

WITNESS STATEMENT OF B PLATOON GEELONG CITY FIRE STATION

1. We, Damien Raven, Anthony Field, Andrew Shearer, Mathew Geerings, Keith Taylor, Marcus Smith, Luke Anderson, Nathan Brame, and Nick Maheras Firefighters, Leading Firefighters, Station Officers and Senior Station Officers, on behalf of B Platoon Geelong City Fire Station, with the Country Fire Authority (**CFA**), c/- 69 McKillop Street Geelong, 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) as a result of the continual attacks on pay and conditions and the use of public money to do so. Additionally, having public safety compromised due to stations being continually closed as a result of lack of personnel lowers the morale in the workplace. Lastly, the failure to support the presumptive legislation has caused firefighters to question whether the Government took firefighter welfare seriously which had a significant affect of morale.
3. The morale at work has also decreased because of the CFA failing to honour its agreements due to the following reasons:
 - a) It has led to mistrust towards senior management;
 - b) The uncertain future in regards to pay and conditions;
 - c) It is felt that senior managements are attempting to “drive a wedge” between volunteers and professional firefighters; and
 - d) There has been an expected increase in non-operational work tasks, with minimum to no pay increase.

Equipment and Staffing

4. We believe that the standards of equipment and operational response have decreased during the Napthine Government. In some instances, career progression has stalled due to no opportunity for development and the operational response has been affected. The decrease in equipment is also the result of the following:
 - a) Failure to look ahead;
 - b) Ageing appliances with no contingency plans (ie heavy rescue);
 - c) Limited spare vehicles. For example, when Geelong City is offline, we lose a vast majority of equipment and therefore response capabilities; and
 - d) Radios.
5. We also believe that the staffing levels are currently not adequate to protect the Victorian Community and firefighters. There are still many “3 up” stations responding, and first on scene to incidents requiring a minimum of four on the fireground. Geelong City needs to send two appliances into volunteer areas due to lack of staffing on pumpers and a lack of volunteer’s response. Also, many specialist appliances are still unmanned.

Interoperability

6. We have experienced issues arising from lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. Some examples include:
 - a) Different radios resulting in communication issues;
 - b) Different equipment;
 - c) Lack of knowledge of resources and capabilities; and
 - d) Different procedures.
7. We would like to see increased interoperability between the agencies achieved by shared training, standardised equipment, multiagency exercises and better access to secondment opportunities.

Senior Management

8. There is a disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees as a result of the following:
 - a) Minimal support;
 - b) Minimal contact with station staff to investigate and correct issues;
 - c) Distrust as a result of "Fiskville"; and
 - d) Reactive management instead of proactive.
9. As a result of the matters mentioned, we have lost trust and confidence in senior management.
10. We do not believe the relationship can be repaired because of senior management continually renegeing on agreements, attacking our pay and conditions and the use of public money to do so. The responsible members of senior management cannot be forgiven for their actions.


Damien Raven, on behalf of "B Platoon",
Geelong City Fire Station.

Date: 16/08/15