MOVING BEYOND THE BRASS CEILING
exploring best practice inclusion in
Emergency Management + Services
organisations; how this impacts diverse
employees, workplace culture; and
public safety outcomes

Igniting
Inclusion

2018 Churchill Fellowship
Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
in Emergency Management
Services Organisations
(EMSOs)

Sonja Braidner, Churchill Fellow
INDEMNITY CLAUSE

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST
IGNITING INCLUSION
REPORT BY SONJA BRAIDNER CPHR, CHURCHILL FELLOW

2018 CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP TO STUDY HOW TO BETTER LEVERAGE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE ORGANISATIONS (EMSOs)

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Signed Sonja Braidner

Date 21st October 2019

Team at The Delta fire station – Ixelles  SIAMU Brussels, Belgium
IGNITING INCLUSION:
MOVING BEYOND THE BRASS CEILING IN AUSTRALIA

PROJECT RATIONALE, DEFINITIONS, DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

1. Finding better ways to create inclusive workplaces within heavily homosocial workplaces:

This purpose of this report is to explore how Australian Emergency Management Service Organisations (EMSOs) may better leverage diversity by creating more inclusive workplaces. The report will look at inclusion initiatives in Firefighting and Emergency Response organisations in other counties to determine what is effective, what positively impacts diverse staff members’ career trajectory and helps them fit in to an otherwise homosocial culture, a prototypical group comprising predominantly of white (or mainstream culturally aligned) men.

Whilst this report focuses on EMSOs, many of the findings and recommendations regarding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) best practice may be applied to other industries especially those which are culturally, male dominated.

In 2016, The Australian Fire and Emergencies Services Authorities Council observed there were ‘Unacceptably low levels of diversity, particularly in urban fire and rescue services”. Since this time there have been attempts made to recruit more diverse firefighters and other emergency service personnel however, many services are now encountering issues of retention and cultural pushback from within. The backlash to diversity revolves around fear of change. Globally, firefighting, is based on strong conventions and a powerful belief for many, that it is a career for men. This is a traditional view which has held firm for well over a century.

As such every Australian fire and emergency service organisation has a high degree of homosociality within their ranks. This can be confronting to those who enter the ranks that are not part of the dominant cohort. For those who are demographically diverse. Diverse people for the purposes of this report are those defined under the Australian Anti-Discrimination Act – being women, LGBT+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians; and Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD). In the overseas case studies cited in this report, diversity is defined by respective local legislation across each example.

Whilst not absolute, many diverse “others” find they are entering a sacred domain in firefighting where the rules, perks, privilege and promotion are best accessed by those from the dominant group. There is more than enough data to suggest many in this prototypical group do not wish to share their status as “heroes” with women, cultural and linguistically diverse and others perceived as non-masculine and non-white and who, therefore unable to visually support the traditional hypermasculine identity of a firefighter.

There is evidence these diverse members are leaving organisations; with complaints in many Australian EMSOs surrounding diversity attracting media and public interest. Reasons for these departures may well be attributed to the fact the working conditions into which they are recruited, are not inclusive. The structures, policies and processes of these organisation provide a sympathetic background to exclusion. Combined with a history of homosocial focus, these functions have not been updated to be fully inclusive for all firefighters. Exemplified, in part, by the notion that maternity management for firefighters can still be a complex issue in 2019.
I wanted to explore if these issues were occurring in EMSOs elsewhere other than Australia and if so, what these organisations were doing to improve inclusion in their workplaces. I wanted to explore what EDI initiatives work, those that don’t and; investigate how we may improve inclusion practice for EMSOs in Australia. This is Outcome 1 of this report.

2. Improving public safety outcomes for the Emergency Services Industry by leveraging EDI

2A. Future-proofing the Emergency Services Industry by achieving better prevention outcomes

Outcome 2 and 2A (linked) of this report tests the strength of the theory that employing more diverse people and building better organisational inclusion, positively correlates to building safer communities.

3. Illustrating how the wider social & political context impacts how EDI is received within an EMSO organisation. How this link can be used to strategically adapt for acceptance of inclusion.

Outcome 3 is to explore the wider social context of each nation visited and learn how their respective socio-political environment impacts the EDI agenda within each organisation. EDI is both political and values based; and each employee brings with them a cornucopia of beliefs to their workplaces. Leaders likewise. When the external community narrative changes due to socio-political events, so too does the resistance and or acceptance of EDI within a workplace culture. Hence this report considers the work of each EMSO set against the background of their current social narrative. This has been done to draw parallels between these environments and confirm for both practitioners and leaders that EDI is a dynamic practice. To accept this will provide better protection for EDI practitioners who are at risk of being pulled between creating progress whilst walking the line to accommodate leaders intent on maintaining existing status quos to avoid internal resistance. This following diagram illustrates this report’s intention.
ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

EDI is an abbreviation for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
EMSO is an abbreviation for Emergency Management Service Organisation

1. Homosociality – “means same-sex relationships that are not of a romantic or sexual nature, such as friendship, mentorship, or others” (Wiki definition)
2. Prototypical – “means is used to indicate that someone or something is a very typical example of a type of person or thing.” (Collins Definition). In this report it refers to historically dominant firefighter cohort of male, white firefighters in this industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I wish to acknowledge the following people for assisting me in undertaking this Fellowship Opportunity.
I would like to start by acknowledging and thanking everyone involved with the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. This includes the interview selectors, who displayed faith in my Fellowship vision, the President of the NSW Churchill Fellows Association Mr Ian Krimmer for his encouragement, Sonia Jennings (Campus Travel) and the following people at Fire and Rescue NSW who supported me in providing contacts and information: Assistant Commissioner Robert McNeill, Inspector John Macdonough, Inspector Mark Reilly and Gillian Andrews. I wish to warmly thank the following firefighters for supporting me through months of complexity which occurred at this same time: Deputy Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell, Assistant Commissioner Mark Whybro, SO Kate Barnes, SO Craig Mashman, Inspector Belinda Hooker, SO Dawn Maynard, SO Belinda Wheeler, SF Dean Dobson, SO Kieran Shield, SF Kim Buckland-Kerr, RFS Volunteer Firefighter Sharon Ceiley, Keira Alexander, Ann Darcy, Celeste Young of The Bushfire Natural Hazards Collaborative Research Centre (BNHCR), Steve O’Malley of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Women and Firefighting Australasia (WAF). I wish to thank many supportive colleagues in this industry and in the world of Human Resources professionals; including the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI,) SALT, EPHEA and NEEOPA who have featured my inclusion research at various events and conferences both past and present.

Whilst in Japan I was escorted in my visit by Professor Tomohiko Taniguchi, Special Adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet. He arranged for my access to all 4 organisations I visited in Tokyo. At times he acted as translator and shared great insights into the structures and linkages of the organisations within the Japanese social and governance contexts. I am greatly indebted and forever grateful to Professor Taniguchi for his selfless support for my Churchill Fellowship visit, given I arrived on a week when The Diet (Japanese Parliament) was sitting and this meant he was already incredibly busy.

Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge and thank all the generous interviewees who gave up their time to share their invaluable expertise, knowledge and opinions

I wish to acknowledge and thank my family, deeply thanking Stephen Pierce for accompanying me on my Fellowship journey, for his unrelenting support and engagement with my work; and for being an editor of this final document. I wish to thank my daughter Lili Braidner for her belief
and encouragement; and for looking after our home and animal companions whilst I was overseas. I am blessed to have you both in my life. Lili, as young woman entering the workforce, I hope this report helps unlock future doors in industries which will equally accept and grow the talents of women as they do men.

I would like to dedicate this report to my friend Ms Susan Gai Telfer who passed away unexpectedly whilst I was travelling in this Fellowship journey. Your love of life, supportive friendship and light will shine on for eternity. As a woman of rock and roll you were a pioneer, carving your niche successfully in another male dominated industry. I hope the major findings, insights, and themes and recommendations contained within this report help provide a voice and improve access to opportunities for all pioneers: all women, all men, non-cisgendered, CALD, LGBTIQ+, differently abled and First Nations people.

I acknowledge that this report was written on Eora land and that the city I live is built upon what was, is and will always be Aboriginal land.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Sonja Braidner is currently the Founder and Chair of EMDDIPA, The Emergency Management and Defence Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners Australasia. This Association was created to lift the standard of EDI practice in EMSO industries through practitioner collaboration and knowledge sharing. EMDDIPA has been enthusiastically embraced by industry and is growing.

Sonja worked for the past 3.8 years at Fire + Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) where she led the Inclusion & Diversity team. In 2018 she received a Deputy Commissioner’s Certificate of Appreciation for ‘contemporising FRNSW’s understanding, principles, policies and language” of EDI. Whilst in this role Sonja established Fringe (the LGBTIQ+) and Women’s Employee Resource groups and provided strategic support to establish ATSIAC, the Indigenous Reference group. She was a key partner in the IFARES pre employment program for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander firefighters and participated in the establishment of the FRNSW Culture and inclusion Unit, The FRNSW Culture & Inclusion Working Group, was a NSW Government Refugee Employment Coordinator and FRNSW Leadership program facilitator for both the Compass (Adaptive Leadership) and The Captains’ Programs. She has participated in many industries think tanks over the years to further workplace and social Inclusion. Prior to FRNSW, Sonja worked as the Deputy Director Equity & Diversity Strategy for the University of Sydney and helped establish the inaugural, global Inclusion and Diversity strategy for Singtel/ Optus. She has also worked in various leadership capacities within the Higher Education sector. She is a current member of the Australian Human Resources Institute’s Inclusion and Diversity Advisory Panel, was the former co-Chair of the National Sorry Day Committee Inc, working to better inform Australians and Government around issues impacting the Stolen Generations and a former Executive Committee member of NEEOPA. In 1998 Sonja ran for NSW Senate as a founding member of a bipartisan supported political party design to escalate social inclusion and cohesion in Australia.

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INTRODUCTION:

Today when people are asked to picture a firefighter most people will instinctively draw a mental picture of a man, most probably white. Thinking beyond this, they may assume he is also heterosexual. Emergency Services and the various societies and communities in which they sit often engage and protect this traditional stereotype. As such every Australian fire and emergency service organisation has a high degree of homosociality within their ranks. In 2019 there is a minimum of 90% male firefighters in EMSOs, and these are mostly white, Christian and from an Anglo-Celtic ancestry. Stations are brimming with this homosociality.

However, getting closer to fire and emergency service agencies you will discover this is changing. The future will be one in which emergency services responders will better reflect the communities which they service and protect. Currently more women, ethnically diverse, LGBT+ firefighters are joining the ranks. However, the transition to creating more diverse, equitable and inclusive EMSOs is not always easy. At the heart of shifting the demographics within firefighting services, lies a strong tradition which centres around a hypermasculine heroic identity of the archetypal “fireman”. Whilst many prototypical firefighters are supportive of change towards greater inclusion, there are equally strong voices of resistance.

Having worked in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Australian Emergency Management and Services area for the past 4 years I have been astounded at how the diversity agenda is so inflammatory. There is palpable resistance to making services more inclusive. Often diverse people who in the minority, walk a line between being out and proud of their difference to covering - whereby they adopt the traits of the prototypical group to hide their “stigmatised identity” and fly under the identity radar. They maintain the status quo by acting like the “blokes”. Whilst covering is a survival mechanism to cope with an unwelcoming and non-inclusive workplace culture, covering effectively slow successful cultural integration for those like them, who will follow. This sits against a backdrop comprising of voices of naysayers - those who believe mythology about firefighting hiring practices, those who believe women cannot possibly be strong enough and diverse others cannot possibly fit in with the “boys club”. The stereotypes abound: unsubstantiated, so it is time to move forward.

KEYWORDS:

inclusion, equity, diversity, leadership, workplace culture, organisational development, firefighter, emergency management, response, EMDDIPA, emergency services, progress, change management, covering
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IGNITNG INCUSION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2018 Churchill Fellowship Report: Author: Sonja Braidner
Researching Equity, Inclusion & Diversity in Emergency Management Services Organisations.

In 2016, The Australian Fire and Emergencies Services Authorities Council observed there were ‘Unacceptably low levels of diversity, particularly in urban fire and rescue services’. Since this time there have been attempts made to recruit more diverse firefighters and other emergency service personnel however, many services are now encountering issues of retention and cultural pushback from within. Some firefighters do not wish for their ranks to be infiltrated by non-traditional personnel such as women, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBT+ and/or First Nations people.

This is not an issue unique to Australian services. It is a global phenomenon. This backlash to diversity revolves around fear of change and the of sharing the heroic privilege and the powerful firefighter identity. Behind this stand the social assumptions which have long supported firefighting as a career for men. Until recently most children grew up being socialised into this construct too; with their toys, media and most adults supporting this mythology - a traditional view which has held firm for well over a century.

This report observes a variety of EMSOs from across the world, considers what each is doing to build EDI and to create organisations which better reflect their increasingly diverse communities. The report examines (including Employers and Employee Emergency Industry Associations) 4 EMSOs In Japan, 2 In Germany, 1 In the Netherlands, 1 in Belgium, 8 In the UK, 1 in Iceland and 6 In the USA plus interviews with 4 specialist EDI academics each with experience researching fire and emergency organisations. I also interviewed the author of Firefight a book dedicated to the intricate and decades long struggle by the Vulcans – The African American Firefighter Affinity group, to pursue equity within the Fire Department of New York.

The report explores the case for organisational change to facilitate and futureproof EMSOs. This is critical as roles and responsibilities of firefighting and emergency response are shifting. There are now less urban fire response callouts and a growing emphasis on prevention, other types of medical and rescue interventions; and community engagement. This has been driven by technology and community education; which has seen the numbers of incident calls for urban fire response drop significantly. Additionally, Climate Change is reframing the management and prevention of increased wildfires and environmental disasters. This report reflects upon firefighter culture and how it may better adapt to these challenges.

To observe the effective inclusion of an EMSO requires a measuring framework. In this report I will utilise the Australian Human Resources Institutes’ Inclusion Maturity Framework. It is used to provide a yardstick as to how EMSOs are progressing in becoming more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

This report also considers the intrinsically linked socio-political environment in which a service is located. EDI is
critically impacted by the personal values of firefighters, their families, the wider society and political contexts. EDI by its nature is both a political and social science. Finally, the report will highlight the critical linkage where progressing EDI creates an EMSO which better understands its community and is a living part of it; thereby creating greater public safety.

The Fellowship research discovered innovative practice which shifts the mindsets of employees and leaders. Conversely it examined some of the blockers for EDI progress, providing a cautionary tale for Australian EMSOs. All the organisations observed had commenced their journey of change and inclusion. Some were frustrated by the impact of economic austerity measures which have hampered resourcing, recruitment and consequently EDI progress. A select few had moved into a progressive space buoyed by collaboration and best practice leadership.

The Fellowship opportunity returned vast data which will extend beyond this report. There is further information delving more deeply into EDI practice examining the how, what, when and why of strategy. This report is an overview of this fascinating journey with many of the lessons supplied here holding equally strong for other industries and work sectors; especially those which are male dominated.

INTENDED AUDIENCE
“Igniting Inclusion”, this Churchill Fellowship report, has been written primarily for the Australian Emergency Management and Emergency Service organisations although similar themes and issues can be readily be found in other paramilitary and prototypical industries, making this applicable to a wide audience, especially those working with employee engagement and workplace cultural development. The findings and recommendations are universal for all EDI, HR practitioners and people managers. As a result, the value and interest of “Igniting Inclusion”, extends well beyond the primary target of EMSOs.

HIGHLIGHTS
- Meeting and working alongside Professor Tomohiko Taniguchi - Special Adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet.
- An inspired interview with Commandant Leen Schaap, formerly of the Amsterdam-Amstellan Brandweer
- Staying at the SIAMU Heliport Station for the three days in Brussels.
- The academic interviews: with Prof Mustafa Ozbilgin, Dr David Baigent, Prof Markus Meckl and Prof Corinne Bendersky.
- Learning of the cutting-edge outcomes achieved by Chief Fire Officer Becci Bryant and EDI Manager Diane Dunleavy both of Staffordshire FRS and the extraordinary work of AFSA.
- Visiting the Icelandic town of Akureyri to be met by a welcoming community wanting to engage in EDI conversations.
Meeting the I&D team at the Fire Department, New York and visiting Randall’s Island Training Academy

Interviewing Ginger Adams Otis – author of Firefight

Being invited to stay in Yosemite National Park at the house of Chief, Fire and Aviation, Kelly Martin

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: There were many findings resulting from my travel; some reframing EDI narratives, many highlighting best practices for EMSOs, many observations of workplace culture and; the progress and adaptation for the future of work. Below are only a few key findings. The full report is more detailed and extrapolates key finding by countries.

✓ Proof the acceptance of EDI in EMSOs is greatly influenced by the socio-political and cultural contexts. EDI is at heart a political practice.
✓ Inclusion needs to exist before diversity and equity can thrive.
✓ EDI is best served by collaborative practice not competition.
✓ Many EMSOs utilise holistic approaches creating wider, more inclusive strategic practice.
✓ Proof the quality of leadership has a direct correlation on the success of an organisation’s EDI progress and the mitigation of risk and backlash.
✓ EMSOs have a unique and rigid mythology of merit
✓ Not having effective EDI is risky business. Implementing EDI incorrectly is as risky.
✓ EDI is dangerous work when progressing practice in a hostile or immature environment.
✓ EDI co-exists with its dark sibling, Backlash which prompts acts of resistance in workplaces
✓ Practitioners and committed champions are at risk of burnout.
✓ Priming a culture with clear messages assists successful EDI traction in an organisation.
✓ Language is important. When abused through the lens of privilege it is a form of violence.
✓ EDI in workplaces benefits everyone not just those who are “different”.
✓ EDI progress correlates positively to enhanced community engagement and public safety outcomes for EMSOs.

