

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 8 July 2017

Partially
Confidential

Good Afternoon,

I have attached an email that I sent to the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Region Manager in October 2016. It relates to Points 1 (a), (b) of the terms of reference with regards the prevalence of bullying, harrassment and discrimination, and the support structures that exist or lack there of to address them.

Specifically:

- Contempt for volunteers.
- A stove piped complaints process directed through the very people who are the subject of the complaint.
- Lack of independent oversight in the RFS. Apparently a Professional Standards Unit exists, but no one seems to know what their remit is or how to contact them.
- A culture of protectionism between RFS salaried staff. That hinges on keeping volunteers uninformed.

Unfortunately whilst the Region Manager did look into the matters at hand and appointed an investigating officer I received little feedback and when I followed up on my complaint I was informed that little could be done under existing policies and procedures as it related to a cultural problem. The hope was that the individual and the core group causing the issues would eventually be moved on through normal RFS employment rotation practices and that this should address the culture that had developed at . Nothing however would occur in the short term.

Whilst my email primarily describes the actions of one individual and could be perceived as an individual grievance, I have done this in order to provide a case study into what I believe is the root cause of the culture of contempt towards volunteers that exists at as a whole and also parts of the wider Rural Fire Service community.

Since writing the attached email other actions have been reiterated to myself that suggest that little or no investigation was done, including part of an email addressed to another volunteer, where the describes his resentment at justifying his actions to and working with volunteers.

Regards