

# TFS-SES CULTURE REVIEW REPORT

Building Positive,  
Respectful and Inclusive  
TFS and SES Cultures



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Tasmania  
Fire Service



# The Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES) keep people safe from fires, floods, and storms

These organisations have a long history and are made up of:

- ➔ **Career professionals** (paid workers)
- ➔ **Volunteers** (people who work for free)

They work together to protect communities across Tasmania



## Why ?

### Why was a Culture Review done?

A good workplace culture means people feel safe, respected, and supported at work. The TFS and SES work in high-pressure situations and face challenges like:



More fires, floods, and storms due to climate change



Changing community needs



Plans to formally unite TFS and SES

To help improve the workplace for everyone, a culture review was done. This means experts looked at how people feel at work and when volunteering and what could be better.

## What 🔍

### What did the Review look at?

The review helped understand:



Diversity, respect, and trust in the workplace



Problems like bullying and sexual harassment



Everyday sexism, racism, and discrimination

This review did not look at individual complaints. Instead, it looked at overall workplace culture and how it can improve.

## Who 👤 Who did the Review?

Elizabeth Broderick & Co (EB&Co) did the review. EB&Co looked at the workplace culture in:

- ➔ The Tasmania Fire Service (TFS)
- ➔ The State Emergency Service (SES)

This was called **the Review**.

# Who took part in the Review?

1,250



TFS and SES employees and volunteers shared their thoughts through ▶

1,057



employees and volunteers completed a survey (22% of the workforce)

140



private one-on-one chats

24



written submissions

8



small group discussions

We looked at important documents and policies



## What we learned through doing the Review



**Different Teams,  
Different  
Experiences**

- Firefighters, emergency workers, volunteers, and support staff don't always feel connected
- Different teams around Tasmania have different workplace cultures
- These differences affect safety, inclusion, and teamwork
- For a strong workplace, all teams must feel equal and included



**Inclusion is still  
a Challenge**

Many people understand why inclusion matters, but ...  
Some behaviours and attitudes still exclude people

**Problems include:**



- Feeling undervalued or ignored
- Favouritism (some people get special treatment)
- Fear of speaking up about problems
- Resistance to change

**Women face extra challenges:**



- Few women in leadership roles
- Old ideas about what women can do
- Women in operational roles can feel excluded and disrespected



## Workplace Harm is a Problem

Bullying and harassment happen across TFS and SES



**1 in 5 people**

**23%**

experienced bullying  
in the last 5 years



**1 in 6 people**

**15%**

experienced bullying  
in the last 12 months

Different people have  
different experiences  
of workplace harm

There is low confidence  
in change



believe bullying will  
be addressed



believe TFS/SES will  
take action



experienced sexual  
harassment in the last  
5 years



**1 in 10 people**

**10%**

experienced sexual  
harassment in the last  
12 months

Reporting workplace harm is also an issue for many  
people across the TFS and SES



think bullying and  
harassment complaints  
are taken seriously



believe that action is  
taken against bullies –  
even if they are senior  
leaders



## Leadership is Inconsistent

### Leaders set the tone for workplace culture

#### Some leaders:

- ➔ Support inclusion and teamwork
- ➔ Make people feel safe to speak up



#### Other leaders:

- ➔ Use old-fashioned “*command-and-control*” styles
- ➔ Ignore workplace problems like bullying and favouritism
- ➔ Are not held accountable for poor behaviour



Many staff and volunteers feel that good leadership depends on the individual leader, rather than clear standards across TFS and SES



## Volunteers Feel Left Out

Volunteers are a big part of the workforce, but ... Many feel undervalued and disconnected from leadership

#### What needs to change?

- ➔ Better training for volunteer leaders
- ➔ A fairer way to choose leaders that includes everyone and is based on leadership skills



## Policies and Reporting Systems Need Fixing

There is a big gap between the rules (policies) and real-life experiences

#### Problems with reporting workplace harm:

- ➔ People don't trust the system
- ➔ There is fear of punishment for speaking up
- ➔ Some people feel that reports are not handled well



#### What needs to change?

- ➔ Stronger protections for people who report problems
- ➔ Clearer policies that match real workplace needs
- ➔ Better training on workplace behaviour, inclusion, and safety





## People Don't Feel Safe Speaking Up

A safe workplace means people can speak up about problems without fear

But many employees and volunteers don't trust the reporting system because:



- ➔ They fear retaliation (being punished for speaking up)
- ➔ Past reports have been ignored
- ➔ There is a culture of silence – people feel they must stay quiet

This means harmful behaviours continue instead of being fixed



## Key Areas for Improvement

The review found six important areas that need improvement to create a safe, fair, and inclusive workplace.

These areas work together to build a stronger and more effective team

1

Improve leadership  
and accountability



4

Ensure fairness  
and transparency



2

Make the workplace  
safer for everyone



5

Support  
underrepresented  
groups



3

Bring teams together  
and recognise efforts



6

Use data to track  
and improve culture



A better workplace



A stronger, more  
effective team