Summary of Recommendations
✓ To expand and evolve EDI practice to become better interconnected with business and community expectations
✓ Create an external and independent Government monitoring body to benchmark and monitor the EDI challenges and progress for EMSOs.
✓ Establish inclusive working environments and cultures FIRST to enable authentic EDI activities and progress on a fair and equitable platform.
✓ EDI needs to be heard directly by leaders not filtered up through a prototypical hierarchy.
✓ Improve operational design at the frontline: Stations, PPE & inclusive workplace cultural design
✓ Provide Safety and Wellbeing programs supporting inclusion, psychological safety and link this to the EDI agenda within EMSOs
✓ EDI and public trust grow simultaneously for EMSOs, futureproofing the organisation and further building public safety.
## ITINERARY OF CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP STUDY INTERVIEWS

### Japan, Tokyo

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<td>and informal discussions with staff at dinner times in the mess room</td>
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<td>informal chats over the 3 days Station observations Interviews with female firefighters Informal discussion with team members ethnicity</td>
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<td>14 June 2019</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Service d’Incendie et d’Aide Médicale Urgente de la Région Bruxelles – Capitale Heliport Station</td>
<td>Ms Martine Bollu – Diversity &amp; Inclusion manager and firefighters of the Bruxelles station</td>
<td>Station Visits Interview 15 – informal with gender mixed firefighter crew and observation of station set up</td>
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**London, United Kingdom**

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<tr>
<td>16 June 2019</td>
<td>University of Brunel London</td>
<td>Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin Chair in Org Behaviour University of Brunel</td>
<td>Contextual Interview and historical data on firefighter inclusion studies past. Interview 16 Socio-political context of Inclusion in the UK and Europe by esteemed I&amp;D academic</td>
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<td>Fire Officers Association</td>
<td>Cathi Reeve FOA National Inclusion Officer</td>
<td>Lunch and 2nd Interview Interview 18 Inclusion innovation in UK. Fire Officers Association.</td>
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<td>19 June 2019</td>
<td>Fitting In</td>
<td>Dr Dave Baigent</td>
<td>Meetings and Cambridge walk Interviews and discussions over the day Interview Day 19 Tracking the evolution in the British fire services. Male assessment of Inclusion from both academic and firefighter POV</td>
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<td>Ms Dalvinder Rai</td>
<td>Meeting and Interview Interview 20 Discussion on HFRS Inclusion</td>
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<td><strong>Portsmouth, United Kingdom</strong></td>
<td><strong>21 June 2019</strong> Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Ms Katie Cornhill Meeting and Interview Interview 21 Transgender and transitioning support for firefighters. Human beings and leadership</td>
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<td><strong>Staffordshire, United Kingdom</strong></td>
<td><strong>24 June 2019</strong> Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire officer Becci Bryant D&amp;I Manager Diane Dunleavy Meeting and Interview Continued discussions over lunch Group Interview 22 The socio-political contexts which impact EDI strategies in FRS. Best practice EDI by a high maturity organisation.</td>
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<td><strong>16th July 2019</strong> Akureyri Fire Station Gunnar Olafsson Deputy Chief Fire Officer Meeting and interview Interview 28</td>
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<td>22nd July 2019</td>
<td>New York City, NY, United States of America</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner Cecilia B Loving and her team</td>
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<td>22nd July 2019</td>
<td>New York City, NY, United States of America</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Ken Nguyen</td>
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<td>23rd July 2019</td>
<td>New York City, NY, United States of America</td>
<td>New York Daily News Reporter and Author; Ms Ginger Adams Otis Author of the book Firefight</td>
<td>Meeting and interview</td>
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<td>24th July 2019</td>
<td>New York City, NY, United States of America</td>
<td>Firefighter Prentice Jackson</td>
<td>Visit to Randall’s Island FDNY Training Academy</td>
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<td>24th July 2019</td>
<td>New York City, NY, United States of America</td>
<td>FDNY Inclusion team</td>
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<td>25th July 2019</td>
<td>Yosemite NP, CA, United States of America</td>
<td>Chief Fire and Aviation Management Yosemite National Park Kelly Martin</td>
<td>Meeting and series of informal and formal interviews</td>
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<td>26th July 2019</td>
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<td>26th July 2019</td>
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<td>Josh Eichamer</td>
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<td>26th July 2019</td>
<td>Yosemite NP, CA, United States of America</td>
<td>2 Millennial Law Enforcement Officers</td>
<td>Fireside chat</td>
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### Los Angeles and California, United States of America

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<td>1 August 2019</td>
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<td>Meeting and group interview</td>
<td>Interview 38 Inclusion in the Californian fire services Voice and courage</td>
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<td>Chief Andrea Avila, SF Tracey Sizemore, LACoFD Commissioner Osby</td>
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<td>Observation 39 Station 13 Media event</td>
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<td>Informal chat 40 Brief catch up on visit and the Inclusion work being done by LACoFD</td>
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<td>Professor Corrine Bendersky</td>
<td>Meeting and interview</td>
<td>Interview 42 Current research into Californian and other US Fire Departments regarding Inclusion and culture.</td>
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### Sydney, NSW, Australia

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<td>Josephine Reynolds</td>
<td>Fire female firefighter in the UK and author / speaker</td>
<td>Meeting and interview</td>
<td>Interview 43</td>
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DETAILED INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES, EXPERIENCES & INTERVIEWS

TOKYO, JAPAN

Japan was chosen as a case study because it provided many unique perspectives for organisational inclusion. These include:

1. The social context of a collective culture.
2. The Japanese cultural framework and its translation to the workplace. How this impacts views on inclusion.
3. Government intervention such as the ABENOMICS, Gender Equality Assessments and the success of centralised monitoring by the Prime Minister led Gender Equality Bureau.

OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANT SOCIAL CONTEXT

The major attention of diversity, equity and inclusion in Japan is gender, focused on the advancement of women, a key component of Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe’s “ABENOMICS”. Designed to help Japan to meet its economic growth targets for the 21st century and to position the nation on the international stage as a proactive supporter for women’s equality. However, it must be noted that the gender equity narrative in Japan is centered around the binary notion of gender as only male or female. This is predominantly to do with a rigid cultural framework anchored in Japanese history and tradition.

As a nation which places strong emphasis on traditional nationalistic values, Japan has had to reflect and reconsider what will lead the country for sustained economic growth. With its declining birth rate and increasing aged population, this was a challenge Japan recognised as key to future economic success. Furthermore, with minimal immigration and ethnic diversity, no identified first nations, LGBTI culturally “quiet”; and a view of disability as a narrative of compassion and restriction rather than one of workplace or economic potential; Japan’s main area and focus of diversity is gender equity.
ABENOMICS AND THE GENDER EQUALITY OFFICE

In 2012 Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed ABENOMICS as a cornerstone of his new government. Broadly, ABENOMICS is an economic reform agenda which aims to increase monetary flow and government spending to improve economic outcomes. Key to this agenda is encouraging more women into the Japanese workforce, using the larger workforce to help build prosperity while offsetting the growing issues of an ageing population and a lack of labour mobility. This is referred to a “womenomics”. Prime Minister Abe’s advocacy for gender equality can be seen in his 2015 statement at the United Nations and his positioning as the minister in charge of the Cabinet Office, Diet and women. Whilst gender equality is very much a centrepiece to Abenomics; an independent British assessment, conducted by the BBC Fact Check Team in 2018, found “womenomics” has not made great progress for Japan’s OECD rankings for women employed as a percentage of the total population. Despite this Japan is maintaining focus and many of the Abenomics goals inform policy and inclusion narratives at Japanese EMSOs.

3/11 – THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE

Just before 3.00pm on March 11th, 2011 the eastern seaboard of Japan experienced a massive trench-type earthquake and consequential tsunami which resulted in the heavy loss of 22,199 lives (including missing). These natural disasters witnessed the destruction of at least 400,000 structures and initiated a catastrophic nuclear incident at the Fukushima reactor. This was the most devastating disaster to impact Japan since World War II. Tragically, other large-scale natural disasters are not uncommon in Japan. As recently as October 2019 Japan suffered from the impact of a large typhoon. Additionally, landslides, volcanic eruptions, flooding and regular earth tremors are constant threats to Japan.

GEOGRAPHY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Japan is not only located in a geologically active zone; it is also located in close proximity to many neighbouring nations some of whom have indicated an expansionist agenda threatening Japan’s national interests. Due to these factors Japan clearly monitors its land and sea boundaries and emergency response is well coordinated across several agencies.

THE VISITS:

With my first interview I learnt that traditional social conventions meant a cautiously initiated discussion regarding LGBT+ inclusion. Mention immediately drew signs of polite shock and embarrassment. This topic was more appropriate in a social context than in business discussions or in any EDI policy I was to review whilst in Japan.

Japan has a population which is amongst the most homogenous in the world, with 98.5% of its citizens’ Japanese. As such there was very little discussion about ethnicity in any conversation or mention within EDI plans.
Finally, topics of disability and ageing were acknowledged but rarely fleshed out in any research evidence encountered whilst on my Fellowship visit.

With social protocol front and centre, I was fortunate to be accompanied in most of my visits by Professor Tomohiko Taniguchi – a Special Advisor to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Professor Taniguchi expertly guided my conversations and primed our many host organisations on my research study. This provided invaluable assistance and opened many doors whilst I was engaging with EMSOs and The Cabinet Office. It also enabled me to traverse language barriers with far more ease and clarity. I am graciously indebted to Professor Taniguchi.

His support enabled me to dig a little deeper and it was refreshing to discover the openness and candour of conversations which acknowledged not only the positive movements in Inclusion which have occurred but also the learnings which emerged from both; previous policy and more recently from the tragic circumstances of the what is referred to as 3/11.

**JAPAN COAST GUARD**

Japan Coast Guard (JCG) is a law enforcement agency employing 14000 people. It is a non-military organisation established in 1948 after the conclusion of World War II and was driven by the vision to create security and prosperity at sea. Sea border protection is a primary focus due to encroachment from China into the Senkaku Islands, a disputed area between the two nations. The JCG is focused on maritime law enforcement and national security, including the prevention of spying, poaching, illegal fishing and piracy in Japanese territorial waters. The JCG provide the intervention for compliance before military action. The JCG also head up search, maritime rescue and disaster response, perform hydrographic and oceanographic surveying and are the chief cartographers of the seas surrounding Japan. In addition, the JCG is responsible for environmental protection and increasing awareness to a younger generation about the maritime environment and disaster response / preparedness. The JCG is a large organisation which monitors Japan’s waterways 24/7, 365 days per year, monitoring on the seas and from their operations room which monitor the busy harbours. The organisation receives approximately 2000 “118” emergency calls per day.

How the Japan Coast Guard manage inclusion for women and results:
The JCG are mindful that there is a labour need in Japan resulting from a declining birth rate and increasing aging population. Agencies need to grow the talents and opportunities for women as both genders will feed their staffing needs into the future.

Policy: Aligned to the outcomes expected under the Japanese Government’s Abenomics Framework and the gender equality assessment benchmarks, the JCG was aiming to achieve 20% female representation in its ranks, representing a large step from the 2010 figure of 3.9% with 487 women. By 2019 the JCG has 6.9% with 979 women. These figures show committed progress and the Agency is making significant efforts to create inclusive workplaces for both women and men.

JCG Officer training recruits approximately 240 students per year and currently 7% coming through are women. These recruits must have a minimum undergraduate degree as they will be studying international law, maritime strategy, practical ship handling and officer training.
The Master’s course for officers has women graduating at 6% of the cohort. This appears to create a viable pipeline at the JCG Academy. There are currently 40 female cadets at the JCG Academy out of 240 therefore these 40 represent 16%. Women are attracted by the work and the free tuition. Free tuition makes a positive difference to women’s lives. One of the women in the course whom I interviewed told me that without this she would not have been able to undertake her training.

Shifting Mindsets: The Vice Admiral of the JCG, VADM Katsuyuki ICHIMI is the Chair of the JCG Gender Committee and when interviewed he explained that as the leader, he is committed to ensuring gender equity progress continues. Within the organisation there is little resistance due to the cultural and hierarchy structures. JCG leaders see that change is necessary and are coached about the relevant business case via strategic workshops. This is a major difference to how we work to shift in mindsets within many Australian ESMOs, where programs are often implemented to “fix” women. (and other diversity target groups), doing little to change the fundamental blockages of attitudes, systems & structures which exist in our male dominated services. The JCG are aware that the hearts and minds which need to shift those who have the most to fear – the existing male leaders. As such these leaders are educated of the business case and invited to join a narrative which values inclusion for both men and women. This approach targets the traditions and pre-existing systemic issues and as such is highly effective in creating EDI progress.

EDI “Respect” workshops are held at the Academy and in the JCG feeder high schools to prime all students of the expectations of the workplace culture; including the value it places on gender equity. The workshops are supported by organisational literature and communications booklets to help people successfully understand and navigate their inclusive work environments.

Creating Inclusive workspaces: The JCG has introduced maternity uniforms and female friendly facilities on board vessels. All the re-design involved women’s participation. Additionally, there is a major WLB (Work life balance) program initiated helping both men and women with their carer roles outside of work. Family support for JCG staff includes shift and transfer support. This program involves teleworking and flex time and has been modelled by senior leaders to promote it as a viable option to for all. The inclusive rollout of universally available flexibility supports the social rise of Ikuboss where men are involved in caring for children.

INTERVIEWED
VADM Katsuyuki ICHIMI – Vice Commandant
CAPT Ryoji HAYASHI – Host. Director - International Affairs – Guard and Rescue Department
LCDR Masako NOHARA – Chief - Planning Section, International Affairs & Crisis Management Division, Administration Dept. Interpreter and lunch host
CAPT Fumihisa HAYAFUNE – Director - International Affairs & Crisis Management Division, Administration Dept and managers and members of the HR Team and the Maritime Traffic department.
JAPAN’S GENDER EQUALITY BUREAU

The Gender Equality Bureau (GEB) is headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and 12 cabinet ministers. I was fortunate to meet with the research team who inform the Ministers of the social context; and measure the progress of the work instigated by the GEB and the Prime Minister’s very public international commitment to gender equality via Abenomics.

Challenges & Social Context: The gender pay gap + family expectations:
In 2017 the “Equal pay for Equal work” legislation was introduced to combat gender pay disparity. Japan realised it had some serious work to do after being rated at 110 globally for the gender pay gap. Whilst good in principle, this legislation has not addressed the fact that 60% of women resign from the Japanese workforce after their first baby. Further research by the GEB showed that women were struggling to meet traditional social expectations of child raising, especially in a society willing them to have more children to address the declining birth rate and at the same time, to be active participants in the wider labour force. The research is deep and shows that when men expect women to hold the traditional homemaker role and do not contribute to housework and childcare; the likelihood of a woman having more children reduces. What we see is that the delineation of labour at home can reduce women’s desire to have more children, necessary to help lift a declining birth rate, whilst concurrently many women leave their job after a first child, so they can be both a mother and complete homemaker if unsupported in housework by her partner. Only 5% of men take any parental leave in Japan but this is growing due to Ikuboss. Currently though, a one-sided...
approach to care, the onus of which like in many Western nations, is on the female caregiver; impacting her career, future career prospects and possibly; well-being. As such the social narrative surrounding gender equality is changing; shifting from rigid cultural stereotypes to enable women continue to lift birth rate and /or be active be participants in workforces.

To assist; the Japanese Government supported by the GEB has made Government sponsored changes to childcare. From October 2019 introduction of free Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) for children aged 3-5 will help improve household affordability. There is much research to show a woman’s participation in the workforce can often be limited by childcare costs. It is here that the GEB and Japanese’s Governments are putting some of the key elements ABENOMICS into practice, freeing up access for women to be in the wider labour force without budgetary or social stresses. The ECEC is being funded by Japanese company pension insurance and a lift by 0.1% in consumption tax (which is rising 2% overall). It is a business and government partnership to cover the cost of implementation of the ECEC. This is seen as an investment into Japan’s economic future. This encountered some initial social debate but has been accepted by the Japanese community and industry. It is here that we see the impact of shared ownership, willingness and support for inclusion to build economic prosperity – a direct result of a collectivist approach with its origins in the Japanese cultural psyche of collaboration.

“Chikung” & Sex Harassment

Whilst the current “Me Too “movement has had limited impact in Japan, sex harassment has been identified a major issue. “Chikung” as it is known, led to the establishment of women only carriages in Japan over 20 years ago. This idea of female only spaces on public transport has now been adopted in other countries like India and Bangladesh. Another interesting observation is that the issue gender violence is now discussed publicly in Japan. This displays a socio-political development where once taboo socio-cultural issues are now being discussed with a view to searching for solutions and providing tangible support for victims. This is another step to building a more inclusive society which will be reflected in more inclusive and open organisations.

Interviewed
Ms. Rie KUROKI Director Research Division, GEB, Cabinet Office Japan - Host
Mr. Masateru YOSHIDA – Director International Affairs
Ms Haruka Ide, GEB Research team
Ms Misato Sakuma GEB Research team

FIRE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FDMA)

The Fire Disaster Management Agency (FDMA) is the regulatory department which acts as the “flight control tower” overseeing emergency response agencies in Japan. Whilst individual municipalities have direct responsibility for fire and emergency responses and the employment of firefighters; the FDMA provides advice, policy and oversight to coordinated responses in time of widespread national emergencies.
FDMA encourages discussion amongst the prefectures and represents some 740 firefighting and emergency services in Japan. A priority for the FDMA is supporting 840 000 volunteer firefighters and ensuring mobilisation of EMSOs for large scale responses. FDMA encourages mergers of smaller services to provide better service delivery. In Japan, 60 % of fire services are
small, protecting communities of a few thousand but the other 40% protect communities of hundreds of thousands of people.

