UTILISING GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT TO DRIVE CULTURAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has undergone significant change over recent years. This level of change within the department has proven challenging from a cultural perspective. In effect, QFES is an amalgam of cultures from three very different services, with staff identifying strongly with their service of origin. For many, the potential loss of cultural identity and the feeling of 'constant change' has been challenging to accept.

Given the extent of change, it has been imperative for QFES to better understand how its staff are managing through these changes. Since 2013, assessments have been undertaken into workplace climate through the annual Queensland Government *Working for Queensland Employee Opinion* Survey. To complement these, in 2015, the *Commissioner's Future of QFES* survey was also conducted to gauge elements of QFES' culture. Both surveys provide valuable information on the workplace pre- and post-merger, however do not necessarily provide a full assessment.

In 2015 and 2017, to supplement the surveys, QFES conducted extensive staff consultation throughout the department to unpack the survey results, better understand the causes, effects and possible solutions to issues staff are confronting. This research has been invaluable for management to develop actions and initiatives to make QFES a better place to work. Areas of greatest concern for staff include:
- Relationship and communication with QFES management;
- Equity in, and accessibility to, performance management, recruitment, promotion and training opportunities;
- Integration of, and communication amongst, QFES services;
- Harassment and bullying;
- Workload and its effect on staff health and wellbeing;
- Change and contract management practices; and
- Approval processes and red tape.

Over the last four years, there has been increased understanding by management at all levels, regarding the importance of both the survey results and consultation findings, and consequently more commitment to working with staff to improve the workplace. Learnings have resulted in greater understanding across the department regarding the importance of workforce engagement and communication, both for attracting and retaining valued and capable staff, and for building a positive, inclusive and empowering culture.

The consultation process was not without challenges including issues due to a diverse and distributed workforce, change resistance and fatigue, competing priorities across the department, maturity in understanding the benefits of workforce consultation and difficulty in maintaining momentum to address issues.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2013, the Queensland government has surveyed its workforce to gauge their views on issues such as workplace climate, job satisfaction, leadership and management. This is done through the *Working for Queensland Employee Opinion* (WfQ) survey, conducted by an independent provider and facilitated by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The survey is an opportunity for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) staff to have their say and make a difference in their workplace. It provides insight into the QFES workforce and the issues that matter to them. Results are analysed at an organisational and strategic level through strategic and organisational factors, and at a local level through workplace indices (refer to Appendix A). Feedback is taken on board by management and helps shape the future direction of the department.

To support this work, biennially QFES conducts regional and state office consultation to further unpack the results of the survey and work with staff to look at solutions to issues they are confronting. Staff consultation was first conducted in 2015 with the first summary report produced in March 2016. Fifty-five recommendations were contained in the report. A recent review found approximately half have been implemented in full or part, demonstrating the workforce's insight into resolving workplace issues.

BACKGROUND

The benefits of undertaking employee consultation and feedback are widely established including improved workplace engagement, productivity and effectiveness of change (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). Organisational development theory (Griffin, Saville, Smith & Alsop, 2011), change management practice (Kotter, 2012, Prosci, 2018) and workforce engagement specialists (Bersin, 2014; Romans & Tobanen, 2016, Saks, 2006), demonstrate the key role employees have in any change strategy. They recognise that people and collaboration are key features of any change and realise the importance of staff involvement in change, including how change will be implemented.

Working from these theories it was determined in 2015 that in addition to the administration of surveys, QFES would conduct workforce consultation through staff forums and other workforce meetings, across the organisation. This represented an opportunity to have as many staff as possible involved in suggesting the nature of changes to QFES operations and business, and how these would be implemented. It ensured a cross section of the workforce was consulted prior to the implementation of any workplace change initiatives and provided leverage to staff commitment to change. This process was repeated in 2017.

METHOD

The WfQ survey results were released by the PSC in September 2017. The Culture, Change and Engagement Unit (CCEU) presented the organisational results to the Executive Leadership Team in October. Regional and Directorate presentations were coordinated by CCEU, working with staff from across the Human Capital Management (HCM) Directorate, with additional staff from other Directorates involved to provide independence during consultation with HCM staff.

Regional and state forums and station visits occurred from October 2017 to April 2018. Station meetings were conducted with a cross section of permanent, composite and auxiliary crews, for one to two hours. Staff forums were conducted between two and four hours with discussion centred on identified topic areas in the format:

- Causes
- Effects
- Solutions

Participants were provided the opportunity to discuss other concerns or issues during each session. In line with psychological safety research (Edmondson, 1999), at the commencement of each forum and meeting, facilitators reinforced the confidentiality of the meetings with participants and the need for the sessions to be safe spaces for people to share their concerns and ideas for improvement. Staff were offered the opportunity to speak confidentially with facilitators after the sessions were conducted, with several staff across the state taking up these opportunities. Over 860 staff were involved in the consultation process in 73 workplaces.

