

SUBMISSION OF BRIODY WALKER

1. I, Briody Walker, Qualified Firefighter (**QFF**), with the Country Fire Authority (**CFA**), [REDACTED] in the State of Victoria, say as follows:
2. I have been employed by the CFA for 3 years 6 months . I currently hold the rank of QFF and I have held that rank for 6 months.
3. As well as holding the rank of QFF I hold the following qualifications/memberships:
 - i. Road Rescue qualified
 - ii. Bronto, Teleboom Ariel Pumper increments
 - iii. UFU Member

Morale at Work

4. I feel that the morale at work has decreased during the Napthine Government (2010 – 2014). I only began work for the CFA in early 2012, however, in my few years at the CFA, I have seen morale fall significantly in the lead up to the elections and while Napthine was in power.
5. Most people on station were very concerned. I was personally concerned about my conditions, wages and whether I would have a secure job in the future. I felt unsupported by the CFA and that as a professional firefighter I was a burden to them and that I was not doing a good job. I felt that the CFA did not care about my career and did not want to invest in me. All these worries take their toll on firefighters, myself included. I felt very uncertain about my future for a long time. This was not eased by the fact that my partner is also a firefighter in the CFA and was facing the same uncertain future and worries.
6. The result of the CFA failing to honour its agreements also lowered the morale at work. It is hard to trust the CFA because of this. This means that I question whether the CFA ever had the firefighters best interests at heart when making a decision. I worry about my safety and welfare as a result.

Equipment and Staffing

7. I have had limited service time, however, in my short time of service, I feel that the Union has fought hard to make sure that we have good equipment and more staffing. Both of these areas should of course continue to constantly grow and be reinforced.
8. I feel that despite the Unions attempts, staffing levels are currently inadequate to protect the Victorian Community and firefighters. Firefighters are often put in a position on the fire ground where there is not enough members to safely conduct a first attack (where four on the fire ground are required).
9. Being stationed at Geelong City, I always feel very wary of going to rescue jobs out of Geelong's area with myself and only one other member on the truck. I do not think

this crewing of two and the nature of rescue calls allows the crew leader to really perform their role.

10. With so many more rookies coming onto station, I feel that the level of observation of these new firefighters is not sufficient. We do not have enough crew leaders on station available to adequately supervise so many rookies and Level 1 Firefighters.
11. I also believe that the Victorian community deserves better and that this requires adequate protection from full-time professional firefighters, particularly, in areas where the work load is far too demanding for volunteers. I think a lot of Victorians would feel let down that they are paying their fire service levy and not getting a guaranteed response to emergencies. I think the decision for brigades to go integrated should have very little to do with the brigades themselves and be purely based on the community's needs.

Interoperability

12. I work in Geelong and have not experienced issues arising from the lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. I do, however, want to see increased interoperability between the agencies and believe it would result in more effective outcomes.
13. I believe that we should be able to train together more often. Streamlining our training and procedures makes sense. However, this should not result in decreased training standards in either organisation or decreased expected skill level.
14. For example, in the CFA we train to a standard to ensure our firefighters can come out on shift and manage the particular difficulties associated with firefighting activities in remote and regional areas and the extra responsibilities that attach to this. I think CFA firefighters should work together with MFB firefighters, as both agencies could offer each other new opportunities.

Senior Management

15. There has been an evident disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees. Senior management see their firefighters as nothing more than a number. I am a cost that they have to pay. Most emails received from them are about patting volunteers on the back.
16. Additionally, I am also disgusted at the handling of Fiskville. I am concerned about my long term health. I do not believe that senior management have taken responsibility for their actions in placing myself and other firefighters in the unsafe environment safety at Fiskville.
17. I have lost all trust and confidence in senior management. They fail to communicate honestly and constantly lie to us. Senior Management is disinterested in the welfare of operational staff and seem only interested in their own welfare. I believe there is no way to repair the relationship. I honestly believe we require new management,

with new ideas, that are willing to support professional firefighters and appreciate the work that we do.

Other

18. As a female firefighter, I believe that the CFA has a long way to go in supporting females on fire stations. The policies that the CFA has that are supposed to support and protect me are outdated for women in this workforce. In particular, the maternity policy and sexual harassment policy.

19. The maternity policy is outdated. The CFA provides no health or safety information to pregnant female firefighters. It takes no responsibility by not providing information, putting females and their unborn babies in hazardous situations. When I became pregnant, it was up to me to investigate the risks myself. These are areas that a doctor cannot really help you with as they are not firefighting professionals. They do not understand the risks of a fire ground. I had to gain most of my research from international fire brigades who at least offer information to their firefighters to make informed decisions. CFA also provides no help to OIC's about dealing with pregnant firefighters or finding safe jobs for them to do.

20. Whilst my boss has been great and very supportive, the position would be significantly different of someone with a different employer.



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Briody Walker

Date: 4 August 2015