“Disaster affects men and women in different ways... It is recognised that to build a society with robust disaster resilience, gender equality must be a fundamental value in good times and bad. Toward that end, women must share leadership roles in all aspects of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) process.” FDMA

Case Study 3/11: Improved Inclusion Equates to Improved Public Safety Outcomes

My interview with the FDMA provided significant evidence of the link between EDI and successful public safety outcomes and that conversely, without an EDI lens, public trust and safety is at greater risk.

This was demonstrated in the 2011 Earthquake, subsequent Tsunami and nuclear accident. Otherwise referred to in Japan as 3/11. The mass evacuations which occurred across Japan as a result of the 3/11 events saw emergency centres and shelters inundated for weeks. Many of the victims in these shelters were women and children.

What became apparent was the emergency planning staff who had stocked these shelters in case of disaster had inadvertently forgotten to include emergency supplies specifically for women such as sanitary products; and milk formula nappies and toys for children. This caused further hardship and inconvenience for many members of the community who questioned why they had not been included in logistics planning. Worryingly, there were also alleged incidents of inappropriate behaviours including Chikung (groping and other sex-based harassment) and gender violence directed towards women and children whilst they were in emergency accommodations and shelters. When people are at increased emotional stress the likelihood of poor behaviours also increases thereby leaving women and children even more vulnerable.

Allegedly there was little to no privacy. The community and media spoke of increasing hardship on top of surviving due to a lack of foresight and inclusive planning by EMSOs.

The key lesson

The key lesson from 2011 was the need to include more women in disaster preparedness and planning. As a direct result policy, employment focus and logistics planning were updated as the FDMA saw an immediate need to take a more inclusive approach to emergency and disaster planning. It commenced this by employing greater numbers of women to help build broader safety strategies and improve disaster resilience.

Some of these equity issues regarding disaster planning have been topical in Australia. There has been some shift in policies regarding USAR response team configurations. This is relatively recent. Yet within each agency there is unlikely to be an established position or unit to tackle this important consideration with a filter of expert and nuanced EDI knowledge. This needs to occur especially given Australia’s increased exposure to climatic events and the subsequent increased need for large scale disaster preparedness.

Finally, the FDMA speaks about “Kaizen” a Japanese term encapsulating continuous improvement. It has adopted a learning mindset and speaks openly of the mistakes it made in
the past which contributed to poorer public safety outcomes. Staff and leaders are genuinely motivated to create a better environment to serve Japanese people and to create better public safety. It is this mindset which will progress inclusivity.

Meeting with FDMA Vice Commissioner Shinji YOKOTA

TOKYO FIRE DEPARTMENT (TFD)

It was my pleasure to spend a day with both the FDMA and the world’s largest urban fire department, the Tokyo Fire Department (TFD). Following a meeting with the Deputy Chief Hironaga SUZUKI, I was introduced to members of the TFD HR division and female TFD employees (firefighters, EMS and paramedics) for a discussion on gender equity across our respective fire services, before I was invited to see their extensive Command and Control Centre. TFD currently employ 1200 women which represents 6.5% of their total workforce. In this figure there is little distinction between roles as paramedics, firefighters, pump operators, fire prevention, driver and emergency call centre operators. However due to legislation regarding the protection of child bearers, women are unable to undertake HAZMAT roles and currently there

TFD staff and their mascot plus Australian Afternoon Tea!
are no female rescue operators. In terms of day to day operations there are approximately 200 female firefighters working in a fire station environment. TFD, similarly to some Australian EMSOs are currently exploring ways in which they can improve the female friendliness of stations by providing more equitable spaces and privacy between genders.

Whilst the first women were employed at TFD in 1972, it was 1994 when women were included on the roster including night shifts, fire scenes and stations. In 2019, women participate on night shift at the same rate as men.

The panel of TFD women who graciously shared deeply personal stories of their achievements whilst trailblazing in their Department.

SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM (TFD)
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6541836920069152768-Bm6X

REFLECTIONS: JAPAN

In a country anticipating a huge influx of tourist to visits for the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, Counter Terrorism and disaster preparedness is of the highest priority.

Through bitter experience Japan has already learnt what happens when there is a disconnect between inclusion, inclusive disaster preparedness and public safety outcomes. As a direct reflection of this awareness Japan’s ESMOs are embracing inclusion in their industries. This is a relatively new construct and many organisations are starting from a lower base than some other nations. That said the spirit of KAIZEN (striving for continuous improvement) combined with authentic and a humble leadership approach has ensured a learning mindset has been adopted. There is little aversion to progress with the understanding that outcomes are beneficial for the collective i.e.: everybody. There is a
consensus amongst the representatives and leaders I met from EMSOs that the move towards gender inclusion needed to occur faster.

The linkages and plans across industry centring from the GEB and the constant support under ABENOMICS are shifting the dial - the collectivist culture underpins the take up of change and therefore this is a great country to watch... with widespread prediction that after some initial stagnation with uptake, Japan will rise and move at a faster rate driven by economic necessity, societal collaboration and a noticeable lack of backlash within EMSOs and communities. Japan has an existing framework of structures and targets driven GEB and ABENOMICS.

In summary: There is an authentic desire by capable and authentic people leaders for change to come faster and the leaders I spoke with are proud of their efforts to date. This was evident in all the EMSOs I visited.

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES AND ANALYSIS

- Japan’s disaster experiences clearly articulates the EMSO EDI link to Public Safety
- The inclusion and equity work being conducted in Japan is nuanced and progressive, set against a background of complex and fascinating social expectations
- Kaizen will help to better understand & deliver EDI in Japan.
- Societal dialogue, cultural collectivism and Government support under ABENOMICS; are progressing the EDI agenda with less resistance in EMSOs and in society than in nations with a clear focus on individualism.
- ABENOMICS is committed and accountable leadership at the highest level
- Japanese traditional work culture is changing - more flexibility is being introduced to support families. This is in the early stages.
- Linked to this is the rise of Ikuboss – men who take on child rearing opportunities
- ABENOMICS is not only about gender considerations. It is also about issues of an ageing population.
- EDI is a collaborative exercise not a competitive one.
- Some legislation is EDI enabling, other legislation counters equity. There is a degree of cultural and political dualism
- The agenda in Japan is driven by gender and it is the primary focus of EDI.
- There is a critical shortage of female role models in Japanese EMSOs. However, in organisations such as the TFD and the JCG leaders are doing their best to sponsor and encourage talented women.

Japan’s EMSOs are operating within Level 2 of the Inclusion Maturity Framework
BERLIN, GERMANY

In Germany, I wanted to learn more about the interventions which are government and research backed. Project Human Fire initially caught my attention and through more research, I learnt of the work of Prof Ilona Horwath from the University of Paderborn. These initiatives are being supported by several local and international firefighting organisations. Germany’s social context also parallels as a fascinating look at what has moved forward, or not, post reunification. I was privileged to interview both Dr Janina Dressler and Dr Steffi Bergmann, resulting in a rich and multifaceted conversation. Janina provided insight into her role with its’ successes and challenges. The meeting assessed the flow of academic theory to practice and implementation at a firefighter level. Steffi was then able to provide the links into the wider European networks from her work in the DFV and CTIF.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Reunification
Dr Bergmann spoke of the social programs which supported EMSOs by providing family care in the East Germany, prior to the reunification. Since then there has been an 11-year quest by the BF CEO to obtain improved childcare options like those offered before the Wall came down. There is an opinion many Germans are possibly too Capitalist focused, and this has impacted the social cohesion felt in the former (East) German Democratic Republic (GDR). Some locals believe there has been values shift across society. Although many Germans view Chancellor Merkel as a unifying force; having been born an East German and now viewed as a powerful player on the world stage. I spoke to German women who see her as a role model for equality and possibility.

Right wing extremism across Europe
Germany is currently in the grip of a growing right-wing anti-immigration sentiment where these views represent a backlash to an inclusive society. Several politicians have received death threats and recently a mayor was stabbed following his vocal support in welcoming immigrants to his area. This socio-political backdrop impacts EDI sentiment when bringing women and ethnic minorities into fire services.

Healthcare support for gender violence
Another focus in Germany is curbing gender violence. This has prompted the establishment of the Charite Hospital, a hospital is equipped with violence ambulance to take photos and collect evidence for court. Aftercare and psychological support are also provided. Dr Dressler explains domestic violence impacts the work of both D&I practitioners and EMSOs. An example she provided is that Berlin Police are currently implementing a program to reach out to LGBT+ population. Postcards are distributed to public to encourage reporting of LGBT+ domestic violence and harassment. This is about demonstrably supporting the LGBT+ community.
THE VISITS:

BERLINER FEUERWEHR

Dr Janina Dressler is the Diversity Manager at the Berliner Feuerwehr (BF). This EMSO is Berlin’s Fire and Rescue service and includes paramedic response. Promotion from medical intake to firefighter is akin to a specialist and takes approximately 3 years. The BF has a focus on diversity recruitment with well targeted media resources. Like many EMSOs, having women and diversity groups represented in their ranks has been a priority with targets being driven by the German Government. Recently the medic intake has seen close to a 50% application rate by women. Firefighting numbers are low with the number of women at the BF is approx. 2-3%. Inclusion especially in the ranks of firefighters remains a struggle for diverse groups. As such, Dr Dressler’s role was created as part of corrective action determined by the Berlin Senate. Her role reports directly to the CEO Head of the Berliner Feuerwehr. Government imagined her appointment would be a split role 50% Diversity and 50% violence prevention. However, in real terms Janina’s work is 20% diversity and 80% counselling and violence elimination”. Like many others in the diversity space she has said she requires another few members on her team to effectively handle demand.

When interviewing Dr Dressler, I asked her about some of the challenges she encounters on a day to day basis whilst helping shift the culture. She noted there is also a lack of awareness of appropriate language use and behaviours in relation to diverse communities and individuals. She is constantly educating to rectify the poor workplace behaviours of some of the firefighters. She explained:

“It’s hard for them to find the line”

Dr Dressler spoke about the challenges of dealing with colleagues who often miss the nuances and do not see their behaviours as sexist or racist.

When digging deeper to establish other blockers of inclusion, both Dr Dressler and Dr Bergmann from the DFV spoke about covering. They believe diverse firefighters are fearful of the prototypical group and cover to protect themselves, thereby denying their unique and diverse identities. Most concerning some women will subconsciously adopt hypermasculine traits to reinforce their beliefs they are just as equal to men by being just like men. In the German – English translation we coined these women were referred to as the “Men-Women”. Discussion ensued on “men women” and how they limit their cause to be accepted as true equals.
Another key issue enabling firefighter equity is childcare. Rosters now follow an EU directive: 12/12/12 day, night, day, night. This impacts parents’ availability to secure childcare except for those whose primary partner stays at home. The BF Commissioner is campaigning for better childcare for firefighters.

In addition, Dr Dressler spoke of a public scandal in 2017 in which a senior member of the BF was allegedly inappropriate with children in the BF Youth brigade. This impacted the psychological health of service members who were shattered, labelling 2018 a “black year for the BF”. It was a very big story and caused reputational damage. The impact was minimised to an extent by prudent internal communications and adept public media liaison. The BF’s proactive and transparent communication strategy helped people retain their trust in the organisation. Berliner Feuerwehr is now writing policy and a strategic plan to ensure that an event such as that will never occur again.

In summary: there are no pre-existing programs or diversity interventions at the Berliner Feuerwehr. Their focus is on the elimination of harassment and violence which is on a case by case basis. Dr Dressler also notes there is generational change emerging from the academy, linking with a renewed focus on wellbeing and psychological support for firefighters.

GERMAN INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS SERVICE ASSOCIATION
(DEUTSCHER FEUERWEHR VERBAND)

DR STEFFI BERGMANN

Dr Steffi Bergmann works for the Deutscher Feuerwehr Verband (DFV) (The German Firefighters Association) and is connected with The International Association for Fire and Rescue Services (CTIF) Women in Fire and Rescue Services Commission who are committed to improving workplace conditions and inclusion for female firefighters, globally. The head of DFV is a Turkish woman Dr Mujgan Percin whom Steffi supports wholeheartedly. She observes the challenges Dr Percin faces in her role, being both a migrant and a woman. Germany, not unlike Australia, presents this common diversity intersectionality due to our respective multicultural populations based on immigration waves. Steffi explains that appointing a migrant woman to the head role at this EMSO was viewed as controversial. Dr Percin is a 39-year-old Berlin lawyer who is involved in several projects to assist inclusion. There is direct evidence that more multicultural and inclusive leadership in EMSOs result in higher levels of talent and a greater mix life experiences which can be leveraged to better support public safety.

Project Human Fire (menschfeuerwehr)

Dr Bergmann is the main contact for Project Human Fire (menschfeuerwehr) an initiative to build greater diversity within German Fire agencies. The Project is part of the German Federal Government’s “Living Democracy” program which aims for diverse, nonviolent “togetherness” (from translation) for the German people. In fire agencies the goals are to create an increased understanding of the value of EDI – this is being done by delivering information via a national touring exhibition displaying existing diversity in EMSOs, by providing consulting to fire agencies on how to leverage and further build inclusive workplaces and leadership and by promoting and
sharing success and information regarding best practice inclusion. Project Human Fire is about changing the culture of organisations and ensuring that structural and mindset barriers are reduced in EMSOs. This current phase of Project Human Fire runs until the end of 2019. There will be further funding in 2020. EDI is still viewed as a challenge in many European EMSOs to which Dr Bergmann quipped;

“Diversity – the single word which leads people to run away”

- The women spoke of what they have witnessed: Leaders are supportive but not always engaged and so sit on the sidelines when poor behaviours occur.
- EDI narrative must change to become modern and inclusive. In Germany many women feel they are leading this conversation.
- Both women agreed on the need for collaboration and supporting one another in the EDI area as the work is hard and emotionally draining.
- They also agreed that societal backlash to inclusion is manifesting in response to current political discourse across Europe.

Further Highlights

The integration of existing technology to promote inclusion and further workplace safety from harassment and assault

The Rescuebase App originating in Scandinavia, is now also being used to record incidents of gender-based harassment and assault within the Emergency Services. Victims can note the details of the incidents and report them either with their name or in an anonymous fashion. Even anonymously the statistics help to track the lived experience of women and others in the services and build a profile of target and services hot spots. This extends across Europe thereby including are large cohort of EMSOs.

Academic Partnerships

The research of Prof Horwath from the University of Paderborn who is working with the DFV to help build inclusion in EMSOs is illuminating. Her research is concentrating on the future of work in this industry. It is controversial work and has attracted backlash including threats to Professor Horwath’s personal safety.

SUMMARY: KEY THEMES & ISSUES

- There are some similar backlash triggers to that seen in Australia; reflecting both our cultures and histories: These issues focus on gender, increased homophobia, and backlash towards migration.
- The BF is contending with ageing firefighters promoted to desk roles where they are unable to perform as they lack training for their new vocation. This also occurs in Australia.
- In what appears to be a universal theme, many dominant prototypical groups, in this case male firefighters do not fully understand nor appreciate the trauma their “jokes” cause and what impact inappropriate language in the workplace has upon “others”.
The construct of covering female firefighters slows the inclusion agenda. This will limit their engagement, commitment and productivity in the long term, contrary to desired business outcomes.

In addition, these women may adopt masculine traits which impact other women below them in effect adding to the “brass” ceiling with a “stiletto” ceiling.

This is the intersectionality of resistance making it twice as difficult for women from diverse backgrounds to progress in non-equitable workplaces/industries.

Leaders are supportive but not always engaged – tacitly supporting poor behaviours.

Technology & academic partnerships help expand EDI knowledge & practice.

German EMSOs are at level 2

SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6544921579153911808-dNxS

Dr Janina Dressler Berliner Freuewehr, myself, Dr Steffi Bergman Deutscher Freuewehr Verband
AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands gave me the opportunity to meet a committed proponent of progress at the Amsterdam – Amstellan Brandweer (AAB), Commander Leen Schaap. Commander Schaap has made an impressive mark, accelerating not only the rate change but implementing many strategic decisions to reshape the organisation. This has won him both fans and critics, polarising some in the AAB and in the community. He adopted an assertive organisational change model based on new research and is swiftly progressed the inclusion agenda, of which he is passionate.

With a reputation of fierce determination, Commandant Schaap challenged the way inclusion is championed by a leader of an EMSO. It was exciting, however it angered traditional firefighters, their unions and some politicians. Consequently, he and his family have received several death threats. For this study I believed it was imperative highlight a leader who, risked so much to progress and future proof his Service. This is the story of an inclusive leader who attempted to fast track EDI evolution in a traditional fire service and the immense tsunami of resistance he encountered...

BACKGROUND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Netherlands is the 6th largest European economy in the Eurozone and has benefitted from strong economic growth in Europe’s financial recovery. Consequently, GDP grew approximately 2.8% in 2018, pushed primarily by internal demand. The nation has a low unemployment rate and citizens enjoy relatively high wages by European standards.