On completion of the forums and meetings, analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken by facilitators led by CCEU. Utilising the framework presented by Rabiee (2004), interpretation of comments was achieved by considering the following:

- context (influence of facilitator and group members);
- internal consistency (consistency in opinions of individuals);
- frequency (how often a comment is made);
- intensity (depth of feeling in which comments are expressed);
- specificity (comments based on personal experience); and
- big picture (trends or concepts that emerge from an accumulation of evidence).

RESULTS

Strengths

Results in several factors and workplace indices demonstrate consistently high positive scores and improved satisfaction over the years. Figure 1 demonstrates this trend since 2015.
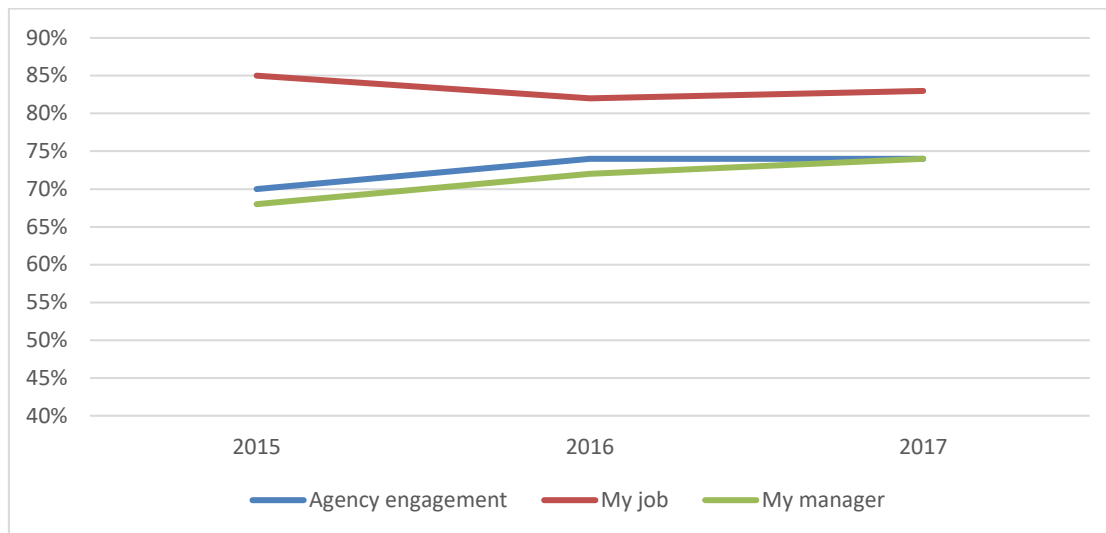

Figure 1: Yearly trend data for factors

Organisational Engagement

QFES scored very highly on questions related to organisational engagement. At 74%, QFES scored 15 percentage points higher than the average for the Queensland Public Sector (QPS). Staff believed it was the 'nature of the organisation' and the 'type of people who work for QFES' that make people feel engaged with the organisation. They believed most joined the department to assist the community. It is their values, beliefs and sense of purpose in the roles, that gives them passion for the job and the organisation.

My job

Many respondents were highly satisfied with their current job; 83% were positive, five percentage points above the QPS score and a 1% increase on 2016 data. Various reasons were provided for these positive scores including enjoyment of work, job security, satisfaction with salary and job benefits, loyalty to the organisation and workgroup; opportunities to work with the wider community, rewarding work, helping people and making a difference.

Research (PSC, 2018) suggests people who find purpose in their roles are more engaged and likely to report positive sentiments towards their work, the people they work with and their organisation. Ensuring staff find purpose in their work is a key to QFES continuing to have an engaged and committed workforce.

My Manager

The results of the survey suggest many staff (74%) are satisfied with their direct supervisor or manager, with 80% believing their manager treats them with dignity and respect and 79% believing their manager demonstrates honesty and integrity. As demonstrated in Figure 1, there has been a steady increase in perceptions of management since 2015.

The key role a manager plays in creating an engaged workforce cannot be underestimated (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Shuck, Rocco & Albornoz, 2011). For those who felt treated well by

