

I start this submission by saying thank you for the opportunity to have a say. The following will be a heart felt account of my run in with CFA heirachy and its inability to acknowledge problems within the Cfa volunteer ranks or resolve issues.

I joined the CFA as an enthusiastic community member willing to give back to the town I had chosen to live in. I was an outdoorsy person with a love for nature and found myself working with three cfa members in the vineyard industry. They encouraged me to join and thus began my cfa career.

I completed minimal skills training but already noticed that there were not many female firefighters and there was an air of masoganism. I quickly realised that females were not given an easy ride. Having come from an agricultural background I had already experienced discrimination and lack of female support but learnt that in order to fit in sometimes you take what comes. But in emergency services where we are all supposed to be on the same page I would have expected better.

At the end of 2006 I found myself up in the high country on striketeams and learnt a lot. I realised that I had a passion for helping and soon became an active member in most fields of the cfa. However I still met with Blokey attitudes and found myself having to prove myself a lot as well. The thought of complaining never crossed my mind. You have a choice as a volunteer. You can walk away at any time.

As a couple years passed I noticed that the cfa was a very cliky group. Volunteers split themselves into groups. That's where the trouble begins. But worst of all I witnessed bullying, discrimination and a lack of interest by cfa heirachy to intervene. Complaints were often not resolved. Instigators never reprimanded and good passionate people leave disheartened and bitter rather than complain.

In 2008 after many turnouts and still heaps of enthusiasm, despite realising I was in one giant boys club, I completed my crew leaders course. I didn't realise this was to become the biggest mistake of my life. I knew that I had upset male longterm members of the brigade when upon my return from the course, happy as because I passed, I wasn't greeted with enthusiasm but a "now you have done it" and "watch your back". I was appalled.

I was instructed by cfa heirachy not to upset the applectart, accept a mentor, which I never got, and carry on. I persisted despite the bullying,

harassment name calling. I honestly thought this cant go on for ever. Little did I know it would.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In 2010 I finally realised the cfa was not going to do anything. Swept under the carpet is how I felt. The cfa I had once loved was not what it seems to be. I persisted as a member for another year or so. But as I had complained life was not easy. Even though myself and to others were the victims. I sought legal

action. Maurice and Blackburn took up my case and for the last four years have fought a long hard battle. This could all have been avoided if the cfa heirachy would have dealt with the situation properly right from the start. At the end of all of this I have lost my life, job, friends. I have been diagnosed with PTSD and am on disability support. I no longer enjoy the same quality of life. And all because of what. The failure of the cfa to put its volunteers first, as promised when you join.

At the end of last year I was awarded compensation for my trouble. I have managed to recoup a little of my life losses. The money the cfa faulked out to do this could have been better spent elsewhere if they had only listened. I will never recover from what happened to me. The worst part is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Still lives the same life. We don't and we were the victims. The cfa Blueshirt who listened and did nothing along with all the rest of them should be ashamed of themselves. Why are they there? Why do they think that good hearted volunteers are dispensable?

I could go on for a few more pages about ill felt feelings towards the cfa and the way its run. I even have a few suggestions for change. But the last six years of my life have been a misery thanks to inaction by the cfa. I have spoken till I was blue in the face all because I thought that as a volunteer we do have some rights. But it seems they are stuck in an archaic world. And god help any of us that have a heart or conviction.

As a side note I wish to add that I did not join alone. My partner also joined at the same time. He is now no longer a member as he stood by me in my plight. He too has felt the lapsidaisicle wrath of the cfa. But chose not to stand up and have a say after he saw what the system had done to me.

To this day none of us have received an apology. We just faded away like most people end up doing. Those of us who do not wish to treated like shit. I feel sorry for all of those disaffected members past and present who never said anything or ever will and are living a miserable life even though they are the victims. Wake up CFA time for change.

Any proof to the above can be found at CFA headquarters in Burwood and Maurice Blackburn P/L.

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