Socially the Netherlands is regarded as progressive. It has a history of providing a safe haven to fleeing refugees across Europe for centuries. The Netherlands worked collaboratively to protected persecuted monitories and worked to counter invading Nazi forces during the occupation in WW II. The is exemplified in the stories of Anne Frank. The Dutch pride themselves on tolerance and acceptance. They have a reputation for progressive social policies and thought. A part of this the Dutch believe in the Polder Model of finding solutions to problems by group consensus. This is shown in the Dutch political processes. The Netherlands is a multicultural community and whilst there are differences between immigrants and the indigenous population, the social classes structure is relatively flat due to a successful progressive tax and welfare systems.

That said, The Netherlands has not been immune to the Far-Right ideological wave which has swept across Europe. There is the Geert Wilders’ Freedom party (PVV), whose voters ascribe to Islamophobia and other socially exclusive notions; along with the rise of smaller parties such as the FvD – led by Thierry Baudet. These impact the Dutch socio-political discourse. “The FvD argues more subtly than Wilders that borders should be closed “except to those we need”, that immigrants whose views “do not fit western civilisation” should be deported. Supporters of the FvD speak about the “battle against social justice warriors and political correctness”. Here in the Dutch zeitgeist we begin to see the problems a changemaker was to encounter...
AMSTERDAM – AMSTELLAN BRANDWEER (AAB)

Commander Leen Schaap was the Netherlands Police Commissioner before being appointed head of the Amsterdam-Amstellan Brandweer in June 2016. He was appointed by the former Mayor with an agreed agenda to accelerate workplace cultural change to increase diversity in this emergency service organisation. This was vital as this Fire Service like many others, was deeply resistant to employing firefighters outside their traditional pipeline of white, European men. Previous Commandants had been drawn from the firefighter pipeline and merely replicated the existing stasis by employing those like them; thereby perpetuating the enduring homosociality for privileged white men; many of whom already had connections with the Service. Commander Leen Schaap’s firm agenda was to revolutionise the Amsterdam-Amstellan Brandweer ensuring opportunities were afforded to those who never have had equitable access when up against a workplace culture dominated by these prototypical firefighters.

Commandant Schaap embarked his leadership journey at the AAB, traversing tough cultural terrain....

Being appointed to oversee the firefighting agency from the Police service via a lateral transfer to the top rank of Commandant was not well received by firefighters. He was immediately considered an outsider and not to be trusted. The Mayor at the time believed change would only occur with an external appointment, required to break the tight culture of firefighters. Leen Schaap arrived, greeted by a workplace culture entrenched with entitlement, haemorrhaging public funds and not at all reflective or responsive to the increasingly diverse Amsterdam-Amstellan population. He was also shocked at the poor workplace behaviours which were allegedly rife. The victims of which, were women or culturally diverse firefighters.

“All of us are going to act normal...” Commandant Leen Schaap

Upon his commencement, Commandant Schaap moved swiftly and decisively to build a more inclusive service, both reflective of and responsive to the community’s changing needs. In his interview he explained he wished to see greater responsibility for taxpayer funding with an increased focus on fire prevention; achieved in an shorter and more defined timescale.
In his first 12 months Commandant Schaap visited every one of the 19 fire stations in the AAB district to convey the case for diversity and inclusion. He met with many existing firefighters who were former soldiers and deeply entrenched in the notion of masculine boundaries for work such as theirs. He discovered a workplace culture teeming with resistance to change so he eventually conceded that at that point in time “talk did not work.” As such Commandant Schaap became convinced that talk and the Polder Model of working by consensus needed to cease and action determined by his authority as the leader of the Service, begin...

This was achieved with some deliberate steps. Commandant Schaap;

   **Step 1 Changed the name of fireman to fire professional.**

The Commandant began by reframing the language used to describe “firemen” to that of fire professionals – Not only was this gender neutral it encapsulated the increased importance he placed on fire prevention as well as response. Given active response to fires was statistically dropping (at AAB it was down to under 5% ) he predicted that with growing and increasingly
diverse communities; fire vulnerability would be a key education issue. As such fire prevention became a major focus. In my interview, the Commandant noted that “fire prevention was not sexy” amongst many of the male firefighters. This is possibly because fire prevention can be hard face to face work in the community to which you feel an outsider. As such, it may not always feel comfortable. Plus, could it be that; when you have safer communities your incidence of heroically “fighting a fire” diminishes further?

Step 2 - AAB began recruitment and employed from alternative areas –
Under Commandant Schapp’s directives, AAB recruited from mosques, sports, schools in socio-economic and multiculturally diverse areas. Where this occurred the interest followed. (This is a well tested and effective strategy for increasing the diversity within some Australian EMSOs.) When AAB Recruitment bought forward the 24 annual recruits there were 12 diverse and 12 “normal” ... as the Commandant he chose and approved only the 12 diverse. (6 women and 6 “CALD” appearance*) This upset the Recruitment Branch but showed that he was determined to lead change. Since mid-2016 he moved AAB from 5 women to 18 women. * Please note exact details regarding CALD are unable to be recorded in Nt due to local legislation.

Step 3 Identity: What is a fire professional and what is a fire hero??
Leen believed the stereotypical axe wielding hero mythology which permeates the firefighter culture was a key reason many firefighters were resistant to change, enjoying the danger and the kudos. However, in real terms urban firefighting as an emergency response is diminishing in almost every service worldwide as technology and fire safety increase. Commandant Schaap believed the new narrative around firefighting needed to be about a a capable professional in a good job. This “firefighter identity” issue is omnipresent in nearly every firefighting agency and it requires deconstruction in order to enable other messages about fire prevention, capability, compassion and medical assist to achieve cut through. The leader of the AAB also believed it was the hero mythology which kept firefighter culture tight and unwelcoming of difference. Heroism and egoism he believed, drove cultural resistance.

Step 4 – Communicating these changes in AAB emphasis by a carefully targeted media campaign to the public.
This upset many of the “firemen” but worked in attracting more diverse people to the profession – now with a greater emphasis on prevention and community liaison. As incident response is on a fraction of the time spent at work and firefighters needed to be more productive in their downtime – more prevention work was needed but this was unpopular with the many of the men. Commandant Schaap took full ownership and full responsibility in using his rank, power and authority to progress and build the future stating that “progress is about forcing inclusion along and going with the resistance.” He believed in 2 generations inclusion would be the normal and the old attitudes would have been confined to history.

This is a controversial approach so why so determined? Commandant Schaap’s fundamental starting point was “

“What kind of organisation are you and what do you want to be???”
The City wanted AAB to better serve the community in all aspects: response and prevention; and use tax payers funds wisely and with greater accountability. At the core of his business rationale, Leen wished to adjust the core emphasis from being a firefighter to being a fire professional. Unions were outraged and openly began a campaign against him. He also wanted to stop the old school influence over younger recruits which he believed turned them towards the rotten aspects of the culture. He believed...

“Culture creeps into recruits”

“...they are compelled because if they resist the old attitudes, they will be ostracised, so they comply even if they do not necessarily believe it.” He believed this was true of the fulltime firefighters and said the culture of volunteers was more adaptable and open to change. Many leaders in this space rely on rhetoric to pacify all stakeholders and hold a position which ultimately leads to little or no real change. However, Commandant Schaap was determined to move his EDI agenda at Brandweer Amsterdam–Amstellan.

Death Threats ensued...

THE CHALLENGES:

“Some firefighters will always see Diversity and Inclusion as theft”

Leen Schaap

Backlash & Death Threats
Commandant Schaap continued organisational change in the face of intense backlash which involved threats to he and his family’s safety and wellbeing. He displayed courage and leadership “sisu”. Sisu is a Nordic term for grit and determination in leadership. This descriptor is apt under these circumstances. It was not an easy path.

Women who cover
Leen spoke with the 1% of women and found they were covering “survivors”, except for one who was courageous enough to speak the truth. Many women were fearful of disrupting the inherent privilege held by the fire men and as such dissuaded his interventions. He also found these women were not helpful towards the concept of getting more women into the service.

The 24hour roster creates part time cultures which are cumbersome in changing. + Volunteers and retained are more adaptable...

The Commandant reiterated the view held by some industry personnel that 24hour shifts create part time and group think cultures. He rectified this by returning some stations back to 8 hour shifts so more people could mingle but also get away from gossip and alienation which occurred when forced to stay overnight in stations which alienated diverse others. He also believed retained and volunteer firefighters had better cultural awareness and were more inclusive than the professional firefighters. Leen also theorised that EDI was a complex topic and threatening to the homeostasis existing in EMSOs. He believed prototypical firefighters saw EDI as theft.

Implication of Terrorism in Europe:
The rise of terrorist related incidents across Europe and the fear it imbues, has led to a harder sell for diversity recruitment. In many pockets of European society there is a harsh backlash to
people of difference. With the European anti-immigration push from media and the political Right combined with the influx of refugees of visible ethnic and cultural difference EDI can be viewed as problematic. This fear was perpetuated amongst some of the firefighters. Commandant Schaap cited the case of Muslim firefighter, who is now impacted by PTSD, after turning up to work and being forced to apologise to his firefighter crew for (others) terrorist actions. Sadly, he has not worked since.

Self-reflection of His leadership
By his own admission Leen understood that as the leader of this service he had the power to get things moving and he took this responsibility seriously; with passion and commitment. He began by reframing the EMSO language and followed by implementing a series of critical inclusion initiatives which saw the number of women and culturally diverse people rise sharply since his commencement. The takeaway from my interview is Commandant Schaap is he was not at all oblivious to the resistance he created. He believed this resistance signified his change was working and in order to have success and real change one must press past this to build a better and more futureproof AAB. Since his commencement Commandant Schaap built a more inclusive service, both reflective of and responsive to the community’s changing needs.

Postscript: October 2019
Commandant Schaap’s approach to working with the firefighters at AAB was based on new research which advocates for a strong and determined approach to organisational change with results seen in a comparatively short while. Within a decade an organisation as unwieldy as an EMSO can shift. Whilst this may sound a long time, the issues raised in this research paper have been in play over a century. When Leen was appointed he was appointed by a supportive and popular Mayor who backed his approach, sadly this changed in 2017 with the appointment of a new mayor who although appearing sympathetic at first, then re-aligned her view, agreeing with prototypical firefighters that they were unsafe victims of a forced change process. Tension escalated over time and October 1st, 2019 Leen was removed from his role as Commandant. This plays to the narrative that EDI is dangerous and controversial work often undertaken amidst fierce resistance by those vocal and unwilling to lose their privilege afforded by history and prototypicality. Here is a link to the American Life Interview “Burn it Down” documenting the rise and fall of Commandants Schaap’s vision.
Summary: Key themes & issues

- The EDI positive impact of courageous, active and committed inclusive leadership.
- The swift progress authentic leaders achieve, adopting an aggressive change strategy.
- The inherent risks, danger and personal toll pursuing inclusion in a hostile environment.
- The personal and professional resilience inclusive leaders must have or create.
- The tight culture of firefighting and how this perpetuates homosociality.
- Fear of not “fitting in” creates a culture of covering for “others” denying their diversity and unique talents drawn from their differing life experiences. This stalls inclusion, thereby working against themselves!
- The risks of the hero mythology to creating inclusive, future focused EMSO’s.
- How this then links to the possible compromising of public safety.
- The observation that culture can shift more readily amongst volunteers and retained ranks than amongst permanent firefighters.
- The 24-hour roster creates part time cultures which are less willing to change.
- Volunteers and part time firefighters are more adaptive and potentially more inclusive.
- Value of retained & volunteer firefighters: inherently closer to their communities?
- The impact of Terrorism in obscuring the equity, diversity inclusion agenda and;
- How this can impact the well-being of some CALD employees.
- Poor culture can begin at the firefighting college /Academy transferred by some instructors to the newest recruits – keeping the cycle of resistance to Inclusion going.
- Using the media to send out clear messages about firefighter culture and inclusion via a targeted and strategic communication plan.

This EMSO was on track to push through to a high level 2 / low 3 before the Commandant left.
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The decision to research Brussels was prompted by FRNSW Inspector, John Macdonough who mentioned that Service D'incendie Et D'aide Médicale Urgente De La Région Bruxelles – Capitale (SIAMU) was an example of a fire service where good practice had been initiated but the statistics for diversity were still quite low. I wanted to study a service in the early stages of their journey to see what conditions may be adjusted to enable a faster or deeper transition. In Brussels I encountered many reasons as to why the service was operating in a constricted financial fashion. Most of these reasons were with the governing rather than the service level.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

For the past 7 years the Brussels - Capital government has initiated social austerity measures. Austerity measures are not popular and researchers suggest that up to 25% of the population is at risk of poverty. Added to this there are escalating social tensions following terrorist related incidents which have left many migrants feeling alienated and prejudged by non-migrant citizens. However, there are many activities and services designed to celebrate inclusion and diversity in this hugely multicultural city. Whilst visiting there were many posters up for the Musiq3 festival celebrating diversity. In addition to the relatively recent African multicultural wave, Brussels is also a city still divided over its Dutch speaking Flemish population and its Walloon, French speaking people. This makes for interesting if slightly non-stable political, economic and social discourses in this city.

Amidst this complexity Brussels has not been immune to the influence of the extreme right with one female firefighter reporting it makes a difference to the dialogue surrounding the concept of female firefighters, believing it limits the discussion on encouraging women to become firefighters. This has had an impact and in 2018 the Ministry held an enquiry into the low levels of women firefighters.

SERVICE D'INCENDIE ET D'AIDE MÉDICALE URGENTE DE LA RÉGION BRUXELLES – CAPITALE (SIAMU)

“The Service d'Incendie et d'Aide Médicale Urgente (SIAMU, firefighting and emergency medical assistance service) takes action in the event of fire and coordinates emergency medical assistance in the Region. It also provides first prevention and training services as well as looking after the safety of inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region.” 4 80% of all interventions by firefighters involve ambulance support. There are over 200 ambulance interventions per day in Brussels and in 2019 SIAMU introduced a combined firefighter medic role.

Since 2012, when the gender mainstreaming law came into effect, the Diversity role at SIAMU has been managed by Ms Martine Bollu. Martine is the daughter of a firefighter and she has worked for SIAMU for over 40 years, initially commencing in 1979 as a social worker. She is well respected by all the firefighters and staff; and is aware that her role is about patience and tenacity. Martine is working to grow the diversity of the service, investigating why there are...
currently so few women. Women’s representation as firefighters equates to 1%. The first 2 female firefighters were employed in 2004 with Officer, Anna Wibin commencing in 2006. Within the service there are defined biannual Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans and a Diversity Charter. Whilst in Brussels Ms Bollu graciously offered me accommodation at the main Heliport station in the north west of the city (pictured). This station was built in 1983 prior to women serving as firefighters. I was greatly indebted to Martine Bolu and SIAMU for enabling me to stay at this station allowing me and observe the firefighter life and routines. Being accommodated at this station provided firsthand experience of what it is like to be a woman on this site. In the 4 days I was onsite I experienced just how many detours I needed to take to use facilities because of my gender.

Journeys were made longer as women cannot transit across the second floor of the main building as this is where male firefighters have their dormitories. As such it is disallowed for women to walk this shortest route to their showers and bathrooms in other buildings. There are 10 female (7 firefighters and 3 officers) and 1127 male firefighters in SIAMU. As the women share a small shower room amongst themselves some male colleagues have suggested they should not have exclusive quarters. I was told of incidents where the women access this shower room only to find excrement smeared across the walls – the rooms having been violated by unhappy male firefighters trying to make their point. Hence the room is now locked. This behaviour is shocking but not unlike other services. These kinds of behaviours are often excused in the name of a “joke”. Sadly, this kind of action impacts all firefighters and from what I could assess whilst I was at Heliport the male firefighters I met were very inclusive, positive and supportive of their female colleagues. They too, were upset with the shower room incident. It is planned that in 2020 the Heliport station will undergo renovations to better accommodate all firefighters. The other, newer stations in the Brussels-Capital region are inclusively designed.

Station spaces and inclusion – not always an easy relationship
The gender and space relationship is a common theme with all fire services. Stations are places where people live whilst on their shifts and as such stations become “home away from homes” where living in close proximity to one other can elicit poor behaviours. This is especially true if “space” in stations is constrained. Space issues and station design can impact how others are included in EMSOs. These micro-aggressions are not uncommon especially when the largest cohort of firefighters are ordered to give up space to create facilities for female recruits in stations which up, until then, had always been male only.
Firefighter reflections on inclusion: Case Study 1 Officer Lisa Legros

Lisa has spent the past year at SIAMU and 6 years in another fire service. She has been a Captain for 3 years. As a young girl Lisa initially wanted to be an F16 pilot. She was inspired to become a firefighter after reading National Geographic magazines which introduced her to this career. However, Lisa notes there was no female role models so she didn’t know what to expect.

Lisa’s Observations of being at woman at SIAMU:
Lisa felt that when she was the youngest the age issue was concrete, however she feels less tension with the gender dynamic as she believes there is less clashing ego with the male/female dynamic as opposed to male-male. She qualifies her experience may differ from other female firefighters because she is an officer and holds a senior command role. Lisa also mentions men feel more comfortable to speak about their feelings with her than some with other (male) colleagues. This can help provide effective cut through with management. Although at times she can feel like a social worker! Lisa loves her job and loves being on shift. She enjoys the spirit of camaraderie and trust with her team. This is important to her. She believes that when with a crew there is a finite time period to establish trust. Her experience as a chemistry specialist and technician help her to adapt to the masculine service without too much drama; although, she concedes human side is the most difficult to navigate. The women in SIAMU appear wary of the gender politics and offer each other support via social connection. She looks forward to a future with a critical mass of women so there is less awkwardness regarding gender balance. Lisa wants young girls to know via education, that firefighting can be a career for them. That it requires physical and mental strength. This firefighter believes women are often stronger and more resilient than the men because of this scrutiny and that a double standard exists which needs to be eliminated, This can be fatiguing as she feel women are “always on show”. She cites an example of a pioneer female firefighter named Sabine. 15 years ago, Sabine was one of 2 female firefighters and there was lots pf proving to do, and she was questioned repeatedly about her physicality. (This is a situation where “others’.” in firefighting are over scrutinised – and forms part of research by Professor Corrine Bendersky at UCLA. This will be investigated in the USA section of the report.)