their manager, survey results show engagement and job satisfaction is significantly higher (Figure 2). Having managers that understand the importance of supporting staff by treating them with respect, understanding their work and creating purpose, will ensure QFES continues to deliver quality services to our communities and stakeholders.
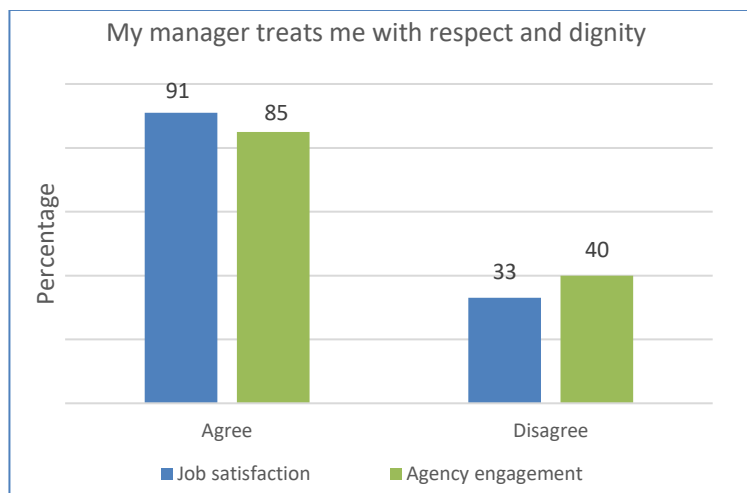

Figure 2: Job satisfaction and agency engagement x treatment by manager

Opportunities for Improvement

Leadership

Results from the WfQ survey and commentary from staff indicate some dissatisfaction with QFES leadership. Although survey results show a slight improvement in satisfaction with leadership (1%), satisfaction remains low at 52%, with 21% of staff dissatisfied with organisational leadership.

Several causes for dissatisfaction with leadership were provided by staff including inconsistent decision making and a lack of visibility and communication with leaders. Staff observed managers being 'too busy' and struggling because they were not receiving support from their managers. There were perceptions managers have insufficient training in administrative functions.

New questions were included in the WfQ survey in 2017 concerning the attributes staff currently observe and want to see in their leaders. The results were analysed across four management levels: team leader, program manager, senior officer and senior leader; based on the Workforce Capability Success Profiles (PSC, 2017). They provide valuable information on skills needing development in our leaders and managers at all levels.

It is clear from the data staff want leaders to demonstrate a range of skills, however staff specifically require:

- Ethical leadership;
- Effective and confident decision making;
- Managers that give staff the tools, information and authority to do their job well;
- Support for new ideas and business improvement; and
- Managers who actively seek feedback from staff to improve their skills.

Fairness and Trust

Survey questions regarding fairness in decision making, anti-discrimination and related topics, highlight that many staff do not see clear, transparent processes being followed. Staff observed decision making that does not align with policies or values, inconsistent

recruitment and promotion processes, and a lack of appropriate performance reviews, and training for supervisors in people management.

Operational staff voiced concerns regarding current recruitment processes and perceived reverse discrimination in favour of minority groups. Concerns from non-operational staff centred around a lack of fairness regarding opportunities for learning, development, awards and entitlements. Administrative staff commented there were few opportunities for promotion unless they left the department. This was particularly evident outside the south-east corner of the state.

Communication

Results from the survey indicate 60% of staff receive the information they need to do their job. Results also demonstrate the importance of good communication to improving engagement, perceptions of leadership and organisational trust (Figure 3).
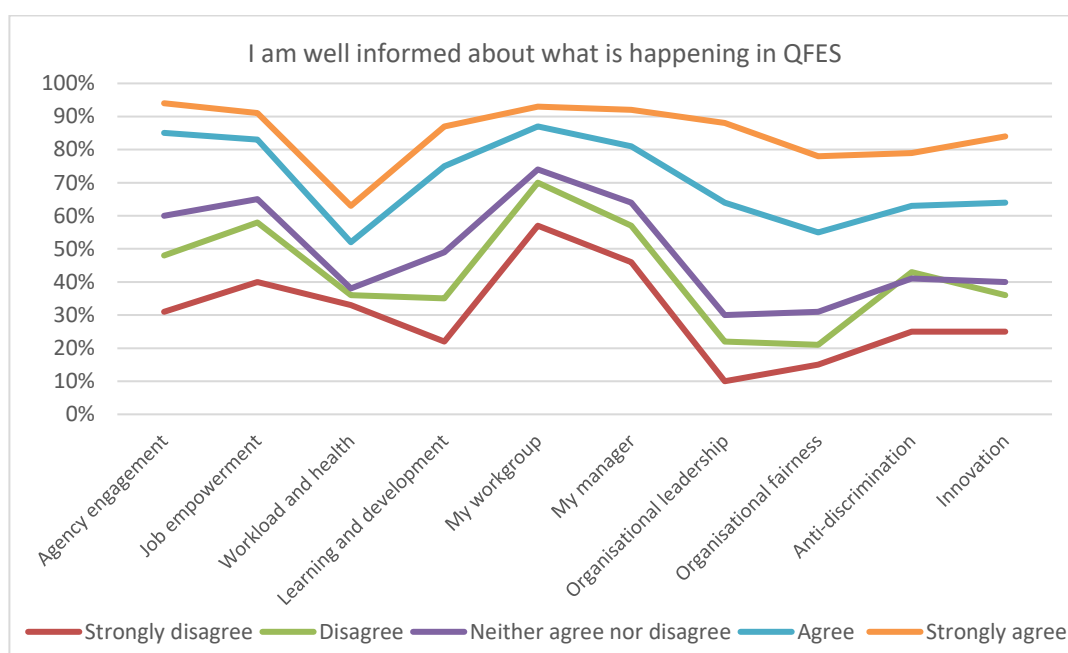

Figure 3: Influence of effective communication on workplace factors

Despite these positive results, staff consistently expressed concern regarding the effectiveness and means of communication across the department. Issues contributing to poor communication included the existence of silos and lack of communication around initiatives, achievements and unit capabilities. Staff identified a need for more communication between teams, to reduce confusion about responsibilities.

