

SUBMISSION OF C PLATOON BALLARAT

1. We, Glenn Bulleen, Ben Reynolds, Nathan Duggan, Cameron Morris, Patrick Shawcross, Josh McNamara and Brady Trotter (on behalf of C Platoon Ballarat), Leading Fire fighter (**LFF**), Leading Fire fighter (**LFF**), Leading Fire fighter (**LFF**), Qualified Firefighter (**QFF**), Qualified Firefighter (**QFF**), Firefighter (**FF**), Firefighter (**QFF**), with the County Fire Authority (**CFA**), c/- [insert address], in the State of Victoria, say as follows:

Morale at Work

2. We feel that the morale at work has decreased during the Napthine Government (2010-2014).
3. The morale has certainly decreased because of the MFB's attempt to set aside the Enterprise Agreement. If the MFB had been successful, we believe that the CFA would have followed in their footsteps. The morale at work has also decreased because of the CFA failing to honour its Agreements.

Equipment and Staffing

4. The standard of equipment and operational response (including staffing) has decreased during the Napthine Government. The following are examples as to how:
 - a) Ballarat City Protective Equipment Van (also known as Ballarat City BA Van) – This appliance is currently in a state of age and neglect, has no housing infrastructure to protect it from the weather elements and is showing signs of external visible rusting (rendering possible roadworthy issues). It does not have a standard of stowage comparable to other Protective Van appliances within the Country Fire Authority vehicle fleet, meaning that interoperability within the CFA organisation among endorsed operators is compromised should they be required to provide overtime or relief staffing at another fire station with the same appliance.
 - b) Ballarat City Hazmat appliance – There are currently two Hazmat appliances at Ballarat City Fire Station, the first being operational and in service but in an aged state and with limited equipment and stowage capacity. This appliance is to be replaced by the second vehicle, a relatively new appliance which is yet to be placed online due to (a) limitation of infrastructure [there is currently no housing to protect it from weather elements] and, (b) staffing issues [the complexity of the equipment on the appliance requires enhanced staffing and skills beyond current levels to provide safe and adequate service operations at incidents].
 - c) Portable radios and paging service – Portable radios are currently incapable of communication between CFA and MFB, and have very limited (often poor) capability in buildings such as hospitals, institutional facilities and large shopping centres. Additionally, current EAS Alpha Legend pagers have failed to alert CFA staff in situations comparable to the portable radios.

5. There have also been several infrastructure deficiencies in the Ballarat City Fire Station. These include:
 - a) Aging building, built in 1983;
 - b) Motor room substantially too small for stations resources, causing: a need to reverse appliances into motor after each job, BA support vehicle being parked outside, not covered in the wash bay, Operational Hazmat van being parked in a makeshift shed that requires reversing until vehicle is physically touching rear wall in order to fit, as well as a new Hazmat van being parked outside uncovered;
 - c) Dormitories, poor air quality causing health risks to employees; and
 - d) Parking, insufficient parking space provided for employees.

6. There are also no appliance standards across the state. The request for specialist appliances or gear can result in very different outcomes depending on which appliance is sent, including:
 - a) All heavy rescues carry different equipment and have different stowage
 - b) BA support vans vary in size and capabilities and amount of equipment carried. Some are simply cars with a few air cylinders, versus Ballarat City which has cylinder recharging capacity, extra PPE (gas and splash suits, long duration BA sets, airlines, etc. There is an obvious lack of consistency, no standard means and no certainty about what equipment is responding when a vehicle type is called for operationally. You may not get what you want. Hazmats across state all carry different detection gear and equipment
 - c) No standardized stowage of appliances across the state

7. We are currently having issues with our FAY computer, as it is constantly crashing and causing us to not have an audible read out of the incidents we are being paged to. This is the second FAY computer we have had, ours was beyond repair so we acquired Warrnambool's old computer to run it. This computer is now failing regularly. When we ask about getting the more user friendly Gator system to replace this older system, we are told by the district that it's not supported by CFA so it will not be rolled out to our station. We also are very keen to get map print outs (available on Gator) of where the incident is which is not available with the FAY system.

8. We are also currently running 3 sets on the PE Van. With 3 sets, we would not be sending in a crew due to health and safety issues. If 2 sets are in use, we don't have 2 sets left for a backup crew to assist or rescue. We are still waiting for the BG-4's to be brought into service that have been at PE department for years. LFF Ben Reynolds raised safety concerns with PE department back in November 2012 by means of a 35 page document and nothing has changed apart from less part to fix current sets.

9. There are also insufficient state spare appliances. Appliances that are offline are being replaced with inadequate State Spare appliances. Issues where this has occurred include:
 - a) Ballarat City Ladder Platform being replaced with State Spare Teleboom. (Bronto has a capacity of 37 meters, the Teleboom has only a capacity of

19.8 meters. This is not sufficient to meet the demands of the Ballarat City and greater response area risk).