“accepting that I don’t have to accept”

Case Study 2 Officer Anne Wiben
Officer Anne Wiben commenced her career at SIAMU in 2006 after moving careers, keen for a role which offered variety and excitement. Anne’s husband was a paramedic, so she applied and was accepted to join the ranks as a firefighter. As a university qualified firefighter Anna now holds an officer rank with SIAMU. Prior to this role Anne worked in intervention; managing a team of 5-20 people before managing a station which had a 150-170 member team. Officer Wiben believes that even though there a few women at SIAMU as firefighters she feels that when women prove themselves, they are generally accepted. She is aware of her visibility because of her gender difference. Anne was the only female officer for 10 years however now there are 2 others and she feel less alone and there is less cultural isolation. The women at SIAMU support each other but there is the pressure not to make mistakes as it will reflect on gender which of course is different for the men.
She has seen others struggle and as such there is strong camaraderie between the women officers and firefighters to support one another especially when there are stories of women being sidelined because of their gender, allegedly in stations outside of the main city.

Anne believes women are attracted to firefighting from an early age and via the paramedic portal. The paramedic area of the service attracts more women than firefighting. A few of these women will move across to become firefighters. Anne explains that, despite only having 10, women all are different and this needs to be acknowledged. She believes there is covering by some women. However, she has chosen to accept that she does not have to accept poor behaviours and will point them out.

October 2019 – A divisive logo?
In October 2019 – the official logo was changed by the municipal authority. This has not been received well by the firefighters including some of the women. Most of the commentary saying the new logo which includes the lily representative of Brussels is too feminine, too soft and not at all representative of firefighting. The firefighters want the logo to be changed back to the “traditional” axe and helmets – representing the strength and identity of firefighters. I believe this discussion is inextricably linked to the firefighter identity and tradition agenda permeating the industry globally.

INTERVIEWED
Ms. Martine Bollu – Diversity and Inclusion manager
Officer Anna Wibin – Officer Firefighter
Officer. Lisa Legros – Officer Firefighter
Plus, several other officers and firefighters were informally interviewed at the mess and dinner table and at The Delta fire station – Ixelles

SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM

Martine Bollu and I sharing a few EDI laughs!
SUMMARY: KEY THEMES & ISSUES

- Station design and the use of space is a highly contentious EDI issue
- Resourcing constraints have a definite impact in accommodating diverse firefighters at stations to the same level of equity as their prototypical colleagues.
- The best EDI leaders are unable to make critical progress when under resourced and not actively supported by their leaders.
- Social isolation impacts diverse groups if their numbers are too low.
- The talent pipeline is also impacted for the future as is mentoring and role modelling.
- Often otherwise innocuous issues will elicit a strong reaction from firefighters if they feel their traditional identity has been challenged in any way – the case of the new logo has flushed out the deep entrenched masculine and traditional biases existing in this service.
- Resistance to inclusion can be very localised and not reflective of the wider prototypical group – however the actions of a few impact all firefighters, their workplace culture and organisation.

Inclusion Maturity Framework

Level 3: Way we do business
Level 2: Way we change mindsets and behaviours
Level 1: Way we comply

This EMSO is moving from Level 1 to level 2. Driven from the ground up and the work of understanding firefighters and the EDI manager.

Pablo Nyns in the mess room at Ixelles station
UNITED KINGDOM’S FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

There is a strong traditional base to both services, reflected in the design, associations and structure of Australian fire agencies. However, unlike their British cousins, Australian fire services are state and/or urban and rural based as opposed to Borough based, this means there are different governance structures. Despite this, so much of Australian fire services tradition has been modelled upon the British tradition.

In the UK, the past 2 decades have witnessed enquiries and subsequent reports into the effectiveness of these services, promoting calls for greater workplace diversity. In 2018 a watershed report “Smoke and Mirrors” was launched by the Asian Fire Service Association. In this report the most recent data (2016) showed the British Fire and Rescue Services had 5% women to 95% men. Ethnically white firefighters were at 87.1% and ethnic minorities (BAME – Black and Ethnic Minorities) accounted for 3.8% (with 9.1% not stated).

Additionally, I wanted to widen my research scope with a sub theme to better support LGBT+ staff. I arranged a targeted interview with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service to explore more about EDI best practice, specifically supporting transgender firefighters. I also wanted to follow up on many of the initiatives which have served as models for inclusion for Australian EMSOs, exploring their progress. British EMSOs have trialled a wider variety of programs and have a better understanding of the opportunities and risks these programs present. Investigating these will help filter the best initiatives, saving Australian organisations time, frustration and money. Hence it was important to explore and interview British services, who’ve long influenced our EMSOs and service cultures.

This visit was set against a dynamic and controversial historical backdrop with Brexit and the imminent release of the Grenfell report in the air. It was also a time when years of recruitment freezes on UK services were lifted. Services are currently buzzing with the recruitment activity. Many wish to link this to building inclusive organisations, in touch and reflective of the Britain’s rich multicultural society.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT

The United Kingdom in is the throes of the most socially and politically divisive issue to impact their society - Brexit – the referendum decision to leave the European Union (EU). It has been said the Brexit vote witnessed an increase in xenophobia. Some politicians have outwardly
expressed their divisive commentary which has fanned the flames of racism. The decision to stay or leave the EU has led to protests and occasional street violence. In addition, years of Government austerity measures had taken their toll on public services. There have been numerous funding cuts to EMSOs. Whilst in London the leading story at the time of my visit, was about a massive escalation in street violence and the absence of police numbers to contain it. Allegedly policing numbers have been drastically reduced under these same austerity measures. Since 2017 British Fire and Rescue Services have been audited for standards and compliance including EDI, by an external authority, “Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)”. This Inspectorate independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces (and now), fire & rescue services in the public interest”. ⁵

Furthermore, Facebook sites have been established by concerned citizens and EMSO workers documenting the impact of the lack of resources as it allegedly unravels at the front line. People have voiced concerns that austerity has led to a significant decrease in public safety. The reason for the monetary shortage? There has been a reduction in taxes to the top percentile in the UK and therefore a reduction in Government money, reducing services to the community.

The Grenfell Report – erosion of community trust?
In June 2017 a massive fire erupted in the housing estate of Grenfell Tower, located in North Kensington in West London. Tragically 72 people perished and a further 70 were injured. In the view of many EMSO personnel the fire and subsequent loss of life at Grenfell resulted in a tangible erosion of community trust in British Fire Services. A highly anticipated report will soon be released, the repercussions of which may impact firefighting response processes and building inspection requirements with the view of better improving public safety. In October 2019 it was announced this long-awaited report will now be released a day before the Brexit deadline, October 31st. ⁶

With all of this highly dynamic social and political activity, I wanted to speak with Academics to obtain their research summations regarding the current socio-political times in Britain and how this impacts the narrative of “inclusion” both publicly and within EMSOs. Both British academics interviewed have also completed extensive research in firefighting and emergency service agencies and were therefore able to link this societal context to the current changes and challenges facing the UK’s EMSOs.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS & PERSPECTIVES:

PROFESSOR MUSTAFA OZBILGIN; UNIVERSITY OF BRUNEL

“Protecting people generates value, not finance.”

Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin
Many of my interviews were inspiring; however, this interview with a trusted colleague and informal mentor, Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin was a highlight of my Churchill Fellowship. In between many cups of tea stretched over a 3 hour discussion, Prof Ozbilgin graciously shared his deep EDI knowledge at our meeting spot, St Pancras Station, London. (Yes, the Harry Potter Station!)

Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin is a Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London and Co-Chair of Management and Diversity at the Université Paris Dauphine. His research focuses on equality, diversity and inclusion at work from comparative and relational perspectives. He has authored and edited ten books and published large number of papers in journals. He was a perfect interviewee as he combined a great understanding of EDI in both societal and organisational contexts plus he has history of research with fire services. He clearly saw the relational linkages I wished to make with my Fellowship – especially the link between best practice EDI and how this demonstrably improves public safety.

There were several key insights provided by this Professor which clearly illustrate and support other findings in this report:

1. There is a relationship between gender and (physical) space
2. EDI networks are being locked out of strategic communication lines in workplaces
3. (Controversially) Female mentors do not work. Men only get there by privilege
4. The hidden expense of western individualism is social justice inclusion & solidarity
5. Language is critical; many people speak language to defeat EDI
6. There is a shift to the abandonment of negotiation. An example of which is the behaviour of President Trump when he verbally attacked the Gender Institute
7. For EDI to succeed it must move away from identity politics to coalition politics
8. The learnt route to leadership is competition. This is biased and limiting.
9. To achieve social inclusion requires an immediate need to move towards progressive capitalism and away from aggressive capitalism
10. EDI needs to be more strategic with practice-based theories
11. There are risks with diversity; and different risks without it

Professor Ozbilgin explained money detracts from infrastructure which sets up the social capital required to create an inclusive society with inclusive values and practices: For example: In a society where governments and industry are closing non-financial schools, hospitals, fire and rescue services because they are financially non-viable; this ultimately creates exclusion for those groups without money, education and or means of access to obtain these services elsewhere.

As such he views 3 “sicknesses” which inhibit the flourishing of social inclusion:

- Individualisation
- Deregulation
- Competition

Professor Ozbilgin challenges the notion of restricting funding – saying that measurement of social capital including public safety is more important than the economic value. As such EMSOs
must be allowed to operate and remain funded as they save lives, and this is more valuable than a financial bottom line. Mustafa explains there is a greater need for human rights-based education from early childhood to help shift the western individualist cultural mindset, as economic rationalism drives social discrimination. This holistic and compassionate approach to social inclusion links to all the reasons I became an EDI practitioner and I found this discussion with him overwhelmingly human and inspiring.

DR DAVE BAIGENT; CAMBRIDGE
FORMER FIREFIGHTER, ACADEMIC & LOCAL COUNCILLOR

If anyone understands the resistance to advancing EDI in fire and rescue organisations; and the politicised contexts in which these sit, it is Dr Dave Baigent a former firefighter and current Labour Councillor for the City of Cambridge. He is also the current Managing Director of “Fitting In” a company which provides specialist high level consultancy to organisations wishing to progress inclusion. Dr Baigent received his PhD in 2001 from the Anglia Ruskin University where he completed his thesis investigating the Sociology of Masculinity. Dave was a trailblazer when researching the complexities and challenges of inclusion within traditional fire and rescue services. To meet and discuss EDI with Dr Baigent was a great honour. We spent the entire day together unpacking nuanced arguments of inclusion, whilst also relishing some acutely political conversations reflective of the current British zeitgeist.

The day commenced with Dr Baigent explaining that when he first approached the notion of including more women and others in fire services back in the 1990s, many considered it

“a difficulty they didn’t want to handle”.

45 | Page  Sonja Braidner  2018 Churchill Fellowship Report
He spoke of producing reports that would get buried and the difficulty of translating the research from the operational frontline into a concept leaders of EMSOs understand. In short, he encountered great resistance to change. Behaviours he witnessed still occur today: humour used disarm, seduce to avoid; and there was resistance in a traditionally blue-collar profession as many ignored what they perceived as too complex. In the 1990’s there was an almost absolute homosociality within fire and rescue services and many wished to keep it that way.

Dr Baigent spoke of the rank structure and how it works to perpetuate an ongoing homeostasis in the insular world of fire and rescue workplace cultures. In such structures leadership can be a key enabler or blocker to progress inclusion depending on their capability and integrity. Often leaders will simply replicate traditional practices in their teams. Behaviours like hazing, sex harassment and race vilification are swept under cultural carpets for fear of upsetting the Boys club. Groupthink and exclusive prototypicality thrive whilst innovation, EDI and community engagement are stalled as is community safety. This is still a major issue in many services today.

These are learnt behaviours and are used to protect firefighter lifestyle as it is viewed as more than a job. These behaviours serve to exclude those who don’t fit unless like many, these “others” begin to cover for their psychological workplace safety.

“These are traditional identity roles that firefighters adopt and are unwilling to let go.”

The most common role in firefighting is that of the heroic saviour – the musclebound man who saves using his hypermasculine strength and the ubiquitous firefighting axe.

Dr Baigent believes there hasn’t been much movement in services given the schism between diversity statistics for firefighters and the wider community statistics representing a multicultural Britain. This is highlighted in an incident Dr Baigent recounts regarding the Brixton Riots. Allegedly Black British (BAME) attacked firefighters. This led to a decision to recruit more BAME firefighters to help solve the rift between the community and fire services in this part of London. Today street murals of black firefighters in South London show that there has been some movement to include.

The conversations of this day were rich and multilayered. On a hopeful note for the future Dr Baigent predicted that change is (finally) coming with the growth of more women and BAME staff adopting union roles to fight austerity and budget cutbacks. Through this avenue many diverse firefighters are becoming political brothers and sisters in arms, where their comradeship has led to acceptance within firehouse cultures.
He sees this as progress but also as a loophole and paradox of acceptance given diverse colleagues are viewed as good comrades rather than good firefighters.

THE SERVICES: LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB)

Shilla Patel – is the Inclusion Manager of London Fire Brigade (LFB) plus EDI trainer and team leader. The EDI team at LFB is well resourced and strongly supported by internal leadership and the external governing body, the City of London. Ms Patel explains that the LFB receive strong support for the EDI agenda from the Mayor of London Mr Sadiq Khan and their work is influenced by him as he has passion for inclusion and for growing the numbers of currently unrepresented diversity groups in the service. This interview demonstrates the impact a dynamic, politically supported and well-resourced team can have within their EMSO. LFB run a wide range of EDI initiatives, policies and research to expedite positive cultural change.

The mural at the entrance to London Fire Brigade’s HQ

Shilla’s role is to ensure delivery of EDI strategies and policy for London Fire Brigade. She manages 7 employee references groups and the EDI team. The latest one of reference groups to launch is “United Minds” a mental health and wellbeing initiative.

Shilla is joined in the team by other experienced EDI practitioners including Divya Patel. Divya’s knowledge of recruitment and community engagement led to an interesting discussion on how different communities interact with Fire agencies enabling employment opportunities. The LFB has commissioned a report to examine how women and BAME (Black and Ethnic Minorities) may be better engaged and aware of careers in firefighting. Divya explained many white men are part of a “family” - a lineage of firefighters. Research confirms this as approximately 70% people know people in the service. This effectively perpetuates white male homogeneity as we see in Australian services. However, this is not the same for women and BAME community members as they have relatively few family histories of being in the fire service.
At the time if this interview the LFB Inclusion team had been recently joined by new Equality Manager, Abbey Crawford –formerly employed by the Stonewall Organisation the key global advocacy organisation for LGBT+ communities.

In 2016 the LFB researched the progress it was making against its existing Inclusion strategy and ways to better progress inclusion at the Service. From this the LFB developed a 6 step-change strategy with the following objectives:

1) Develop an inclusive culture
2) Provide political and professional leadership to the inclusion agenda
3) Support our colleagues
4) Recruit, retain, develop and promote a diverse workforce
5) Deliver services to diverse communities
6) Use positive purchasing power

Source: https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/

A major aspiration of the LFB as articulated in its Inclusion Policy “is to put fire stations at the heart of their community by encouraging an ‘open’ culture that builds on the public’s trust of firefighters and makes fire stations available as resources for community groups, or as ‘safe havens’ for vulnerable people.” This creates regular opportunities to engage with under-represented communities. In articulating Inclusion at LFB they have been clear drawing the link between a diverse and inclusive culture and how this enables improved safety both within organisation and for the communities which LFB serves.

**CATHI REEVE FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

London Fire Brigade Senior Officer Cathi Reeve is also the National Inclusion Advisor for the UK Fire Officers Association. Cathi is a trained mindfulness leader, the regional representative for fairness and equality and a practicing Buddhist. This background provided for an interesting conversation on how EMSOs can better provide inclusion for their staff by design. Cathi is currently advocating for vegan Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in fire and rescue services in the UK. This follows what I observed in Japan with redesign plans for service PPE. In Cathi’s example the vegan option for PPE will enable its usage by people who have ethical, religious and/or spiritual boundaries in using products derived from animals. For me this offered a wider application of inclusive workplace principles and with current societal trends increasing the ethical uptake of veganism - this is an area I noted for eventual change in Australian EMSOs.

**SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM**
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6547016036376510464-n2EJ
Hampshire Fire & Rescue (HFRS) + The Asian Firefighters Association (AFSA)

I visited Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) to meet Inclusion and Diversity Partner Dalvinder Rai who is also the Chair of AFSA - The Asian Firefighters Association. The AFSA was established in 2002 by 4 firefighters in London before it grew into a national organisation, advocating for all diverse firefighters. AFSA has grown over the last 16 years to become the largest EMSO EDI advocacy and research organisation with over 43 Services and corporate members. As the new Chair Ms Rai wishes to embark on key progress to create a tangible legacy for AFSA given the scope has now gone beyond representation for only Asian fire and paramedic service members. AFSA reflects the progress towards EDI intersectionality.

Ms Rai agrees whilst intersectionality is the new frontier for EDI practice, within CALD /BAME communities this can create complexities. She uses the example of supporting a young gay firefighter wishing to come out to his traditional Asian family.

