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RECEIVED 21 OCT 2014

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From:
Sent: Monday, 20 October 2014 10:52 PM
To: DCS:Minister Piccolo
Subject: Sector reform

GDAY

Possible sector reform of MFS, CFS, SES and SAFECOM.

To whom it may concern,

The following are the concerns and thoughts of a 30 year plus member of the SES, 5 years in Mildura Victoria and now continuing my SES volunteer career in South Australia.

There have been many rumors of change over the years, some good and some bad. In over 30 years as a volunteer with the SES I have seen many changes.

This appears to be the biggest change that has been put up, however without consultation and information flow this will create issues that could drag the moral down to a level that may not be sustainable.

I have seen the introduction of the 132 500 number, this is now answered by paid staff at the MFS call centre, this change has brought about the biggest downfall of the SES, we have been given excuses that some of the issues that we have had are human error. This should not be happening as regularly as it is. It has been denied, but the call takers appear to pick and choose which emergency service they send to which incidents.

As far as duplication of services goes, if the call takers are properly trained this issue should not arise, many of the incidents that we are tasked to, have NOT required the attendance of MFS as well as SES. The excuse that we often get is that it was a life threat, this is ridiculous, as there is rarely any need for a paid fire service to attend with lights and siren blaring to an incident that they deem priority 2 for the SES.

I have volunteered with SES for over 30 years now,	NO PAYMENT required.
I have given my time each week for training,	NO PAYMENT required.
I have given up many weekends for training and incidents,	NO PAYMENT required.
I have traveled interstate for incidents,	NO PAYMENT required.
I have, along with many others have trained many volunteers,	NO PAYMENT required.
I am proud to have assisted the community in times of need,	NO PAYMENT required.
My family has supported my SES career	NO PAYMENT required.

There have been many members that have come and gone over the years, some for personal reasons, if these possible changes are not communicated properly and accurately, there will be many many more that I believe will leave the service.

The following are some issues that I would like clarified before I can wholeheartedly support the possible changes.

What is meant by 'surge capacity', this DOES need some explanation for the mere volunteers? Does this mean that SES volunteers will just sit at home waiting for the paid service to be exhausted, to be deployed at the whim of the government?

I believe an apology is required to all volunteers after the comment from Treasurer Koutsantonis when he told Channel 7: not just CFS.

"There are thousands of other volunteers who'll take their place."(11/09/14)

What support will be given to SES units in regards to administration, as I hear that more and more paperwork may be pushed to unit level?

How is the autonomy at volunteer level going to be maintained? What levels of responsibility will be maintained for the 3 operational services?

It was also suggested that we would have paid staff to answer to, directly related to our services, where are they to be based?

What badge and uniform will SES wear, we currently have a state badge and orange uniform that we are all proud to wear?

Will there be separate funding for each organisation, with equitable funding for SES? It has been seen that the one that shouts loudest always wins the prize.

Which organisation, will the Incident Commanders with AIMS qualifications come from to run major incidents around the state (for example major storms, floods and other incidents)? I am sure that there would be very few from the fire services that understand the incidents that SES attend to.

Why is no-one informing the volunteers of the detail of the changes? The moral of SES volunteers is dropping and will become worse if information is not forthcoming.

This appears to be a cost saving exercise, so why is there no investigation into the roster system in place for MFS, the roster that we see appears to give MFS staff many days off? Surely this could be looked at to see if there were any cost savings changes that could be made.

Could cost savings be gained by ridding the services of SAFECOM, to this day I have no real no idea of exactly what this organisation does.

It has been suggested that services will be cut, to remove duplication in certain areas. How can we be assured that the volunteers will get a fair chance at keeping their autonomy?

Duplication of services is a major issue with metro SES units, not only the fact that they are there, but the fact that SES and MFS and sometimes CFS are all called to the same incident. The majority of these incidents have been identified that a volunteer service such as the SES could have handled the task with ease, without the need to utilise a paid service at all.

Yours for FREE,

SES.