Staff identified a lack of communication pathway for innovation and ideas, along with a lack of clear communication around changes to work practices. There was a consensus that handovers between incoming and outgoing staff could be better managed to reduce duplication of work and reduce staff frustration.

Effectiveness and Innovation

Survey results indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with bureaucracy and approval processes, which is consistent across the public service. Only 16% of staff believe approval processes are not excessive and there is not too much 'red tape'. Questions concerning new ideas and implementing better ways of working indicate staff are feeling stifled. 59% are encouraged to make suggestions about improving work processes and services, however only 46% believe management are willing to act on their suggestions, and 47% feel QFES is open to new ideas.

Staff expressed frustration with excessive approval processes; processes that are convoluted and are not introduced well, slowing change and limiting effectiveness. Some noted not acknowledging when things are not working properly, stifled innovation. Others described the level of bureaucracy to implement new programs and courses, as unnecessary.

Forum comments suggest QFES needs to improve change management, including consultation with impacted staff and training to enhance understanding and managing resistance to change. Staff felt change management principles could be better incorporated into project management, and contract management could be improved to ensure service level agreements and contract requirements are met.

Safety, Health and Wellness

47% of staff responded positively to workload and health questions however, 18% felt overloaded with work and 23% felt work had a negative impact on their health. New questions concerning staff wellbeing and flexible work arrangements, indicate only half of respondents felt senior leaders consider staff wellbeing important. Regarding flexibility, 70% believe their workgroup assists them to ensure flexible work arrangements meet their needs, however only half had proactive discussions with their manager regarding flexibility. 38% felt their commitment wouldn't be questioned if they chose to use flexible work options.

During consultation there was a perception staff across the department didn't understand stressors in other work areas, while some felt they have responsibility for fixing problems out of their control along with feelings of personal commitment which lead to exhaustion.

Other staff experience confrontational stress with customers, while others were frustrated with the 'excessive requirement' for briefing notes and felt overwhelmed because there were few opportunities for 'catch up time'.

Staff felt clear communication was required regarding role requirements, both for role clarity and motivation. The importance of supportive managers and co-workers and positive teamwork was also highlighted. Another topic that resonated with most groups was the need for performance plans to provide an avenue for regular feedback to staff, and to develop skills and confidence.

Workplace Conduct

Of those who responded, 76% had not witnessed harassment or bullying in the last 12 months, while 84% had not experienced harassment or bullying in the last 12 months. These figures are an improvement on 2016 and a steady improvement since 2015.

Issues raised in forums concerned possible lack of understanding of performance conversations compared to bullying which could potentially be addressed through training and communication. The amount of time taken, the stress and a lack of transparency in the complaints management and discipline processes, were identified as deterrents to reporting behaviour. People recognised the need for staff to have confidence to speak up but that this was not always evident. Figure 4 demonstrates the importance of an environment where people feel confident to raise complaints.
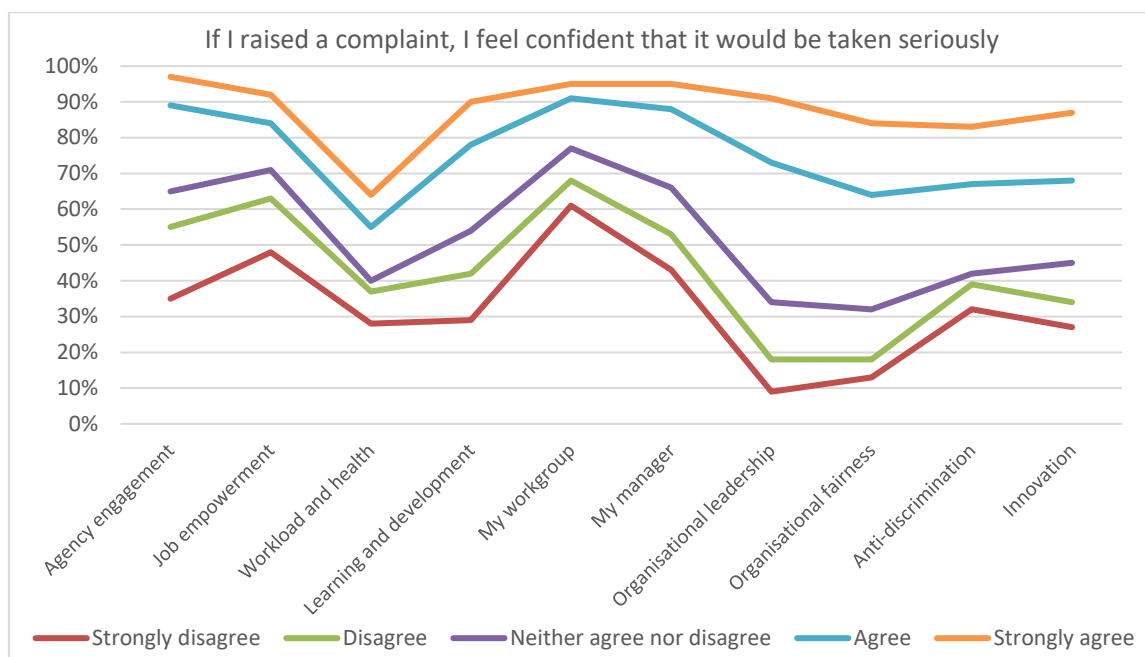
Figure 4: Workplace factors as a function of confidence in raising complaints

