

#81

Songer, Rachael (DCS)

From: Adams, Leanne (SES)
Sent: Wednesday, 17 September 2014 4:55 PM
To: DCS:Minister Piccolo
Subject: Discussion Paper - Diversity and Equity

Categories: Rachel

Minister Piccolo

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper regarding SA Fire Emergency and Rescue.

I see a lot of benefit from amalgamating some emergency services' support activities such as training, operations support and some administration functions, there are many efficiencies to be found and re-invested back into the organisation. I write firstly to say that I would be very interested in participating in some of the review activities particularly in relation to a resourcing model for the Sector as I wrote the CFS Standards of Fire and Emergency Cover and was also involved in the interagency Emergency Services Delivery Standards Project several years ago.

I don't have specific comments on the paper's contents, I think the proposals and principles are generally sound and I look forward to seeing more details. My key comment relates to equity and diversity across the agencies. I have worked in Emergency Services for over 18 years mostly working for CFS, a year (so far) at SES and have worked extensively with all agencies during operational and day-to-day activities. The Emergency Services Sector is very much dominated by Anglo-Saxon men and often men with a strength in operational activities (as opposed to planning activities, project management or people management in a business environment). While we (of course) need these guys in the emergency services there is a clear lack of diversity across the services with minimal participation from women in management, leadership and operational roles. One only needs to look at the pictures in discussion paper for a representation of this (by the way that's me in the foreground on page 12).

I believe this lack of diversity greatly influences the ability (or lack thereof) of our services to adequately look after our people on a day to day basis and during incidents, it influences our level of planning and preparedness, it hinders the decision making process as well as reducing the appropriateness of the decisions that are made because half of the population is often not represented in that process.

While Emergency Services often attract men in greater proportion there are many (many) things that could be improved to increase the attractiveness of the services to women, to provide increased opportunities for women and for under-represented groups and to provide an environment that supports all people. This is generally not seen as an issue by many men in the services and they are not seeing that women are either needing to be restricted to administrative roles or to behave like men to be accepted in operational roles, to not be accepted at all or to leave the services (Observe the demographics of the CFS operational staff and consider the level of satisfaction of the few female staff there).

I would be more than happy to elaborate on any of the points above or to contribute to the process in any way.

Regards

Leanne Adams
Senior Project Officer | SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE