

SUBMISSION OF STEWART MARSHALL

1. I, Stewart Marshall, Senior Station Officer (**SSO**), with the County Fire Authority (**CFA**) and employed by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) under the secondment program, [REDACTED], in the State of Victoria, say as follows:
2. I have been employed by the CFA for 39 years. I currently hold the rank of SSO and I have held that rank for 30 years.
3. As well as holding the rank of SSO I hold the following qualifications/memberships:
 - i. Operations Officer
 - ii. Marine Firefighting
 - iii. EMR
 - iv. All appliance qualifications (except for RESCUE)
4. I have also received the 35 Long Service Award and the National Medal.

Morale at Work

5. I feel that the morale at work has decreased during the Napthine Government (2010 – 2014). This has been the direct result of uncertainty of employment, proposed casualisation of work force, proposed introduction of changed work practices, proposed changes to recruitment and promotional opportunities.
6. I feel that the morale at work also decreased because of the MFB's attempt to set aside the Enterprise Agreement. The attack on the workforce and the attack on our conditions were the most significant reasons for lowering the morale. As CFA firefighters we remained seriously concerned about the MFB attacks as we were not only concerned about what they might mean for our colleagues in the MFB but also what that might mean to our terms and conditions if the MFB was successful.
7. The result of the CFA failing to honour its agreements has also resulted in a complete lack of trust and a general feeling of uncertainty in the workplace. The CFA made promises that they failed to deliver. The proposal to introduce a restructuring of the workforce to allow volunteers to enter directly, destroyed the morale. Also, the ongoing concerted legal attack on our conditions and their failure to recruit the promised extra firefighters made us all feel as though senior management could not be trusted.

Equipment and Staffing

8. The standard of equipment and operational response (including staffing) has decreased during the Napthine Government. Some examples include appliance delivery, with appliance design stalling during these years. Extra staffing was promised but was not delivered, especially in CFA growth areas. The CFA and MFB should have been working towards aligning the two services during this time, but were in fact forcing them apart with their policies.

9. As firefighters, we should be able to work in a “safe” environment, which means adequate numbers on the fire ground, across the whole of Victoria and from that, the fire services have to be able to deliver a response commensurate with the risk. For example, a house fire in Wodonga should have the same number and capacities of fire fighters and equipment responding as should a house fire in Sunshine. The people of Victoria should feel safe and protected at all times across the state, no matter where they live.

Interoperability

10. I have experienced issues arising from the lack of interoperability between the CFA and MFB. A clear issue is the CFA and MFB radio network when supporting each other at fire calls. The radio systems do not “talk” to each other and provide unreliable network. Also, differing hose connections and sizes, differing breathing apparatus designs, as well as the variances in operating procedures makes it difficult to run a fire or an incident.
11. I would like to see increased interoperability between the agencies through widening and increasing the “secondment” program. Ultimately, the CFA and MFB align much more closely to provide an efficient and cost-effective safety solution to fire services in Victoria.

Senior Management

12. There has been an evident disconnect between Senior Management in the fire services and their employees. Most senior management people in both the CFA and MFB are more interested in their own career progression and not about the welfare of firefighters and fire service delivery.
13. I have lost all trust and confidence in this current cohort of senior management as they are more concerned about looking for minor infractions of policy or practices than developing a workable and coherent plan for the fire protection of the State. I do believe that the relationship can be repaired but it would require significant changes in the top levels of management as well as changes to policy, a change of culture and more closely aligning the services to provide for better interoperability outcomes.

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Stewart Marshall

Date: 6 August 2015