

Submission
No 55

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 20 July 2017

Partially
Confidential

Key Issues

- That the RFS and its paid officers have an attitude that they are above the Law.
- That written rule, policies and SOPs do not need compliance. This was stated by a policy officer.
- Investigations into bullying are conducted on staff and volunteers with desired outcomes by those with little ability to identify bullying and harassment.
- That those charged to deal with discipline have no training and no knowledge of what constitutes bullying.
- That those who have different ideas about the service and ways of improvement are isolated and excluded service or promotion.
- The management of the service does not follow protocols of government such as LAWS in general and Public service guidelines of merit selection.
- Committees are set up and controlled by 'yes' persons who go along with management wishes.
- The RFS represents both volunteers and staff and there is a conflict of interest. The RFS committees are controlled by staff inclusion.
- Questioning of decisions sees blacklisting of staff and volunteers.
- Nepotism is rampant with staff family members and relatives receiving positions.
- Volunteers have always felt that the department is isolated to the needs and views of the volunteers.
- There is not adequate or lawful consultation.
- The RFS in its documents does not get involved in industrial matters and so how can it be recognised under government legislation Rural Fires act. The IRC identified this in its findings. Anything concerning the workplace environment and workers are industrial matters and so volunteers have no representation.
- That current consultation methods by electronic and through ranked structure are ineffective.
- Those disciplined are still allowed to participate in service continuing with same conduct.
- Discipline not taken seriously.
- Mates are looked after and others are isolated.
- That departmental officers believe that they are the authority and volunteers are just followers.

Recommendations

- That a government set up a Government Integratory Commission to deal with complaints of misconduct. And that this organisation reports to the Public service commission who has the power to discharge public servants.
- That there is no need for two fire services in NSW. This is costing tax payers mega bucks.
- That a Parliament inquiry into the operations of the RFS take place.
- That the RFS PCBU is made to comply with laws as required by legislation.
- That SafeWork does what it is charged to do whether government Dept or private co. and prosecute those who are non-compliant.
- That the RFS changes its consultation system with the inclusion of Health and Safety Representatives in accordance with the WHS Act.

- That staff at the RFS have the correct skills for the job task, not just employed and then gain skills. Educational qualifications do not educate you on how to manage people.
- That disciplinary committees are not set up with ranked officers who may go along with staff wanted outcomes.
- That suitably qualified persons be employed and not just engaged from volunteers.
- Scrap volunteer to career program.
- That local control be priority at Incident Management Teams rather than those senior ranked being sent to deal with large fires.