- b) State spare appliances not equipped with standard stowage. Appliances are stowed in a make shift set up to ensure correct equipment is stowed on the appliance. (Lack of tie downs for heavy equipment such as Quick Cut saws and PPV Fans).
 - c) Spare Pumper supplied as Type 3 Medium (not the same performance and operation as the Type 4 Heavy). There is inconsistency in the age, condition and stowage provisions provided on spare appliances.
 - d) In instances where spare vehicles are placed into service to replace Ballarat City appliances, a shortage of qualified operators can be encountered due to the limited range of types available. These appliances are not fit for purpose and do not carry all equipment, reducing our overall capacity operationally.
 - e) The age and condition of replacement State Spare Appliances is inadequate.
10. Operators have a loss of confidence with State Spare appliances due to the age, condition, stowage and lack of consistencies in these appliances.
11. There has also been substantial financial investment made by CFA creating the Mt Helen Fire Station & the redevelopment of the Ballarat Fire Station have not improved service delivery to the community in any way, with regard to response times. Concerns raised by station staff regarding the inability of volunteer brigades to respond to emergency calls, are seemingly ignored by CFA Management.
12. Staffing levels are currently also not adequate to protect the Victorian Community and firefighters. We rely on recalling off duty staff to back fill the station due to operational incidents. If we had adequate staffing levels, we could send appliances to incidents with acceptable crew numbers in the first instance. Having to recall staff puts pressure not only on the off duty members as at times they feel obliged to come in, but also the staff at the station having to maintain a response capacity with less than sufficient numbers.

Interoperability

13. We have experienced issues arising from the lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. These include the Hazelwood Mine Fire as well as a lack of adequate management by the CFA, as evidenced by the following examples:
- a) Lack of critical information regarding safe operating levels for Carbon Monoxide, were not readily available for ground crews at the Hazelwood Mine Fire, and when it did become available it was conflicting.
 - b) Operating instructions for monitoring equipment were not provided to ground crews at the Hazelwood Mine Fire. This resulted in CFA providing some faulty monitoring equipment to ground crews, which was then taken into a hazardous environment.
 - c) The CFA lacked an ability to successfully manage resources at the Hazelwood Mine Fire. The system that was in place certainly show a lack of inter-operability between the Emergency Services involved.

14. We would like to see increased interoperability between the agencies.

Senior Management

15. We believe that there has been a disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees. We believe that as a result of the matters mentioned, we have lost a certain amount of trust and confidence in senior management and believe the relationship may possibly be salvaged.

PPC/PPE Cleaning

16. Current turnaround times for structural PPC is up to 3 weeks. This time is considerably longer if there is a requirement for repairs. As we are only issued three sets of structural PPC, it is common to have operational staff without any Structural PPC.

17. Identified issues with cleaning BA sets post operation. There is no procedure that we can find to clean/wash Breathing apparatus post incident other than wash with water. If we are exposed to Asbestos there is a procedure for our PPC to be bagged and sent for testing, however the BA's usually get hosed down and put back into service without any testing for Asbestos.

RAR Response (Road Accident Rescue)

18. Often the local brigade does not respond within the time allowed for on the CAD data resulting in an additional Rescue being paged, and emergency services having to wait lengthy times for a Rescue to arrive on scene.

19. Qualified staff RAR operators sitting at Ballarat city fire station that could respond within 90 seconds. The Rescue unit could be tied up at a rescue incident on the far west response boundary, when a second Rescue job comes in within the CBD.

Skills maintenance (Courses)

20. We carry both chainsaws and fuse pulling gear on our appliances however we aren't qualified to use them.

21. Chainsaw – Health and safety is compromised for Tanker and even more so Ground Observer crews by not having qualifications in operating of Chainsaws. This is a vital piece of equipment (that's carried on our vehicle) that could assist in access or egress where these appliances are in precarious positions on the fire ground. We cannot get on courses to be trained to use this equipment.

22. Fuse Pulling – we need to be trained and assessed to be able to conduct this action which is required at practically every structure fire we attend to isolate power, as a safety precaution. However we cannot get on courses to be trained and assessed to use this vital equipment. (BR)

23. Volunteer Qualifications and abilities unknown – CFA career staff are trained and endorsed to a specific and known standard, giving crew leaders and incident controllers confidence that staff skills and capabilities are adequate and appropriate for incident mitigation. CFA volunteers are trained to a different standard and level, and there is no way of determining with confidence in an operational capacity the skill level of volunteers, posing a safety risk to both career staff and other volunteers in hazardous situations.(PS)

Fiskville

24. There is a lack of confidence and trust within the CFA about how the Fiskville contamination was dealt with. Some key points of interest include:
- a) Recruit courses as recently as July 2014 being assured by management that Fiskville was safe
 - b) Instructors and course candidates continually exposed to contaminated water and foams.
 - c) Insufficient testing carried out previously.
 - d) No safety measures put in place to help or protect persons exposed to contaminants.
 - e) Lack of information about what had and hadn't been tested.
 - f) Poor communication of the overall management of the situation.