AFSA has grown to make a remarkable contribution to British firefighters and also to charities and projects outside of Britain. It supports social justice projects including building water wells in India and Pakistan. AFSA also sponsored First Aid Training to communities located at the Golden Temple, Amritsar. This provide opportunities for British AFSA members to travel and assist EMSO education in developing nations. AFSA hosts twice yearly conferences and research and developed the “Smoke and Mirrors report” a 2018 responsive report addressing equality in British Fire and Rescue Services. AFSA’s work is proudly supported by HFRS where Ms Rai works.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service

It is all about Human beings

Katie Cornhill is a firefighter and Manager at Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS). Ms Cornhill is a former British Marine and in 2016 was nominated for the UK Women of the Year Award. I wanted to interview Katie as she is an outspoken advocate for inclusion and in the UK has helped break down barriers for transgender people drawing upon her own experience as a transwoman. Ms Cornhill spoke of what she considered was the most inclusive and best practice support an organisation may offer a person undergoing gender affirmation.
Katie explained that for her it is treating anybody irrespective of how they identify, as a human being. Together we agreed that the feeling of belonging be it in a workplace, family or within a community is key to a personal happiness, resilience, adaptability and state of mind. Katie is a leader who lives by this ethic and interviewing her wasn’t only about best practice to support transitioning it was also about speaking with a truly inclusive leader who has drawn clarity, insight and introspection from her lifelong personal journey. She leverages her story to engage people about inclusive leadership and currently sits on the Board of Stonewall UK where she works with young people promoting LGBT+ inclusion. Prior to moving to DWFRS, Ms Cornhill was the Watch Manager at Southsea Fire station (HFRS). It was here she gave a powerful interview explaining to the British public the value and true significance of inclusion to fellow humans.

**STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

“Class means you are segregated from the moment you are born.”

Chief Fire Officer Becci Bryant

Visiting Chief Fire Officer, Becci Bryant and Inclusion & Diversity Manager, Diane Dunleavy (who is also the current Vice Chair of AFSA) was a highlight of my Churchill Fellowship journey.

Staffordshire is an innovative best practice service which has a reached a high maturity stage of EDI understanding and implementation. Staffordshire is a fire and rescue service which naturally understands and leverages from the relationships between inclusive leadership, workplace inclusion, building community engagement and trust. It does this in a manner which is intelligent and compassionate. Chief Bryant and Ms Dunleavy work together as a synergistic team. This service has made inclusion part of every fibre of its business and models some of the highest EDI values and practice seen in any organisation for both its employees and community.

**Staffordshire FRS (SFRS) operates at Level 3 the highest level of the AHRI D&I Maturity Matrix.**

The SFRS operates within a socio-economic challenged region of the UK where unemployment, disenchantment and poverty are high. The area of Staffordshire is known for having the largest Brexit (pro-exit) vote in the United Kingdom. This may be due to it being a low socio-economic area where poverty and educational access are the biggest risks. It is a class conversation underpinned by a story defined under Thatcherism, which brought about the destruction of the local ceramics and mining industries, resulting in high unemployment and a disaffected and dispirited community. It is predominantly a white community. Many of the community
members are responsible for extended family care making them even more isolated and less available for possible work opportunities. Both Chief Bryant and Ms Dunleavy are understanding and compassionate of their local communities and see the work they do engaging these people in recruitment, fire prevention and public safety as some of the most rewarding of their roles.

“EDI is not an HR function. It’s about communities; and it’s about understanding the diversity in our communities and what that means in terms of vulnerability and inequality. Because there is absolutely no doubt that those who are the most unequal are the most vulnerable.”

Chief Becci Bryant Staffordshire FRS

Both women spoke of operational issues where many other EMSOs have not yet ventured. These topics included: Operational women and menopause; and understanding what drives covering and the “stiletto ceiling” whereby women disable other women by pulling up the career ladder after them.

In every aspect of the conversations on this day, I listened intently to women who displayed great insight, empathy and deep compassion for their community and all employees of the SFRS.

Listening to Diane Dunleavy and Becci Bryant speak I was reminded of the powerful Australian research by Dr Chris Sarra of the impact of high expectation leadership and how this positively impacts vulnerable communities, leading to better and more inclusive outcomes. Dr Sarra studied this in Aboriginal communities and schools. In Staffordshire it is valid for impoverished communities – when people feel like victims of an unfair system and are less likely to aspire when demoralised. At all times Chief Bryant and Ms Dunleavy spoke of capability rather than disadvantage. “It is to be judged on merit rather than the label you carry.” In return they have the trust, ear and admiration of their community.

Ego IS a dirty word...

Dr Dave Baigent reinforced that there will usually be a chasm of trust between firefighters and their management. It is a blockage that with the right approach can be turned into a leveraging opportunity to unite both. This was the case in Staffordshire FRS where much work had been done to create a uniform, voice and a lateral team from firefighters to Commissioner. This flattening of the structure is not usual and works against the traditional paramilitary hierarchy but is showing strong signs of creating a more inclusive and agile workplace culture capable of being more responsive to the community. It was here that the identity politics of firefighters was also challenged – “serving the community... rather than the ego centred “I am a firefighter”

Indirectly less ego opens pathways for listening to others, including non-firefighter and community stakeholders, ultimately leading to improved trust and public safety.
In Staffordshire FRS Chief Bryant courageously turned the typical top down dynamic, archetypal to paramilitary services on its head and instead; allowed her staff to inform her how and what they needed to do their best jobs. “This is the environment we need from you as a leader for us to work at our best.” Evolutionary.
In this act Chief Bryant is strategically leveraging inclusion as a continuing opportunity for the organisation to flourish” She also added many know but rarely articulate...

“We are looking through the wrong end of the telescope... Inclusion comes first...”

CUMBRIA FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

John Beard the Cumbria FRS Deputy Chief Fire Officer is a thoughtful leader who has previously engaged with Australian EMSOs on workplace inclusion.

He was previously at Gloucestershire where he achieved the 2017: Reform of the Gloucestershire Fire Service which changed way GFRS attracted and recruited diverse talent.

This led to 63% on applicants being female (Raw statistics 21 applicants 13 of which were women) This had a huge impact on the service and local community and was a huge achievement for the values-based assessment used to recruit.

In Cumbria the service operates amidst a finely balanced local governance situation where there are 84 councillors. The councillors represent approximately 500 000 constituents from the parishes and districts. Across the councillors there are many bespoke views on EDI, and this can lead to a certain level of complexity when progressing the inclusion agenda for the Cumbrian Service.

Together with Mark Clement, the CFRS Strategic Fire Reform Manager, these inclusion champions work to dispel myths about who can or cannot be a firefighter; and counter internal backlash against inclusion through workplace education campaigns.

Mr Beard observes’ “If the conditions are not right the women will succumb to the very strong cultural norms (covering) or they will leave disillusioned feel betrayed at the recruitment promised as they feel they are not valued or heard.” He believes that if you promote an inclusive service you are making a promised to new recruits, so you must deliver.

Cumbria FRS has a majority of on call firefighters (retained) and currently employs approx. 3% BAME. For women it is 10% (2% above UK EMSO average) They are hoping to lift diversity numbers. However, the region is subject to right wing extremism and this is something of which the service is mindful. The narrative to the community on EDI, in this part of England, is nuanced and must be carefully crafted.
The Service has also established an equality board and they are engaging on call firefighters to join.

One of the most engaging pieces of community engagement work I witnessed in the UK was a Cumbria Emergency service partnership with religious organisations resulting in a book to educate people on faiths and religions in their communities. Shown here.

**NICKY THURSTON – NATIONAL FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL**

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet and speak with Ms Nicky Thurston over tea at the iconic Modernist, De La Waar Pavilion at Bexhill-Upon-Sea. Ms Thurston is employed as the Inclusion officer for Kent Fire and Rescue Service and has worked in the EMSO environment since 2002. Currently she is also co-lead officer for EDI for the National Fire Chiefs Council.

The (NFCC) is the professional voice of the UK Fire and Rescue Service, helping drive improvement and innovation through the industry. Nicky spoke about diversity and risk mitigation, the pillars used in the HMI assessments and about community attitudes and visible difference in the British fire and rescue service. A discussion ensued where we spoke of diversity as a trigger point to create a better service more engaged with the communities it serves.

**JOSEPHINE REYNOLDS – BRITAINS FIRST FEMALE FIREFIGHTER 1980. - INTERVIEWED 2019**

“The issues remain and there is no real striking change...”

I interviewed Josephine Reynolds back in Australia on September 12th, 2019 as our travel schedule clashed whilst I was in the UK. Jo was in Australia to promote her book. As Britain’s first ever female firefighter Ms Reynolds has a set of memories as being the first woman, as expressed in her book. Jo has been away from this industry for over 30 years and I thought I would interview her asking her reflections on what has appeared to have changed since she pioneered the way forward for other women.

Interestingly Jo believes that many of the original issues regarding acceptance still remain today. In this I considered the analogy of gender pay equity which has been a battle for the past 35 years and still has not progressed in real terms – slight movements here and there but what remains is a massive system, process and privileged mindset up against a few. In Jo’s opinion women in firefighting are still taking the initial steps on a much longer journey. She likes some of the work being previewed at LA County Fire dept (see later in this report) and some of the models emerging from Canada which look at how best to attract
woman via social intervention at an early age. She believes fire camps have some value but only when as “firefighter for a day” as she witnessed in US.

We agreed the promoting recruitment programs labelled “50/50 “ do more harm than good if not explained and marketed in a nuanced and transparent fashion. In fact, it incites backlash impacting women already on the frontline. I found Jo’s comments refreshing as they align to my theories and having these confirmed from this firefighter’s perspective was vindicating. Finally, we noted the imminent release of the Grenfell report and how this may impact the processes of firefighting in Britain.

Summary: Key themes & issues

- EDI attitudes and beliefs in EMSOs are subsets of the wider social and political narrative and as such, are greatly influenced by trends, backlash and discussion across communities.
- For EDI to succeed it must move away from identity politics to coalition politics.
- EDI must build a compelling case for EDI, so the business knows its value and potential.
- The learned route to leadership is competition. This is biased and limiting.
- There is a chasm between firefighters and those promoted to management. This create difficulty with EDI messaging and intent between senior leaders and the frontline.
- The tight culture of firefighting perpetuates homosociality and resistance to EDI.
- The resistance is inextricably linked to firefighter identity which is masculine and exclusive.
- EMSOs aware and compassionate of their communities build better relationships with them.
- EDI practice is progressing to better articulate Faith and religion as part of its portfolio.
- Better community relationships make for better fire prevention and public safety messages and build better community resilience.
- When diverse communities and EMSOs trust one another, diverse recruitment increases.
- For this to work successful EMSOs need to be mindful that creating inclusive work environments comes first then equity, then diversity.
- Change in this industry has been slow and the rate of change is only beginning to increase as a result of shifting community diversity, attitudes and pressure; and government intervention.
- EMSOs progressing cultural change need to be mindful that “a shared lie is a stronger bind for the group than the truth”. (Prof Russ Vince). Building an effective and resonant narrative is critical, so is priming this with your firefighters and employees.
- Removal of rank has worked in some services and failed in others.
- There is value in thinking time to process challenging ideas and to be innovative.

EMSOs in the UK are making progress, each very differently. Most services are operating at Level 2 however some are at level 3.
ICELAND – THE SEEDS OF A WHOLISTIC SOLUTION

Iceland intrigued me in that the fire and rescue service in their second largest city, Akureyri used a hard quota in 2017, recruiting only women for their service. It was a risk to travel so far for an interview however I felt that the societal values underpinning the Icelandic culture would offer me an insight which was unobtainable anywhere else in the world. It is almost unheard of for a fire and emergency service to pursue a hard gender quota and not be subject to a barrage of resistance by the firefighters, media and general public. In Australia significant backlash was felt when some services opted to increase the number of women, by means of gender parity recruitment campaigns. A hard quota would be unlikely to have gotten off the ground! Whilst in Iceland, progressing gender parity in the Akureyri Fire Service via a quota was applauded and received widespread support. This suggested to me something was far more progressive not only in the EMSO but also within the society in which it was nestled – the community which it serves and protects.

I was armed with curiosity and a list of questions:
- Why was there so little resistance to inclusion in this fire and rescue service?
- What was it about Icelandic society that accepted and understood the deeper nuances of inclusion and its benefit to both organisations and the wider community?
- Why was it that in the all-male service at Slokkvílíd, the adoption of a quota was accepted without the usual backlash?
- What were the distinctive characteristics of a society where inclusion was so accepted?
- Why was there no outcry of unfairness?

In Iceland I thought I could find that kernel of difference to create meaningful understanding and workable solution elsewhere. Iceland and the city of Akureyri did not disappoint!

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Located only 100km from the Arctic Circle, Akureyri is approximately 120 years old. There has been scattered settlers in the region since the 9th century however, it grew significantly after being used as an Allied base in WW2. This was when Akureyri grew from a cluster of remote houses in the North of Iceland to a town of close to 8000 people. Today Akureyri is home to approximately 18 000 people nurturing both fishing and tourism industries. Akureyri sits on a port which does not freeze in the Icelandic Winter enabling year-round visits by cruise ships and is an accessible skiing destination.

In my short time visiting this city I found a welcoming community. People were genuinely excited to meet me and share their knowledge and insights of their city. One of the most
endearing examples of how Icelandics support one another are the traffic lights in the city – the love heart was introduced to these signals shortly after Iceland was battered an economic collapse in 2009 and by the massive eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in 2010. The love heart was introduced on the traffic lights to inspire; and give hope and happiness in dark times. The warmth of this community is very much apparent.

Interestingly as Iceland is a small nation with less than 400 000 people it is prone to economic fluctuations. Currently Iceland is riding the wave of a tourist boom brought on by the volcano and more recently by the fact it was used to film the exterior shots for the series “Game of Thrones”. This rise in tourist popularity is a double-edged sword for a small nation – creating wealth but similarly challenging its fragile ecosystem and presenting locals with a conundrum, ironically one pertaining to inclusion (of tourists).

Iceland’s inclusivity was borne by the need to survive extreme climates. This is one of the reasons both men and women are viewed as equal contributors to their economy. That and the fact politically Iceland was the first country to have a female president and the first to elect a female Prime Minister to facilitate its economic recovery in 2010. More of this was explored when I met with Professor Markus Meckl for a socio-economic introduction to Icelandic culture.

**PROFESSOR MARKUS MECKL – UNIVERSITY OF AKUREYRI**

University of Akureyri School of Humanities and Social Sciences’ Professor Markus Meckl is a leading expert on the social constructs which give Iceland is distinct identity. He explained; the core values of Icelandic society revolve around children. Being child friendly, the strength and development of the family and wider social units. Multiple children are commonplace in Iceland and being a parent is key to acceptance in Icelandic culture. Another core value is work. Everyone works and there is very low unemployment. If you don’t work people think there is something wrong. Women are not exempted from this expectation. In Iceland, every child is expected to attend kindergarten from 1.5 years old and women return to work. This is the norm and is a key factor pertaining to immigrant integration in the community. The German Professor explained this helped him integrate into Icelandic culture.
Professor Meckl designed and collated the Icelandic survey of happiness which he distributed to immigrants within the community. He found people are drawn to Iceland to be close to nature, for security (safety), for the possibility of achievement as one can realise oneself in Iceland and good workers get recognition, even if they are not necessarily high within a hierarchy. Iceland is very much about egalitarianism and gender equity. This is replicated in society with Iceland electing the world’s first female President in the 1980’s and the first openly female lesbian Prime Minister in 2008. Iceland’s current Prime Minister Katrin Jackobsdottir is female, 40 years old with 3 children.

In summary, Iceland is predominantly an unbiased and accepting culture; evolving from a history of adapting to a harsh climate where everyone was expected to pitch to help survival and industry.

**SLOKKVILID – THE AKUREYRI FIRE SERVICE & THE QUOTA**

I was extremely fortunate to meet with Gunnar Olafsson, The Deputy Fire Chief at Akureyri Fire and Rescue Service (Slokkvilid), and his crew. The Slokkvilid is overseen by the City Council where equality is very much on the agenda. The Slokkvilid is responsible for fire rescue and medical flights for all of Iceland. This equates to approximately 820 flights per year. The EMSO also assists Greenland. Their remit is fire prevention and response, hazmat and rescue water rescue and mountain rescue, ski rescue, medical flights.

In collaboration with the Slokkvilid Fire Chief, Olafur Stefansson, Deputy Fire Chief Olafsson decided to embark on a change in their workplace to create gender diversity aligned with the gender equality legislation established by the Icelandic government. The initiative also came on the back of some cultural change which occurred after the Slokkvilid faced criticism for internal staffing issues a few years ago. There had been allegations of male on male harassment. The fire department was drawn into disrepute and the many people were impacted. A man of principle, the now Deputy Chief left for this period as he felt this was not a good time for the organisation. He returned once the situation had been addressed.

Since his return, the Slokkvilid has undergone a major cultural change. Some people left and the internal political landscape changed for the better.

The decision to operate a quota for women firefighters was made independently by the leaders but supported wholeheartedly. The Service was to recruit only women for their next firefighter intake. In this, a hard quota was announced. This was revolutionary for a small all-male service, with approx. 30 full time firefighters/ ambulance responders. According to Deputy Fire Chief Olafsson, everyone said “good for you”. Importantly there was no resistance from the public or the media and only support from the Council.

When the recruitment drive was initiated 14 women applied and 4 were accepted. These 4 have since become permanent with 1 part time and another having a position held for her to return after pregnancy.

