

SUBMISSION OF DARREN PADGETT

1. I, Darren Padgett (on behalf of D Platoon Dandenong), Senior Station Officer (**SSO**), with the County Fire Authority (**CFA**), [REDACTED], in the State of Victoria, say as follows:
2. I have been employed by the CFA for 13 years 2 Months. I currently hold the rank of SSO and I have held that rank for 3 years.
3. As well as holding the rank of SSO I hold the following qualifications/memberships:
 - a. Fire Investigator
 - b. Ground Observing
 - c. EMR Coordinator
 - d. UFU Membership
 - e. Teleboom
 - f. Rescue
 - g. Trench Rescue
 - h. CVR (HASMAT)
 - i. Ladder Platform
 - j. Ariel Pumper
 - k. UFU Membership
 - l. Strike Team leader
4. I have also received National Medal First Class, Emergency Services Medal for Black Saturday, 30 year service medal.

Morale at Work

5. Whilst I do not personally feel that the my morale at work has decreased during the Napthine Government (2010-2014), the following have occurred that have made me question the actions of the Government and CFA Senior Management.
 - a) Firefighters being required to pay the fire services levy
 - b) A feeling that the [REDACTED] did not respect and in fact hated professional firefighters in the CFA.
 - c) Lack of accountability regarding volunteer response.
 - d) Not supporting presumptive legislation for firefighters.
6. The morale has certainly decreased amongst the older serving members particularly due to some of the following events:
 - a) The Chief Officer of the CFA has is resigning/terminated and there are no future staff prospects;
 - b) A general consensus that the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] do not care the welfare of firefighters, i.e. their actions surrounding Fiskville training college and allowing firefighters to train in an unsafe environment and seeking to cover it up.
7. These actions mean that I no longer have any trust or confidence in Senior Management of the CFA and I do not believe this relationship can be repaired.

Equipment and Staffing

8. The standard of equipment and operational response (including staffing) has decreased during the Napthine Government. The CFA still use pagers to notify us our calls. This is old technology which could have significant impact on public safety.
9. Our Tait Radio's are very sub-standard and should be replaced by newer technology.
10. There is also delay in funding for new CFA intergraded Stations.
11. There is also a lack of spare appliances such as stowed pumpers, suitable spare rescues and Ladder Platforms.
12. Staffing levels are currently also not adequate to protect the Victorian Community and firefighters. I believe that the CFA should crew appliances and not stations. We should also have Senior Station Officers and/or Station Officers on all Rescues, Pumps, Aerial Pumpers, Telebooms and Hazmats. Staff should also be in stations when volunteers are on call and population reach a certain number. For example, in Werribee, Warrigal and larger country towns. Additionally, Aerial Pumpers are not being crewed correctly due staffing shortages in the CFA.

Interoperability

13. I have experienced issues arising from the lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. The two organisations cultures are very far apart. This is evident in their equipment and procedures.
14. A clear issue is the CFA and MFB radio network when supporting each other at fire calls. It is unreliable and proves to be an ongoing issue. Also, in relation to GARS response, the CFA do not get called to support the MFB. For example, Dandenong Ladder Platform & Rescue, going into MFB this also happens to the MFB into CFA area.
15. I would like to see increased interoperability between the agencies through use of the same appliances, the same portable radios, staff fire services and separate volunteer fire services. Furthermore, the CFA would also like to see an understanding from the MFB that we hold the same ranks.

Senior Management

16. There has been an evident disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees. This has been the result of the [REDACTED] not knowing how Fire Stations and Firefighters work. At the Springvale Brigade Dinner a couple of weeks ago a [REDACTED] said "I hear you guys are going to start doing EMR soon" Springvale has been doing EMR for about 4 years now. Fiskville is another example, the fact that the current [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. There has been nothing to come out of Headquarters to acknowledge or apologise for this. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

17. I believe that as a result of the matters mentioned, I have lost a certain amount of trust and confidence in senior management. Whilst I maintain my trust in the operational officers and management roles, I question why we require two boards – being the CFA and MFB. A complete change is required to change the culture between operational staff and senior management in order to repair the relationship.