

## SUBMISSION OF FRANK HOWELL

1. I, Frank Howell, Station Officer (**SO**), with the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (**MFB**), [REDACTED], in the State of Victoria, say as follows:
2. I have been employed by the MFB for 32 years. I currently hold the rank of SO and I have held that rank for 24 years.
3. As well as holding the rank of SO I hold the following qualifications/memberships:
  - a) Diploma of Fire Technology from Swinburne University
  - b) EMR Qualification
  - c) Ultra Large Pump Qualification
  - d) Breathing Apparatus Qualification
  - e) Wildfire Qualification
  - f) UFU Membership
  - g) ALP Membership
  - h) Institute of Fire Engineers Membership
  - i) Melbourne Cricket Club Membership
4. I have also received the following awards:
  - a) National Medal,
  - b) 30 years service medal,

### **Morale at Work**

5. I feel that the morale at work has decreased during the Napthine Government (2010-2014) as a result of the actions by senior management such as the following:
  - a) Denigration of firefighters and UFU in the press;
  - b) Cutting of fire service budgets;
  - c) Refusal to pass occupational cancer legislation for firefighters; and
  - d) Poor management of the Hazelwood Mine Fire.
6. I feel that the morale at work has also particularly decreased because of the MFB's attempt to set aside the Enterprise Agreement. This conduct resulted in a loss of trust in MFB management as their actions showed willingness to undermining of the MFB's commitment to the protection of firefighters and the community.

### **Equipment and Staffing**

7. The standard of equipment and operational response (including staffing) has decreased during the Napthine Government. This is evidenced in the attempt to detail insufficiently equipped and trained firefighters to attend medical emergencies due to expected heatwaves in February 2014. Additionally it was clear at the Hazelwood mine fire that firefighters were not equipped, resourced and trained to deal with an event of that magnitude.

8. I believe that staffing levels are currently also not adequate to protect the Victorian Community and firefighters. The CFA are yet to implement emergency medical response. Firefighters do not have sufficient resources to implement standard operational procedures to affect rescues. Permanent professional firefighters are not deployed in growth areas of the state. Some areas of the state which currently have professional fire-fighters do not have sufficient staffing and/or equipment.

### **Interoperability**

9. I have experienced issues arising from the lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. Some examples include the following:
  - a) Only some CFA volunteers are trained in BA;
  - b) Hydrant couplings are not compatible;
  - c) Rank structure in the CFA is confusing;
  - d) Turnout/dispatch in the CFA is confusing; and
  - e) CFA equipment is incompatible with MFB training.
10. I would like to see increased interoperability achieved by reinstatement of the secondment program. Also, streamlining and aligning of dispatch, equipment, rank structure and operating procedures will achieve this aim.

### **Senior Management**

11. I believe there has been a disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees resulting from a loss of respect and trust due to the termination case. This caused a feeling that senior management wanted to demonise firefighters and our union publicly and wanted to remove our safety net contained in our enterprise agreement.
12. During this time, attempts by ██████ to interfere with our human rights to organise and ██████ attempt to intimidate fire fighters during the political campaign prior to the last state election have also caused a disconnect with management. Some further examples include:
  - a) ██████ ██████ in his submission to the Fair Work Commission proposed that firefighters numbers be cut when the MFB saw fit without consideration to the community and firefighter safety;
  - b) The use of body guards by management when entering the Fair Work Commission when there was no threat to their safety;
  - c) Targeting and attempted intimidation of employees who used the email system to criticise management.
13. I believe that as a result of the matters mentioned as well as the misuse of the fire service levy monies due to the constant litigation, I have lost trust and confidence in senior management and do not believe that the relationship can be repaired.



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Frank Howell

Date: 18 August 2015