

Submission
No 86

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 22 July 2017

Partially
Confidential

The Director, Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs,

In response to your Portfolio Committee inquiry into;

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- a. *The prevalence of bullying, harassment and discrimination, as well as the effectiveness of the protocols and procedures in place to manage and resolve such complaints within emergency services agencies:*

(i) NSW Rural Fire Service

- b. *the support structures in place to assist victims of workplace bullying, harassment and/or discrimination within emergency services agencies, c)*
- c. *the support services available to emergency services workers and volunteers to assist with mental health issues resulting from workplace trauma and the effectiveness of those programs.*

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I have evidence of:

- New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSWRFS) paid staff engaging in bullying against volunteers;
- NSWRFS paid staff harassing and discriminating against members of the NSWRFS;
- NSWRFS paid staff wilfully ignoring procedure and protocols to resolve Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination, within the Service;
- NSWRFS paid staff violating the premise of Natural Justice;
- NSWRFS paid staff acting extra vitae to their powers with the NSWRFS, and against the premise of Natural Justice;
- NSWRFS volunteers engaging in discrimination whilst dealing with bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints and procedures;
- NSWRFS members acting outside policy and procedure to resolve complaints internally;
- The ineffectiveness of the NSWRFS Critical Incident Support Service (CISS);
- The lack of support the NSWRFS gives to victims of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and those who ‘whistle-blow’ on these activities

I wish to bring to your attention the saga that was the result of an alleged incident that took place, whilst on an interstate deployment as a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Immediately after the incident occurred, myself and members of my crew immediately began being bullied and stood over by paid and volunteer members of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Upon opting to return to NSW, an ‘investigation’ into the incident began.

This ‘investigation’ dragged out for more than 12 months, and caused great emotional stress to myself, my family and my brigade. The length of the investigation was directly a result of paid members of the NSW Rural Fire Service not abiding by it’s own protocols and procedures, as well as the ethos of natural justice and fair judgement.

At the conclusion of this investigation, I was suspended from service, which was eventual reversed on appeal, due to the lack on natural justice. My appeal letter from the RFS stated they had no intent of identifying, or engaging in fixing any of the numerous issues that were brought up by my investigation and subsequent appeal.

Soon after receiving this news, I received a personal letter from stating although my investigation had be resolved, and my appeal upheld, he had taken personal issue with it, and will continue to punish me whilst I remained a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Throughout the ordeal, I reached out to the Critical Incident Support Service (CISS), provided by the RFS. There was no follow up, no trained personnel, and I learned later that although the phone calls are 'confidential' that another member of my crew, who also engaged the service, had his personal emotional issues bought up to people he had not conceded that information to.

The deplorable conduct of members of the NSW RFS displays the systemic disease that is bullying and harassment within the Service. It undermines the principles of good-will and volunteering, and is being fostered by various, very influential members of the service.

To highlight this fact, I have attached two (2) letters (pages 5 and 6, respectively, of the accompanying document), which are the last correspondence I have received from the NSW RFS. The first, upholds my appeal, whilst the second contradicts the first, and displays the lack of regard certain members of the Service show for the genuine issue of bullying within the NSW RFS.

As my matter has been dealt with already by the NSW Rural Fire Service, this is not a frivolous submission, but rather an opportunity to bring these lessons and serious grievances to light, in the hope of helping others, and forming a better attitude and policy toward bullying in this emergency service.

I request my submission be kept **Partially Confidential**.