Initially, there were some minor adjustment issues at the station with a small number of conversations had with some of the older men who found the idea of women joining them at
the station, somewhat unappealing. Their reasons for concern included that they felt they needed to dress better and stop swearing! With some encouragement this was only temporary, and everyone has gotten on board in the past 2 years. Initially there was no need for any station infrastructure changes however since the initial recruitment drive was so successful, there are plans to for another recruitment drive –not an all-female one - but at least gender inclusive. If more women are recruited the station will require an upgrade. Proactively, this is in the planning stages now to ensure the inclusive station is built before more women join the ranks. The station improvements will also ensure the workplace is healthier and is part of the City ensuring its fire service is future proofed. All firefighters irrespective of gender will benefit.

The Deputy Fire Chief cited the following changes as a result of the addition of women firefighters into the Slokkvílíd.

An overall more positive culture where –

“the culture is brighter”

- “Some of the darker humour has come down” a notch
- the women are contributing to the extracurricular activities -which have become healthier for all firefighters such as cycling and volleyball;
- more social activities for the crew
- Less focus on drinking
- More inclusive family and community atmosphere
- Children are welcome at the station at any time (aligned to Icelandic societal values)
- more interest by diverse peoples for recruitment and fire prevention leading to...
- A closer connection with the Community resulting in Public safety improvements

Improved community engagement and public safety
The Slokkvílíd has increased its community engagement with schools and community – with an emphasis on prevention, the firefighters visit children at schools with the home fire guards program. Children come to fire station at the end of the season to play with water and hoses and “graduate” from this now famous Fire prevention and Safety program.
The additional benefit is that the fire prevention program has grown; with both male and female firefighters meeting their community members. This has led to increased interest on recruitment, especially from young women studying at the local high school and university.
More girls arrive at station to enquire about a career as a firefighter and applications from women amounted to 60% of recent applications – more than men applying for firefighting jobs in this city!
The positive change in culture at the Slokkvilid proves that embracing inclusion is not only possible but brings enormous benefit to the community, improving community engagement and public safety. There are all-round improvements whilst future proofing the workforce and guaranteeing a supply of recruits into the future. In a similar way that Katie Cornhill in the UK Fire services speaks about seeing “humans” in the roles of firefighters, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer says it is important to treat people as people, with no need for men and women to be thought of so separately. He reiterates no standards have changed, only to accommodate anatomical difference which does mean there is a female test however most women still opt to take the male test. In recent performance appraisal all firefighters have been asked their opinions on having a more inclusive fire service. Now one year on, there is no resistance. All firefighters are happy and believe the trend to employ more women should continue stating there is a climate of trust and openness with the culture. It is a remarkably different fire service to the one, which a decade ago was under investigation for bullying and harassment. Deputy Fire Chief Olafsson is personally very proud of this progress. He concludes the interview on a positive, jovial note explaining “women all fit in the culture. There are no problems and there is a “better smell” at the station these days!”

Current status:
30 firefighters. therefore 12% women and the service is planning to increase this number.

THE WOMEN OF THE AKUREYRI COMMUNITY

In preparing to go to Iceland, no-one I knew in the EMSOs knew any firefighters in Akureyri. I began to search potential contacts from the city’s community. It was in contacting Alþjóðastofa Akureyrarbæjar - The Akureyri Intercultural Centre run by the City of Akureyri that I met Zane Meckl and Eva María Ingvadóttir. These fabulous women not only pointed me in the direction of whom to speak to at the city’s Fire Department but also agreed to discuss how they saw the fire service from their point of view as women of Akureyri and in this give an insight into gender equality in the city; what it means to women and what it means for Nordic communities. Through Zane and Eva, I was introduced to the community via various Facebook groups enabling to learn more about the culture and community dynamics; and was connected to the Gender Equality in the Arctic network which has its headquarters in Akureyri. These women made me feel so incredibly welcome that I decided to pay them an unexpected visit at their workplace to convey my thanks in person.

It was here I met two empowered women who view equity as simply quite natural and normal as they do, inclusion and the acceptance of diversity. This is built upon a society that values their pristine and unique environment.
ICELAND SUMMARY: KEY THEMES & ISSUES

- In Iceland there lies a major key to understanding the key drivers between acceptance and backlash towards organisational inclusion in fire and emergency services.
- This key rests in the socio-political and cultural values of the wider society in which an EMSO is located.
- In Iceland Inclusion is a fundamental value and is cherished: this enables it to be translated more readily to EMSOs without the levels of resistance we see in other countries.
- However, the values alone do not make the changes required for the Slokkvillid – for this to occur there needed to be support and decisive and visionary leadership.
- Linking this back to Australia I believe that effective Inclusion needs the support of a wider influence of stakeholders – commencing with a government believing in it.
- When political and societal leader are inauthentic the organisational leader dismiss the value as well because the value if inclusion is not measured by economics yet improved these outcomes.
- The power of “Sisu” (Nordic and roughly translates to - grit and determination despite what challenges you encounter) and what Sisu means for leadership.
- Station design and the use of space does not have to be contentious. It isn’t when it is valued and as such the funding is viewed as part of futureproofing the organisation.
- Smaller EMSOs can change their cultures within a decade – collaboration in doing so is essential.

Iceland holds a valuable key to inclusion – that of societal acceptance and valuing of the worth of EDI combined with pragmatism borne of the need to survive in an often harsh but spectacular environment; accompanied by good dose of leadership “Sisu.”

This EMSO is at level 3

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OVERVIEW & OBSERVATIONS OF THE EMSO & POLITICAL CONTEXT

The decision to travel to the USA was based on current dialogue across US Fire and Emergency Departments and agencies on EDI. I was also intrigued by the notion that many large Fire & Emergency Departments in the USA had been taking to court to gain equity for people from diverse groups – referred to in the USA as “minorities”. There have been long fought battles and litigation as it is alleged many prototypical firefighters have resisted the inclusion of minorities for decades. Conversely, in other more progressive EMSOs there are unique initiatives to encourage recruitment of minorities accompanied by leading edge marketing and inspirational promotional campaigns; and I wanted to see what impact this achieved in reals terms, both for retention of diverse firefighters and their respective workplaces cultures.

The USA EMSOs are so diverse in their approach to EDI, it made for a multifaceted environment to research. In many senses the promotional campaigns, most of which are available online and individual programs are extraordinary; adopting cutting edge best practice; at the same time there is enormous pressure on these organisations to make do with contracted funding and limited support from the Federal Emergency management Agency (FEMA).

The USA’s largest and most witnessed challenge at present is its political one. Nationwide the USA is under the Trump administration with a polarising leader who is a denier of Climate Change. With this Americans have witnessed Government shutdowns leading to unpaid public servants and the looming threat of a presidential impeachment. This has certainly been a politically tumultuous time for this nation. Societally, the rise of President Trump has enabled and supported many politically conservative voices. Some of this commentary has been racist, displaying strong anti-immigration views alongside commentary which is misogynist and / or homophobic in the guise of traditionalism.

The division between rich and poor has exacerbated as have trade wars between the US and its trading partners; whilst the USA like the rest of the planet, faces the imminent threat of an escalating climate catastrophe. The recent natural disasters faced internally include, the intensely destructive Washington State and Californian wildfires, both signs of increasing environmental fragility. These disasters are battled on the frontline by the EMSOs. Their
firefighters understand they are in a bind between loyalty to their Government and what they experience and put their lives on the line for each day. This duality made for interesting dialogue with EMSO personnel interviewed.

Historically, the fight for equality in US EMSOs has been hard fought and unrelenting. Progress for claimants from US minority groups (including women) eventuated via legal redress, externally reporting poor behaviours; and rarely, from within the Services themselves. To paraphrase Commandant Leen Schaap the (global) EDI agenda was and still is thwarted by some “angry white men” refusing to share their privilege.

It is mindful to note this report researched selected EMSOs from New York and California, only. These are generally considered the larger of the services and commentary on what I witnessed and learnt in these agencies may not be fully reflective of many other smaller EMSOs in other states and territories.

Adding to the EDI discussion are many online voices calling for change. Many of these originate in the USA; Change Agents for a Modern Fire Service, hosted by Robert Avsec, Firefighter Abby Bolt and similar Facebook sites observe, record and comment upon the failures, successes and inclusivity of EMSOs. Illustrating there is a growing momentum and a global community of people hungry for authentic EDI change in fire and emergency services. It is with this in mind the scope of researching the Fire department of New York (FDNY) and Californian services, both urban and wildfire, with a mix of permanent, retained and volunteer firefighters, provided a rich cross section to observe. It is also important to note that other constructs such as terrorism have played a huge role in defining modern EMSOs in the USA in the 21st century...

In a sad reminder and close to hearts of emergency responders that the landscape of this vocation has shifted since the 2001 terror attacks of 9/11 in New York City. The devastating impact of this human catastrophe had its epicentre in the heart in the Fire Department of New York, who lost 343 serving members on this tragic day and; in the time since, firefighters are still suffering and dying of 9/11 related illnesses. This has changed the character and shape not only of the FDNY and other US EMSOs but also of the population of New York City. What I felt was a forever changed New York with a population where you could sense a resilient community and palpable sense of caring for others. It is a City forever united in grief.
FIRE DEPARTMENT NEW YORK (FDNY)

The FDNY was established in 1865 and is currently the largest and most busy fire department in the USA. Across the City there are over 200 firehouses and 30 EMS stations. The FDNY covers the 5 boroughs of New York City and operates with firefighters, paramedics and EMTs.

Whilst viewed as the City of New York’s bravest, the FDNY has had a negative EDI related history with questionable employment practices allegedly denying access to those termed “minority groups” in the US. This includes women, African Americans, Hispanics and others who are not prototypical white male firefighters. The struggle for EDI culminated in a successful US$100M lawsuit lodged against FDNY’s employer – the City of New York, in the early years of the 21st century. This lawsuit was initiated by the Vulcans – an organisation who fought valiantly for inclusion and equitable employment practices at FDNY for over half a century. This hard-fought victory finally settled in 2014...

FDNY: EDI DIRECTED BY A COURT SETTLEMENT...

The Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer and Diversity Officer positions were initially created as part of the $100 million discrimination lawsuit. These positions are now occupied by Deputy Commissioner Cecilia Loving as the Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer and Firefighter Lieutenant Prentis Jackson, the Diversity Officer. Deputy Commissioner Cecilia B Loving was the second appointed, longest serving and current Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at FDNY. DC Loving, an attorney specialising in Human Rights, commenced her role in 2016.

In addition to these appointments and the financial compensation; a key “part of the settlement decided by Garaufis,( Senior United States District Judge); was the FDNY agreed to let a federal monitor oversee its hiring practices.”

DC Loving spent her first 8 months in the role speaking and listening with the 1600 members of the FDNY across all areas; and discovered the Divisions have their own subcultures, issues, personalities and challenges. Armed with knowledge and research from critical industry reports used across the corporate sector, Cecilia translated the principles, lessons and outcomes to align and be effective at the FDNY. She operates with a highly skilled and supportive team. In this Unit, she is joined by Ms Wendy Star, Director of Policy who works to coordinate events for FDNY employees and works with affiliated organisations known as Affinity groups.
FDNY’S AFFINITY & ERG GROUPS LINKING TO THE SOUL OF COMMUNITIES

FDNY D&I has a wide remit and is working both internally with staff culture and externally with the many FDNY Affinity groups. These are civilian focussed not for profit entities (some of which have been in existence for over 100 years). The staff employee reference groups (ERGs—internally focused) represent EDI staff and together these network groups work to support FDNY’s EDI vision of:

“attracting candidates of diverse gender, age, culture, race, religious preference, economic, sexual orientation, as the expression of unique ideas provide for better productivity, efficiency and service to a diverse and multifaceted community. “

Affinity groups are not directly employed by FDNY and usually comprise of retired service personnel. Although there is also an Affinity group which represents the wives of the Vulcans. These groups support FDNY in the public domain often helping with providing FDNY literature and assistance to potential recruits whilst each group celebrates it cultural heritage. The current Commissioner, Commissioner Nigro is a member of the Columbus Affinity group representing connections between the FDNY and New York’s large Italian population. These groups work in conjunction with FDNY but are not subject to FDNY policies and employment law unlike the Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)—who comprise of current members of FDNY. The ERGs also help provide EDI support and education across the organisation.

All groups; Affinity and ERGs work at building trust, support and connection with the diverse population of New York City. They work to link in with communities and promote public fire safety by communicating fire prevention and safety messages. All of these networks are overseen by the I&D Unit. This again displays a direct connection between employee and affinity groups created to support EDI which also connect with communities to forge greater public safety.

BUILDING SELF-AWARENESS WITH HOLISTIC TRAINING OPTIONS

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<th>Inclusive tenets at FDNY</th>
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<td>Authentic Trust</td>
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<td>Supportive relationships</td>
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Using the above tenets, the Office of I&D focus on expanding allies and creating mindfulness at FDNY. One of the FDNY’s first ERGs was the mindfulness group. Quoting Inclusion and Diversity expert Jennifer Brown “Inclusion is a journey not a destination” DC Loving explains she views the Unit’s goal for inclusion as a process of small steps. The Unit is an industrious one with a plethora of programs; but what struck me most was the humanity of the work undertaken by Cecilia and her team. Given the Unit may have grown from a controversial court case, the involvement of this team seems to have merged amicably and effectively into the fibre of the FDNY and is positively shifting its culture and mindsets.

Programs and initiatives cited to “co-create courageous and compassionate communities” include:

- In Process: Building an Inclusion Leadership Institute: 2019 to embed inclusive leadership and processes into all the FDNY does. It will engage senior firefighters.
- 2019 Women’s Summit honouring the legacy of former firefighter Brenda Berkman.
- NLP programs used + Ethics + Implicit Bias and Allies training
- Use of restorative justice to heal the past and encourage inclusion
- Bravest Women Talk event
- Elizabeth Clement Peace-making workshops.

In addition, the Unit conducts research and supports a host of other employee programs. Furthermore, FDNY staff are involved with planning annual EDI conferences, partnering on recruitment initiatives and attending major NY City events including the Pride Parade and the African American Parade. FDNY’s involvement generates excitement in the communities and it is another way in which the Service remains connected, reflective of; and gives back to its wider communities.

This team run the widest and most comprehensive EDI interventions I have witnessed on this Fellowship journey. It does this from a holistic perspective linking into the wellbeing of FDNY staff and the people of New York City. They are certainly moving the FDNY culture forward and have the explicit support of their highest boss, the Mayor of New York City. Cecilia feels blessed her busy team of approx. 7 staff can focus on EDI whilst other staff focus on recruitment and EEO compliance and standards. This FDNY model shows that when staff resourcing has been properly addressed it enables for higher quality and deeper impact of EDI outcomes for EMSOs. The I&D team at FDNY engage and produce solutions whilst the EEO Commissioner and his team manages compliance and compliance education.
Assistant Commissioner Don Nguyen believes “equity is mission critical” for the business and operational success of FDNY. AC Nguyen’s responsibilities centre around Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) compliance and include:

- Education
- Training
- Leadership

The EEO Unit also conducts investigations. The team operates to serve the 1700 people employed at the FDNY. A highly skilled team of 8 support the Assistant Commissioner. This team are principally comprised of highly respected HR and Human Rights attorneys and are experts at decoding many of the mixed motive conversations which take place in this space. For me the level of experience of the EDI and EEO staff at FDNY was refreshing. So often these roles are viewed as soft skills and/or the place of well-meaning advocates. Having staff with recognised qualifications, deep holistic experience and understanding of the nuanced territories of EDI and EEO is directly attributable to improved levels of service within organisations. This is clear at FDNY.

“Equity is Mission Critical.”
Assistant Commissioner EEO, Don NGUYEN

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MS GINGER ADAMS OTIS

FDNY: An alternate perspective through the Vulcans lens
Ginger Adams Otis is an investigative reporter who currently works for the NY Daily News. She has written a detailed account of one of the most ferocious fights for workplace equity ever undertaken - that of the decades long struggle by the Vulcans. This association of African American firefighters fought hard to be accepted and treated with equity and dignity at the FDNY. Ms Adams Otis is the acclaimed author of the book, Firefight – The Battle to Integrate New York’s Bravest. This “Fire fight” played its endgame very publicly in New York in 2014 when the Vulcans successfully sued FDNY for US$100M plus a raft of other settlement terms, when it was found the City of New York had breached its equity employment obligations for decades. The outcome has resulted in the FDNY having greatly improved EDI participation in 2019.

Reading Ms Adams Otis’ highly researched account of the Vulcans struggle for equity and inclusion ignited my passion to meet this woman and speak to her and a member of Vulcans to learn even more about their struggle. This was achieved in my Fellowship visit with this interview plus a couple of conversations with Vulcans; one of whom works at the station of Captain Paul Washington a key player in the court victory and former Vulcans President. This
Station 243 comprising of a majority of African American firefighters proudly goes by the nickname of the “Soul Patrol”.
Ginger Adams Otis first began reporting about firefighters in the early 2000’s following attending a conference for the Vulcans. At the time African American firefighters represented approximately 3% of FDNY. Since then there has been a serious visual change to FDNY and according to the author “the only changes which came about were because of the Vulcans” and she believes that even today there is still some serious backlash within the FDNY with alleged peer pressure against those are Vulcans.
Ms Adams Otis believe the firehouse micro culture is extremely challenging for fire department to penetrate. She refers to sleeper cells of “resentment and miseducation that are populating within the whole entity”. Interestingly this is the same pattern which plays out across the frontline in other EMSO cultures when there is resistance to change. In this case change involves the genuine acceptance and inclusion of non-prototypical firefighters consisting of African Americans, women and Hispanic, amongst others.