Discussions were held on the inappropriateness of the current Workplace Behaviour Training package. A review of this was identified as a possible improvement opportunity.

Performance Management

Survey results suggest staff are dissatisfied with performance management. 46% are confident poor performance will be appropriately addressed and 48% agree performance is assessed against clear criteria. Only half of staff felt they had productive conversations with their manager on their performance or received useful feedback on their performance.

Feedback highlighted several concerns around performance management. These included a lack of action over under performance, role descriptions that needed reviewing and a lack of role and responsibility clarity. Many identified an absence of performance plans which was disempowering as staff were unable to identify how to improve their performance or reach their potential. Staff noted some managers did not have the skills, or knowledge to manage performance and could benefit from additional training or coaching in this area. As managers, there was concern they would have complaints made against them if they managed poor performance.

Learning & Development

Results indicate opinions vary regarding the management of learning and development. 73% of staff agree there are opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge, 65% are satisfied learning and development activities completed in the past 12 months have helped improve their performance and 67% believe they are able to access relevant opportunities; however only 58% believe QFES is committed to developing its employees and 55% are satisfied with opportunities available for career development.

This topic resulted in much discussion and suggestions for improvement. Some feedback was positive, particularly from auxiliary firefighters who were extremely satisfied with training opportunities provided by their managers. Others felt they would benefit from more opportunities however, for a variety of reasons, including budget constraints, distance, workload and personal restrictions, felt unable to access them.

Issues with communication of opportunities and access to training in local areas and facilities at the Academy, were identified. Staff also recognised the need for human resources, finance and business management skills training across the department.

<u>Improvement Suggestions</u>

Forums and meetings also focused on improvement ideas and suggestions to address the issues identified. In total, over 600 ideas were presented by staff. A sample of these according to organisational/strategic factors and workplace indices are listed in Appendix B.

DISCUSSION

The QFES' culture is at the core of our operational success. Our people are extremely dedicated and capable of dealing with the multitude of emergency incidents and disasters that face the Queensland community on a seemingly more regular basis.

From a non-operational perspective, despite reviews that highlight areas of concern within the workforce, our findings demonstrate much of the workforce are satisfied with QFES as a workplace and highly engaged with their job. Staff consistently provide positive feedback regarding their pride in working for QFES, the valuable contributions they make to keep their communities safe and how effectively they work with others in their teams. Many aspects of QFES' operations and business should be celebrated to ensure they continue and are built upon.

We cannot however, ignore findings that highlight opportunities for improvement. Based on consultation, initiatives (refer to Appendix B) informed by our people and supported by our leaders, have been incorporated into business plans to provide oversight and tracking of progress. The main benefit of these initiatives is their focus on solutions from the workforce. Through their ownership and internalisation of the problems and solutions, we will see the workforce engaged and QFES cultural transformation realised (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004; Romans & Tobanen, 2016).

Through our research, common improvement opportunities or 'levers for change' (Department of Defence, 2012) have been identified. These levers have been assessed as the most critical to our workforce and will support QFES' move to a more effective, culturally dynamic and inclusive organisation.

1. Leadership and governance

Strengthening QFES leadership will drive workforce engagement and create an environment where appropriate workplace conduct is an expectation. Inclusive leaders will engender trust and reinforce an integrated approach to service delivery. Effective governance, policy and performance frameworks will ensure business strategy is translated into meaningful actions for all staff.

2. Vision and strategy

Creating a shared vision with supporting principles and strategies will see QFES transform into an inclusive, contemporary workplace, where staff are supported to be high performers, achieve desired outcomes and provide valued services to our communities and partners.

