STATEMENT OF KATE LOUISE HARRAP

I, Kate Louise Harrap, of 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria, Executive Director (Acting) CFA Learning and Volunteerism, state the following:

1. I am Acting in the role of Executive Director Learning and Volunteerism at the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

2. I am authorised by the CFA to make this statement on its behalf.

3. I make this statement from my own knowledge except where otherwise indicated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true.

My background

4. I have been employed by the CFA since April 2009.

5. I have been in my current role since March 2015. I report to Lucinda Nolan, Chief Executive Officer. In this role I am responsible for leading and managing the CFA’s Learning and Volunteerism Directorate (L&V). This Directorate is accountable for the development and delivery of operational and support training to CFA firefighters and volunteers as well as the development of volunteer support services across the CFA. It is comprised of the following functional areas:

   (a) Frontline Learning & Development (Core, Specialist, Career and Volunteer Professional Learning and Development);

   (b) Statewide Training Infrastructure (Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) Operations, Facility Services, Administration);

   (c) Organisational Performance (Data & Intelligence, Performance Improvement); and
6. Prior to that, I held the role of Manager Volunteerism. In this role I was responsible for developing CFA’s volunteerism strategy, including statewide planning, volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition and leading support program's to encourage, maintain and strengthen volunteers. For example, I led and implemented the CFA’s Volunteer Support Program which was focussed on improving support, tools and resources for volunteers, including the recruitment of 59 additional CFA employees to enhance direct support for volunteers.

7. Prior to that, I was employed as CFA Regional Human Resource Manager.

8. Prior to being employed by the CFA, I held various managerial roles at Hewlett-Packard.

9. I hold a Bachelor of Business from Swinburne University.

**Training at the CFA**

10. I understand that this matter concerns the inability of public sector fire services, including the CFA, to employ operational firefighters on a part-time basis under the *Fire Fighting Industry Award 2010 (Award).*

11. I refer to the witness statements of Cory Woodyatt, Patrick Geary, Malcolm Hayes, Gerald (Archie) Conroy, John Radford and Michael Lia all of whom express concerns, in one way or another, that if the CFA were permitted to engage part-time firefighters, those individuals would not have sufficient skills maintenance and training, nor the same career progression opportunities as their full-time counterparts.

12. I do not consider there would be any impediment to the CFA being able to deliver the requisite and ongoing operational training requirements to part-time firefighters.

13. It is in the CFA’s and employees’ interests to ensure that sufficient skills are acquired and maintained by career firefighters, regardless of the number of hours they work.

14. The CFA has in place suitable systems (training and assessment strategies, instructors, trainers and assessors, facilities, equipment and practices) to ensure that all current and prospective firefighters are suitably trained. In my view, the current
systems could also be suitably adapted to accommodate the training needs of part-time firefighters, if modifications were in fact needed.

15. In terms of initial recruit training, formal training to become a career firefighter commences with an 18 week recruit course on a 4 days on, 4 days off basis (to reflect the 10/14 roster that career firefighters currently work).

16. In relation to recruit volunteers, the CFA has already adopted flexible practices in order to train these members. Recruit training for CFA volunteers is delivered through a diverse delivery model across the State of Victoria, utilising brigades, groups, districts and regions to ensure that all necessary training requirements are achieved, prior to a member becoming an operational firefighter. This training is delivered flexibly, at times, locations and in formats that are suitable to address local risk and volunteer needs.

17. If the CFA engaged part-time firefighters and determined that flexible recruit training options needed to be offered to them, the precise nature of these arrangements could be determined at the appropriate time.

18. The witnesses also raise concerns regarding the skills maintenance training that could be provided to part-time firefighters. Currently, ongoing skills maintenance and acquisition for career firefighters is undertaken primarily on station and through attending conferences and professional development courses. It is up to the individual officers in charge of a station to determine how and when on-station skills maintenance is delivered. This discretion allows station management the flexibility to deliver on-station training in a manner which best suits the needs of their crews, including adopting training schedules which in future could accommodate part time employees.

19. Promotion to senior operations roles, that of Operations Officer and Operations Manager positions is largely driven by individuals and dependent on their desire to seek out promotional opportunities and apply for and undertake the necessary training to obtain the qualifications required to reach those goals.

20. Should the CFA seek to engage part-time employees in the future, custom training and development frameworks would need to be developed to ensure flexible and fit for purpose opportunities are available at times and in locations to suit these employees and address organisational service delivery.
21. Another concern raised by some of these witnesses relates to specialist response training (e.g. response, rescue, driver training, management and leadership skills). This type of training involves the concentrated development of detailed and specific technical learning. The CFA’s state wide training calendar schedules a number of specialist skills courses annually. The suitability of these arrangements for part-time employees would be a matter for future consideration if part-time employees were engaged by the CFA.

22. Whilst the CFA’s current training regime may need to be adapted in some instances to accommodate part-time arrangements, I do not consider the level of learning and development services offered to those employees would be compromised because they do not work full-time on a 10/14 roster (or an average of 42 hours per week). It would be a matter of considering the needs of part-time employees and how best to cater for those needs to ensure they obtain and maintain the skills and capabilities required of their role.

**Future learning and development strategy**

23. The ability to engage career firefighters on a part-time basis would also support the CFA’s current and future learning and development strategy.

24. The CFA has made training the number one priority for the organisation to ensure current and future business and service delivery needs are addressed.

25. In 2015, the CFA reviewed its Fire & Emergency Management Training Strategy, and made a number of critical adjustments to organisational structure, priorities and training programs in order to improve the quality of its training framework.

26. As a result of this review, CFA has committed to, amongst other things:

(a) offering more flexible access to specific training at times and in locations that suit members;

(b) ensuring it builds and develops the capability for all members to perform their roles; and

(c) ensuring it has the capacity to meet current and future service delivery demands, based on risk.

27. In my view, flexible delivery arrangements support a more contemporary and adaptive approach to building the capabilities required of our career firefighters.
The increasing focus on flexibility training within the CFA would help support the training needs of a part-time firefighter.

Kate Louise Harrap
18 April 2016