In her book, Ginger explains how the Vulcans training helped firefighters of colour to pass the FDNY entrance tests. She goes on to explain that many of these successful recruits have turned their back on the Vulcans because they wish to keep away from controversy. This is covering. As a result, the Vulcans are struggling for membership. Like many others who are not from the dominant firefighting cohort, African Americans often have to contend with judgement based in mythology. In this case the FDNY had to bring on certain candidates who taken the exam in 1999 and a judge ruled they were “unfairly treated”. These recruits became known as “second chance candidates” many of whom were resented. Angry prototypical firefighters formed a group “Merit Matters” that falsely promoted these recruit candidates were not merit appointed. Tensions allegedly ran so high that many African American FDNY recruits were unwilling to speak to reporters to stay safe.

**VULCANS INSPIRING AUSTRALIANS**

Upon telling my colleagues I was going to visit New York and look at the work of the Vulcans many were inspired and wanted to learn more about this organisation. Aboriginal and Torres Straits islander firefighters were excited. In the future I hope to build bridges and establish contact and an ongoing narrative between these two groups.

*Ginger Adams Otis and I at The NY Daily News Offices*
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

FIRE & AVIATION
MANAGEMENT

CHIEF KELLY MARTIN

Chief Kelly Martin created a memorable impact when she appeared at the Women in Firefighting Australasia conference in 2017, where she spoke about her experiences in testifying before US Congress. She spoke about her lived experiences as an “other” in the wildfire service. Ms Martin told of her challenges, exclusion and being sensitised to the behaviours which subvert inclusion by both men and women.

I wanted to learn more about this woman’s 35 years fire service experience and travelled to Yosemite where I was humbled to be a guest in her home. Staying for three days I was able to have many conversations with Kelly and her colleague and friend Jeb Pronto who is a retired Battalion Chief.

Kelly spoke about how women need to learn to be brave. She told of her experience of testifying before US Congress. She knew she carried great responsibility as a leader. Kelly wanted to ensure there was access for women to fulfil their highest potential. Other women coming through needed to know someone high up had their back and they didn’t have to risk their career by speaking up. She believed that as women in fire services “we are all one, we are in this together.”

Kelly states organisations must make the leap to inclusion with integrity and commitment. Like many other non-prototypical firefighters, she wants to see conscious strategy around inclusion. People tire quickly of words with no action and people tire quickly of empty words. She believes EMSOs must demonstrate positive examples of inclusion.
This was echoed by her colleague Retired Battalion Chief Jeb Pronto. As a line manager he valiantly tried to normalise inclusion with his crews only to receive resistance from higher up in his organisation with senior leaders unwilling to support his decision to enable greater flexibility for his crew. Kelly also spoke about the cost of speaking up – a key insight of this report. There will always be a price for speaking up. I saw firsthand the career of a 35-year firefighting veteran come to an end. It was her friends and loyal team members who created the bang and acknowledged all her trailblazing career and leadership achievements: Bullying, harassment and hazing were flushed out because of Kelly’s fierce and brave leadership. Her firefighting and leadership contributions are recognised internationally. Yet not within her home service? Together, we spoke about this continued invisibility of women leaders and the outspoken; of the punishing behaviour and silencing those who display loyal dissent with a desire to genuinely improve EMSOs. She acknowledges the harder path she took as a pioneer and the pain this caused her. I was deeply moved by her sharing her vulnerability and story. I was deeply saddened that she had been subject to this type of “othering” in her service to the people of America.

In October 2019, Chief Martin retired from her EMSO and is focussing on how she will continue improving the industry for the next generation of men and women to join.

There were other themes which arose during my conversations with Kelly, Jeb, other wildfire firefighters and law enforcement officers which took place over the 3 days. These included:
1. The lack of critical mass for any minority group in wildfire services.
2. Will the US public ever demand accountability on inclusion from its services?
3. Will the US public demand environments which are safe and inclusive for all?
4. Is there too much emphasis on the words of leader rather than the actions?

These questions are not unique to this firefighting industry and extend globally.

Finally, Kelly spoke about the generosity of patience by diverse groups. EMSOs must expect to change after 100 years but it is still taking far too long.

SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6562559033960685568-RDWE
SHARED CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SERVICES & FIREFIGHTERS:

“This last year we’ve had a lot of firsts. We had our first female fire marshal ever. We have our first African American female battalion chief. Last year for the first time a female recruit performed the best at throwing ladders, which has been a little bit of an Achilles’ heel for women. And we had our very first female overall top recruit in the history of LAFD.”

City of LA Fire Commission Rebecca Ninburg speaking in 2018

LOS ANGELES FIRE COMMISSION
LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT
WOMENS’ FIRE LEAGUE

In Los Angeles I was thrilled to spend a day at the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) as they arranged for members of their Department, Ms Rebecca Ninburg from the Los Angeles Fire Commission and a representative from the Women’s Fire League to speak with me. In addition, I was invited to attend a media and community engagement event hosted by the Los Angeles County FD Commissioner, leaders and a representative from the LA County Board of Supervisors a 5-member team who govern Los Angeles County and oversee the running of the Fire Department. This was an outreach to ethnic communities to further build public trust, request funding and further build confidence and fire safety with the public.

In summary I spent the morning in a shared conversation about equity, particularly gender equity in the Californian fire services, before travelling to Garfield Station to attend the community engagement event alongside ethnic community representatives and media. In the afternoon I returned to LA County Fire Department to observe their 911 command and control room, meeting Assistant Fire Chief Derek Alkonis who was instrumental in setting up my visit and having a brief chat about his support for EDI before ending the day with a phone conversation with Battalion Chief Jasmine Segura from the Women’s Fire League.

My hosts for the day were D&I Chief Andrea Avila and Senior Firefighter Tracey Sizemore.

Over the course of the day many conversations ensued with common EDI themes including:

- The political and systemic frameworks holding back women in most fire departments
- The design of training facilities to be universal and able to accommodate increasing numbers of female recruits into the future
- The essential requirement for inclusion and involvement of the EDI professional in decision making which impacts minorities in fire services (and how best to negotiate this if there is exclusion in the process)
• The emotional and psychological costs for EDI practitioners, women and other minority groups in striving for equity in male dominated services.
• Common feeling for women they are often unheard and fighting against “a machine”.
• Feminine behaviour trivialized - the double-edged sword of making too much noise or not enough.
• Issues with Academy instructors replicating traditional and misogynist cultures.
• Discussion on the balance between paternalist attitudes and of positive movement.
• Need to deconstruct the hero mythology a must as firefighting is becoming low frequency and high risk whereas more work is low risk such as community engagement and fire prevention.
• Pre employment Programs at LACoFD but a pipeline issue remains.
• Women need to be known in the crew to deconstruct the myth – the power of knowing a diverse human!!
• Wives and Partners issue – Universal Lateral violence for women to contend with. Need to disrupt the cronyism – women and others do not invitation to cliques and clubs = they are the Party Crashers.

“Courage doesn’t just happen. It evolves”
Lauren Androtti Women’s Fire League

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT (LACoFD) OVERVIEW OF EDI

The LACoFD has 457 women in a team of 3000 firefighters therefore whilst there are some great EDI actions, this equate to just over 1% women in total for all firefighters. In partnership with groups such as the Women’s Fire league, LACoFD operate several initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion. In addition, I was keen to view the recruitment materials from this fire service as they are among the best. Avoiding tokenism and addressing the process in a manner which inspires would be candidates the recruitment videos, advertisements and other materials for both the LAFD and the LACoFD are inclusive – and normalise diversity on every level. The photo below is an example from the current LACoFD recruitment guide:
With this said the day’s conversations almost exclusively revolved around their primary focus for progression, women. Chief, Andrea Avila, Manager of Community Outreach, Recruitment, Diversity and Inclusion (CORDI) showed me some of the EDI programs, promoted via videos. The programs involved girl’s camps and Women’s fire Preparation Academies (WFPA). I was curious to know the return on investment for these types of programs as the number are non-existent in Australia. She explained the programs have been running for a few years and when I asked how many women have embarked on a firefighting career directly because they participated in a WFPA or girls camp, Andrea suggested “about 6”. As such, I believe there are more effective business investments to progress EDI for every potential (diverse?) recruit not just women.

In 2018 LACoFD held the inaugural ARISE summit with the call “A reason to include and support everyone”. The summit held over 3 days included many varied workshops and presentations from a Fire Chiefs session, implicit bias workshop, trailblazer stories, health and wellbeing presentations appealing to all firefighters and personnel. This was deemed a huge success and a moving experience for all involved. Andrea suggested this conference was a key step in helping shift attitudes and mindsets for all firefighters. Like FDNY and as seen in the UK, these workplace summits are very potent in progressing inclusion.

At the LACoFD I observed and met leaders actively supportive of EDI. I saw leader’s representative of minority groups including the Commissioner himself. In all I witnessed an EMSO walking the talk of authentic inclusion and making genuine progress.

WOMEN’S FIRE LEAGUE

The Women’s Fire league was created to advocate for women in the fire services of California. It operates in partnership with LACoFD to offers a range of education and experiential programs to encourage women and girls to consider a career in firefighting.

Battalion Chief Jasmine Segura of the Women’s Fire League wants to create more programs for women. Jasmine has been with the LACoFD for many years and says issues as those shown in the previous list remain; and are archaic challenges after many years. She believes change is beginning to finally occur in the following ways:

Now often there is 2-3 women in a battalion, and this has brought about some change whereby men get to know the women on their shift as humans and this goes a long way towards deconstructing the myths about women, capability and merit which have long polluted the facts for gender inclusion. She also wishes to create a strong alliance for women, so each woman is less exposed whilst pushing for inclusive workplaces and attitudes. Again, the themes arose that women and others are not a problem to be solved. Rather the limiting structures, policies, attitudes and frameworks are the problem as they lack inclusiveness.
“We make it work (at the stations). We didn’t come into the job for a separate bathroom. We came into the job for the mission. So why do women have to continually pay for this??”

Jasmine Segura Battalion Chief LA County Fire Department

INTERVIEWED
LA Fire Commission’s Rebecca Ninburg
LA County Fire Department Chief Andrea Avila, Manager Community Outreach, Recruitment, Diversity and Inclusion (CORDI)
LACoFD Senior Firefighter Tracy Sizemore
LACoFD Battalion Chief Jasmine Segura Women’s Fire League
LACoFD Assistant Fire Chief, Air & Wildland Division, Derek Alkonsis

Clockwise from Left: Community media event, Garfield station, LACoFD Commissioner Osby & I, staff LACoFD

SOCIAL MEDIA: LINKEDIN FACEBOOK. INSTAGRAM
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-6564687721816817664-PtWB
University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Professor of Management and Organizations, Corinne Bendersky is the author and researcher behind the insightful Harvard Business Review article “Making U.S. Fire Departments more Diverse and Inclusive”. Currently she is consulting to Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and Los Angeles City fire Department (LAFD). I met with Prof Bendersky following a recommendation by Assistant Chief, Derek Alkonis of the LACoFD. The following are themes of the Professor’s research which arose during our interview.

Hard conversations and the heroic identity
Prof. Bendersky speaks about the difficult conversations required to engage the identity of firefighters. Inclusion practitioners need to tap into the preciousness of the firefighter identity to open this discussion which is guarded and to some extent sacred. Yet firefighter identity and the reshaping it to meet a modern service is a key if EMSOs are to meet the challenge of the future. This is a major recommendation of my Churchill Fellowship Report, so I found the conversation with Corinne extremely thought provoking and refreshingly validating. However, it must be acknowledged that her study is far more intricate, deeper and academically nuanced, and I am greatly respectful of this.

Introspection is the powerful tool – when engaging with EMSO leaders and the frontline it is imperative that we move beyond a superficial conversation to one which is introspective. Shifting firefighter identity equates to a prototypicality threat and is often met by an amygdala response when ego is threatened. Instead, by building trust and enabling firefighters to have the intellectual space to think about the way their industry is shifting and for them to be vocal contributors for solutions in shifting culture may be a better approach.

Why is firefighting generalist and not specialist?
Corinne made this point which had also been raised in Europe. Given response rates are falling and prevention is increasing it seems odd that the job is defined by response. The notion raised by Leen Schaap of a fire professional fits this observation. This shift would also confront identity and as such a nuanced and introspective approach must occur when raising this possibility.

Excess drilling and having to constantly prove your value
Another key finding in Prof Bendersky work was the excessive drilling which occur for diverse members of firefighting cohorts. This illustrates their lack of acceptance by the prototypical group and has been a theme mentioned repeatedly when I have interviewed firefighters outside of the dominant groups. Corinne found in some US Services there was evidence of women targeted for excessive drilling and often this was for the one spot in crew which requires most strength. This displays bias and scepticism of merit appointment; and is also potentially dangerous. These behaviours can impact emergency incident management and erode the cohesiveness and trust of a team. Observations at fire academies also show evidence of women being asked to repeatedly to drill the most challenging activities for all genders.
**USA SUMMARY: KEY THEMES & ISSUES**

- When EDI is resourced effectively the results of their positive impact on workplace culture and the communities is synergistic.
- Affinity groups create pathways for reciprocal communication between EMSOs and the community, further building trust and public safety.
- As advocacy groups Affinity groups and industry bodies for inclusion can push the agenda further as they are not under the hierarchy or the control off one EMSO.
- Wellbeing and mindfulness facilitate successful EDI implementation.
- Introspection may be used as a tool to develop EDI progress and shift mindsets.
- EDI Allies are important.
- Why is firefighting a generalist function? In the future will it be a specialist function?
- Get to know women on crews and debunk myths by getting to know diverse people personally.
- Mythology of merit continues as it suits the prototypical and is a key resistor and blocker to positive and inclusive cultural change.
- Dialogue and traditional gender models...in station houses – better terms and conditions for everyone due to being inclusive.
- There is evidence some women are cherry picking to fit the sexist agenda - so how do women and other feels safe in the “brotherhood”?
- Diverse leaders help the EDI agenda and are understanding of its business opportunities.
- Diverse leaders face additional challenges and are often made invisible if they challenge the accepted normative behaviours. This also happens to their prototypical allies.
- There is an urgent need for critical mass of diverse people to assist others and build understanding and remove isolation and vulnerability.

US EMSOs vary immensely.
On average they are operating at Level 2.
ANALYSIS
Throughout the interviews, major themes and areas of action became evident. The degree to which these were embraced by an organisation was reflected in the extent that the EMSO was successful with its EDI goals and embedding these into the strategic fabric of an organisation.

THE FINDINGS:
Based on the interviews, stories and documentation researched on this Fellowship journey, these are my following observations, commentary on current practice and recommendations to improve EDI practice in Australian EMSOs. This research shows how this will correlate to improved public safety. Better ways to improve EDI is to be mindful of the following:

1. **EDI is political and heavily influenced by the societal values and the wider cultural context**

EDI practice is political, and it touches the core of most of us – drawing strong and potentially polarised reactions attributed to our very specific values sets and life experiences. It is a political and social science not just a subset function of HR departments. As such it is best owned by every human being in an organisation.

2. **There is a need for holistic EDI understanding & design in EMSOs, ensuring people engage with EDI and how it relates to them, based on their personal life experience and stories.**

Organisations frequently develop EDI strategies based minimum compliance standards or for singular organisational outcomes e.g. pipeline issues regarding gender. This results in a narrow and shallow implementation of EDI that neither solves greater issues nor provides the organisational benefits that a more integrated approach will achieve.

3. **There is a need for a holistic approach to better articulate a clear and compelling narrative for improved business outcomes linked to effective EDI implementation.**

Full suites of EDI structures, interventions and programs are required, based on understanding of the operational, administrative; full time, part time and volunteer needs of the organisation, it’s culture and its people. Following on EDI strategies best thrive from inclusive, Human Centred Design:

4. **Inclusion needs to exist before diversity and equity can thrive.**

5. **EDI is best served by collaborative practice not competition.**

6. **All staff within an organisation are impacted by the benefits of good EDI practice irrespective of rank, gender or origin. EDI considers everyone instead of considering only some.**

7. **To be effective EDI requires professional nuanced implementation and good data**

Effective EDI suffers when it is
Poorly understood by the business and its leaders
- Poorly resourced,
- Poorly implemented
- Poorly evaluated
- Poorly measured

By using the tools available, such as data mining, exit interviews, or nuanced communication an organisation can map the interactions between the different areas of EDI enabling the organisation to respond to wider range of issues and considerations than by taking a simple portfolio or program view of EDI.

8. EMSOs need to see through their unique mythology of merit

There is great mythology in poorly applied merit. Many EMSOs apply “merit” based on a belief system that is traditional, paramilitary, subjective and biased thereby replicating a comfortable homosociality. This denies voice, access and experience to those outside of the dominant / prototypical group. It impacts permanent, retained and volunteer firefighters and extends beyond firefighters affecting all types of employees.

9. Not having effective EDI is risky business

*EDI is must be considered within a business risk framework.*

EDI has an important part to play in the business and cultural success of an organisation. Rather than a nice to have, EDI is an ever evolving, continuous process that enables an organisation to maximize the potential of a diverse workforce to achieve the best possible potential for the organisation. A simplistic or limited EDI outlook poses significant risks for an organisation strategically in the short, medium and long term. There are defined types of risk to consider:

- Strategic Risk
- Compliance Risk
- Financial Risk
- Operational Risk
- Reputational Risk

These can be found in the following:

- Risks of a Poor EDI Narrative
- Risks of Poor EDI organisational commitment
- Risks of Poor EDI understanding by leaders
- Risks of Poor EDI practice (and practitioners)
- Risks of Poor EDI ownership and business alignment
- Risks of Poor EDI socialisation and communication
- Risks of Poor EDI implementation
- