

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 20 July 2017

Partially
Confidential

NAME SUPPRESSED SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY

SERVICE AGENCIES

I have been in the RFS for ten years. Over that time I have seen what was a vibrant brigade gradually deteriorate with harassment, misinformation and personal attacks resulting in experienced officers being marginalised in the service and brigade.

The brigade is now at a low ebb with mediocre leadership, limited experience and an inability to engage and hold onto new members. The core concept of voluntary service in the brigade for the safety and education of the community has been undermined by personal ambition. The idea that the individual brigade has some level of autonomy and value in the decision-making process has been replaced by a more autocratic, top-down practice in which group officers, Fire Control and the District Superintendent have shown themselves to be unwilling to work cooperatively with the brigades volunteers but demand unquestioning loyalty and support from them and, if this is not given, threaten disciplinary action.

My trust in the chain of command has been eroded from the Superintendent through the Fire Control Officer and Group Officers. I feel that the selection process for paid staff has failed in that it has led to the appointment of people with less than adequate skills for their jobs. This, in turn, has allowed volunteers at all levels from firefighter to Group Officer to place personal agendas and ambitions ahead of service to the organization, brigade and community with the overall result being the slow impairment of the RFS at brigade level and, ultimately, an erosion of the capability of the brigade and the RFS to successfully carry out their core tasks, that of fire suppression and the protection of life and property in the event of a bushfire. At its heart, the RFS is about community service and any person, protocol or idea that limits or reduces the organisation's ability to serve must be recognised and their influence minimized in order for the RFS to remain a vibrant, relevant, volunteer-based, community organisation.