3. Communication and engagement

The development and review of workforce engagement and communication strategies will provide guidance on the most effective ways to engage with paid and volunteer staff and inform them of issues and initiatives that impact them; promoting trust, constructive workplaces and leading to increased engagement and performance.

4. Systems and processes

Developing effective systems and processes across QFES will assist paid and volunteer staff to gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and create more efficient workplaces where excellence in service delivery and demonstration of exemplary workplace behaviour is an expectation.

Since the consultation was completed, it is heartening to see that several initiatives have already been implemented or have commenced implementation. These include:

- Communication via the QFES Gateway of outcomes of complaints and disciplinary action.
- A number of new policies have been updated or developed to address harassment.
- Talent Acquisition Unit have begun speaking with regions about the basegrade firefighter recruitment process. They are developing a program of visits to regions to share more information and improve understanding about the recruitment process.
- The use of independent members in recruitment and selection.
- Blind recruitment process for initial stages of Basegrade Firefighter recruitment.
- Commencement of organisational cultural assessment.
- Review Officer Development program to include training on complaints management and people management.
- Provide training in resume writing, interviewing and presenting self at interviews.
- A revised Combined Conduct training program is being developed, incorporating Code of Conduct, QFES values, workplace behaviour training and diversity and inclusion awareness module.

Research identifies the key role leaders play in creating engaged workforces, implementing successful change and promoting cultural change. It is their role to ensure engagement is a fundamental tenet of what we do as a department, and that they have the necessary skills to manage change (Kavanaugh, 2006). 'Organisations that have strong engagement cultures are populated with senior leaders that make everyday – and everyone – count daily…(They) are not afraid of tough questions, comments or challenges. They seek out those who will engage in the tough conversations to build their capability and that of the organisation.' (Romans & Tobanen, 2016, p. 78). Line managers too, have an important role to play, 'through their daily behaviour toward their staff, which sends signals about the extent of the value placed upon them' (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees & Gatenby, 2013, p. 852).

By our leaders focusing on initiatives that will drive change through the four levers of change, we will potentially see the biggest impact on workforce engagement and our culture. Supporting and using suggestions from our people, changing a few critical behaviours at a time that support targeted and integrated cultural change, can engage the workforce and enable them to participate more fully in the change process.

Limitations of the current study

It is noted that the approach adopted for this consultation process tended towards a deficit approach to investigation and it is proposed that in future, the department consider appreciative enquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2006) or strength-based approaches (Beckett, Field, Molloy, Yu, Holmes & Pile, 2013, p.599) to draw out and focus more fully the strengths, capabilities, and resources of the department which can result 'in a greater level of creative problem solving and a more optimistic atmosphere' and be used to further improve our workplaces.

5. CONCLUSION

Many theories on cultural change and workforce engagement suggest that pockets of activity, whilst making a small difference, can never achieve full cultural change or a long term engaged workforce. Katzenbach, Steffen & Kronly (2012) note that leaders often see culture change as a last resort. For QFES to develop the desired culture and a fully engaged workforce, we need a coordinated approach that is led from the top through establishing clear vision and values (Markos & Sridevi, 2010), modelling required behaviours (Romans & Tobanen, 2016), making engagement a priority (Seijts & Crim, 2006) and utilising effective communication to enhance engagement (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014).

Complex change doesn't happen in isolation. Many issues identified in the survey and forums are linked. Improving one area, will likely see positive impacts in other areas (PSC, 2018). Empowering leaders to make decisions through effective governance, will potentially produce improvements in staff perceptions of leaders, streamline approval processes and potentially increase organisational trust and job satisfaction. Working on identified levers in a coordinated and planned manner, will mean a holistic approach is adopted when implementing change. If we work on those issues that will create more satisfied staff, we will inevitably create our desired culture (Childers, 2016).

QFES faces challenges that will test our ability and determination to implement the initiatives outlined in this paper. For QFES to continue its cultural transformation, these challenges and drivers for change must be kept in the front of our minds. If we are cognisant of issues that may hinder progress, we will be in the best position to find solutions that minimise their impact.

This is an exciting time for QFES and one in which all staff can be involved. With an engaged workforce and an open leadership team, QFES can continue to provide operational excellence to our communities and strive to be a department that exemplifies ethical leadership, professionalism, inclusion, efficiency and innovation.

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Appendix A – Working for Queensland Employee Opinion Survey Results overview

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services | Highlight Report

COMPARISONS:		At least 5 percent GREATER		At least 5 percent LESS
RESPONSE SCALE :	POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE	
QUINTILES:	1 & 2	3	4 & 5	

02 Factors

Purpose

This section provides an overview of your agency's 2017 strategic priorities* and factor results. This data is benchmarked against the Queensland public sector and other agency results, as well as being compared with the previous year's results.

Understanding your agency's data, across time and in relation to the Queensland public sector, will enable your agency to assess its progress in workplace improvement.