Pumping Pit

25. On the 9/2/2015 the Ballarat City Pumping Pit was closed indefinitely due to contaminated water in the pit.
- a) Since the closure there has been little information regarding what the exposure was and what potential risks staff were exposed to.
 - b) Staff have had to use public lakes to maintain skills.
 - c) No solution has been put in place to resolve the contaminated pit. (BT)

Emergency/Threat/Rescue

26. CFA provides no training or minimal procedural information to fire fighters on how to combat emergencies for many of their statutory requirements (refer EMMV Part 7.(Emergency Management Manual Victoria)).
27. CFA management failed to address the staff at Ballarat City OH&S concerns to a lack of training and skills maintenance for trench rescue. Their only action was to remove the responsibility of trench rescue response from Ballarat City fire station. This has resulted in increased response times to trench rescue incidents for the portion of the Victoria formally serviced by Ballarat City by in excess of 1 to 2 hours and taken away the capacity of Ballarat City to support other distant stations who also provide this response.
28. No set programs by CFA for skills maintenance and skills updating for many qualifications and skills, specifically for vehicles and technical rescue disciplines.

Vehicles

29. Fire fighters spend many hours studying and training to gain qualifications and competencies to drive and operate appliances or equipment including but not limited to rescues, aerial appliances, hazmat appliances, ground observing and technical rescue.
30. Once a firefighter moves to another location/fire station, CFA does not automatically provide skills maintenance opportunities to firefighter to maintain their qualifications if the new work location does not house the same vehicles. Over a short time period the firefighters qualification are no longer current. This loss of qualification results in difficulties in sourcing staff with certain skills to fill vacancies or paying for firefighters to cross the state to ensure an appliance can remain in service. This can also reduce CFA's capacity at major emergencies like Hazelwood mine fire 2014.
31. CFA's only process to allow for skills maintenance of this nature requires approval on a local arrangement. Varying priorities at locations and cost can inhibit this type of training.

Skills maintenance - Technical Rescue

32. Equipment and technique changes within CFA's technical rescue are not communicated to all qualified firefighter's though targeted individual skills maintenance programs to ensure consistency.
33. This generates vastly different skill sets over time between firefighters, yet they hold the same qualification on paper. This hinders both training and operations (responding to emergencies) and can also create health and safety issues.

Staffing for Technical Rescue

34. CFA have no requirement to have or maintain technical rescue qualified staff on duty. CFA and Ballarat City fire station rely on recall, the availability and the good will of off duty staff to provide a response to these emergencies.

No technical Rescue Response Vehicle

35. Fire fighters spend many hours studying and training to gain qualifications and competencies to drive and operate appliances or equipment including but not limited to rescues, aerial appliances, hazmat appliances, ground observing and technical rescue.
36. Technical rescue equipment is stowed on a trailer at Ballarat City and thus cannot be responded under emergency conditions (lights and sirens) to emergencies. This increases response times dramatically, especially given that the travel times can be in excess of 2 to 3 hours by road from the station to an emergency.

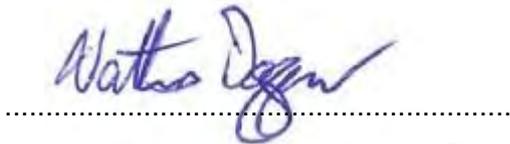
37. Ballarat City does not have a vehicle for technical rescue or a designated vehicle to tow the trailer with the rescue equipment. Staff generally rely on the use of a brigade owned ute that has other roles and may not be available or at the station to use. (This ute is used extensively during the summer fire danger period and is not always available for rescue response).



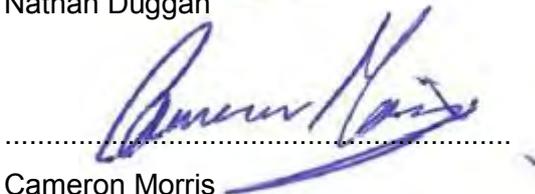
Glenn Bulleen



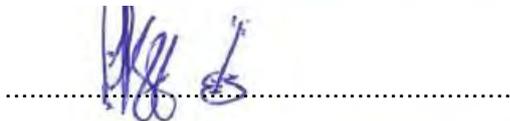
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