brigades Regulations.

I have not been given the opportunity to discuss any perceived poor performance prior to being suspended. I have *never* been on a Performance Improvement Plan or given any indication on what is the expected standards and how I might be failing to meet those standards.

There are major inconsistencies in the required performance, as there seems to be different standards for different stations and different individuals.

I feel that the suspension was an attempt to bully me into resigning.

Recommendations

- 1) That there needs to be removal of the “Old Boys” Network that currently exists within Fire and Rescue NSW and the inappropriate ties with the Fire Brigade Employees Union. This could be achieved in the following way:
All roles from Chief Superintendent (Area Commanders) to Commissioner be filled by appropriately qualified people from **any** organisation. The majority of these roles are currently a “closed shop” and are only open to people from within FRNSW who have come up through the Permanent Firefighter Ranks. I believe this has led to the inbred bullying culture within FRNSW. The roles mentioned are not truly operational roles and therefore do not need to be operational firefighters. The roles are focused on Organisation Management and I think that the people of NSW will be better served with people with expertise in Human Resource, Financial, Good Governance and Strategic Management filling those roles. This would also help dissolve the inappropriate ties with the FBEU.
- 2) In regards to the Workplace Standards Section, I can imagine that a similar section may exist within each of the Emergency Service Agencies. My suggestion is that the section responsible for monitoring and enforcing of respectful workplace culture be removed from each individual agency and placed into a one separate entity within the Justice System. That the Management of each Agency are responsible and accountable for the culture in the workplace. That people who encounter inappropriate behaviour can report to line Managers without being fobbed off to Workplace Standards. That the line managers need to address the issues raised. If the line managers fail to address the issues, then the person with a concern could report the situation to the external agency.

The one agency responsible for monitoring and enforcing of respectful workplace culture would ensure that the same standards are applied to all Emergency Service Agencies. While FRNSW has suitable and adequate policies in place, Management does not ensure that policies and procedures are being complied with. This new external organisation could conduct random audits to ensure that FRNSW Staff at all levels are applying the policies and procedures correctly.

I hope this is sufficient information, as I have never made a submission to a Parliamentary Enquiry before. I am willing to provide additional details if this submission is insufficient. Please feel free to contact me.

Thanks