	Response scale (%)			% positive	vs 2016	vs Qld public sector	Range of all agencies	Your agency quintile
Agency engagement*	74	18	8	74%	0	+15	41 - 82	1
Job empowerment	75	15	10	75%	+2	+3	60 - 86	2
Workload and health % positive indicates those who have limited to no issues with workload and health	47	34	19	47%	+2	+7	29 - 68	2
Learning and development	64	20	16	64%	+2	+8	33 - 82	1
My workgroup	81	12	6	81%	+1	+5	58 - 92	2
My manager	74	16	10	74%	+2	+3	57 - 84	3
Organisational leadership*	52	27	21	52%	+1	+1	29 - 85	3
Organisational fairness	47	25	29	47%	+2	+4	26 - 67	2
Anti-discrimination	55	27	18	55%	-3	-11	48 - 96	5
Innovation*	55	27	18	55%	+1	-5	46 - 89	5

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services | Highlight Report

04 Workplace climate

COMPARISONS:	At least 5 percent GREATER		At least 5 percent LESS
RESPONSE SCALE :	POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
QUINTILES:	1 & 2	3	4 & 5

Purpose

This section provides an overview of your agency's workplace climate index results. This data is benchmarked against the Queensland public sector and other agency results, as well as being compared with the previous year's results.

Understanding your agency's data, across time and in relation to the Queensland public sector, will enable your agency to assess its progress in workplace improvement.

Please note index data will be impacted by the inclusion of new items to the 2017 survey. The indicies impacted are marked with *. Please treat all 2016 to 2017 trend data indicatively.

	Response scale (%)			% positive	vs 2016	vs Qld public sector	Range of all agencies	Your agency quintile
● Safety, health and wellness*	60	26	14	60%	-4	+6	43 - 82	2
● Effectiveness and innovation*	59	23	18	59%	+1	+2	49 - 77	3
● People and relationships	82	12	6	82%	+1	+5	56 - 92	2
● Fairness and trust*	55	24	21	55%	+1	-3	46 - 78	4
● Performance and development	59	23	18	59%	+2	+3	41 - 74	2
● Leadership and engagement	68	19	13	68%	+1	+6	49 - 81	2
● My job	83	11	7	83%	+1	+5	58 - 89	1

* Index impacted by the addition of new survey items in 2017

Appendix B – Sample of proposed actions for improvement

The following actions were provided by staff during staff forums and meetings, as solutions to issues within their workplaces. It is a sample of proposed actions and are listed according to organisational/strategic factors and workplace indices.

<u>Organisational leadership</u>
Suggested actions:
- Regular senior executive regional visits.
- Focus on the development of middle management especially in people management and business skills.
- Support better understanding of services across QFES.
- Use evidence-based decision to align initiatives and departmental priorities.
- Create effective, ongoing consultation and communication to firmly establish, implement and embed agreed operational protocols across the Services.
- Continue promotion and availability of 360-degree feedback for all staff and investigate implementing mentoring and coaching for interested staff.
- Review leadership results from workforce surveys as a basis for the design of leadership training programs.

<u>Fairness and trust</u>
Suggested actions:
- Rotate Auxiliary Captain/Lieutenant roles to increase staff development opportunities.
- Implement a blind application process for training and roles to encourage independent, transparent, open processes.
- Review industrial awards to create more equity across services.
- Investigate opportunities for dual classification of positions where appropriate to allow an increased diversity of staff across the services.
- Conduct a review to ensure reward and recognition programs are equitable across QFES services and decision making is robust.
- Investigate the option of decentralising functions to provide regional staff opportunities for professional development.
- Review service delivery models to ensure QFES is delivering the services based on local risk.

<u>Communication</u>
Suggested actions:
- Communicate the new QFES Structure including the role and responsibilities of each business unit.
- Release a summary report for the Working for Queensland Survey which links the initiatives being undertaken to the results of the survey.
- Review use of technology e.g. Facebook, messenger apps, to communicate training events and other information to staff.
- Communicate recruitment processes to promote transparency and accountability in decision making and improve staff understanding of the process.
- Conduct review of the QFES Gateway to assess effectiveness and functionality.

<u>Effectiveness and innovation</u>
Suggested actions:
- Continue to develop an effective lessons learned strategy and utilise lessons learned to ensure learning and continuous improvement is promoted and harnessed and benefits from learnings are realised.
- Engage auxiliary and volunteer staff and tap into the whole workforce to access skills.

- Review the auxiliary service delivery model to assess its sustainability and effectiveness in meeting community expectations and needs.
- Investigate feasibility or escalate to the appropriate body, the suggestion that auxiliary staff not pay tax on their pay.
- Recognise and reward staff who are instrumental in the implementation of innovative ideas.

Policy/process
- Ensure effective consultation between state units and regional staff, in policy review and development.
- Ensure documentation on the Gateway is up to date, accurate and easily accessible, particularly regarding policies and doctrine.

Equipment
- Provide update on appliance replacement program.
- PSBA to investigate internet access in rural and regional areas to improve connectivity.
- PSBA to conduct ICT review to check on the replacement schedule for current computing equipment.
- Decide on a response/turnout app and implement across the department.
- Consider a review of OMS functionality. OMS team consult more widely with regions to gain feedback on system improvements.

Safety, health and wellness
Suggested actions:
Workload
- Review business/service delivery models to investigate more effective ways of delivering services.
- Undertake review of roles to gain a better understanding of role requirements and training/development needs of staff and update role descriptions as required.
- Review regional administration roles to ensure staff are working at position levels.
- Ensure that flexible work practices are communicated to provide all staff an understanding of the Government Directive regarding flexible work arrangements.
- Consider different roles for auxiliary and permanent firefighters who reach retirement age and want to continue employment or are medically unable to undertake operational roles e.g. community safety/engagement activities.
- Undertake assessment of community and organisational expectations to determine alignment of work practices with expectations.

Health and wellness
- Review role of FESSN to support staff impacted by PTSD or having difficulty coping with demands of the role of firefighter.
- QFES to consider a secular option for chaplaincy.
- Investigate the reintroduction of the wellness program across the department.
- Investigate wellness options for non-operational staff or providing access to station gyms to staff working outside of stations.
- Managers to be role models for flexibility and support staff who request flexible work arrangements in line with legislation.

Workplace Conduct
Suggested actions:
- Communicate the role of Workplace Conduct Branch and its units across the department. Conduct a regional roadshow to promote the work of the Branch and raise staff understanding of its role.

- Review Code of Conduct and Workplace Behaviour Training to meet needs of organisation and maintain relevancy.
- Provide communication of outcomes of complaints and disciplinary issues to wider QFES.
- Make values relevant to staff by identifying behaviours associated with values to provide staff with greater understanding of what the values mean in the workplace.
- Provide management with effective, practical training to address workplace conduct issues and continue with provision of training in difficult conversations.

Performance management
Suggested actions:
- Ensure there are clear, structured and consistent guidelines for performance reviews which will assist in improving performance and identifying development opportunities.
- Review effectiveness of Total Station Workload Targets to assess whether they are measuring what needs to be measured and ensure they add value to organisational objectives.
- Investigate the use of 'Case Management Teams' when dealing with protracted or complicated performance related matters.

Learning and development
Suggested actions:
- Implement feedback mechanism for state and regional training courses.
- Investigate more practical training relating to HR and people management and financial responsibilities, for Station Officers and Senior Officers.
- Review access to Live Fire facilities for regional personnel to make it more accessible.
- Provide on-line application for training that goes directly to the Academy.
- Review Recognition of Prior Learning requirements to recognise training, skills and experience from other workplaces and training institutions.
- QFES to consider incorporating Domestic & Family Violence 'Recognise, Respond, Refer' package into the Core Skills program.
- Continue to promote the Learning Cache to all staff.
- Promote SARAS (financial assistance for study opportunities) more widely with the workforce.
- Incorporate communication styles into leadership training.
- Investigate a QFES skills database to contain information on personnel's degrees/qualifications/strengths that can be tapped into to assist with working smarter.
- Provide training in resume writing, interviewing and presenting self at interviews.
- Provide training in having difficult conversations and performance management.
- Investigate reintroduction or expanding auxiliary RCR competitions.
- Conduct training needs analysis for all staff and incorporate into the Performance Achievement and Development Plan (PADP) process.
- Consider options that allow personnel who are looking to move away from operational activities, to focus on other duties such as MIRs, BA repairs etc.
- When systems are introduced or upgraded, ensure consistent training is provided across the state.
- Where possible, conduct training/refresher courses in local areas to allow more opportunities for attendance.

Change, Project and Contract Management
Suggested actions:
- Project teams to consult more widely with regional staff impacted by changes to better understand needs and barriers to implementation and determine the best approaches to implementation, including regional training requirements.

- Review project management effectiveness including implementing opportunities for improvement.
- Track cultural change over the next 12 months and trending over years including initial measure of current organisational culture and desired culture.
- Develop and implement a change management strategy/framework that includes training and development in change and project management to all staff responsible for managing and implementing change.

Other issues
Suggested actions:

- Review auxiliary recruitment process to streamline and create efficiencies including providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- Investigate developing regional/organisational recruitment campaigns for auxiliary firefighters.
- Develop strategies to recognise local employers of auxiliaries and volunteers.
- Establish Emergency Service Units rather than three separate services in small regional towns struggling to keep SES groups, RFS brigades and auxiliary stations running.
- Review legislation to ensure all staff are covered and all relevant activities/tasks are incorporated.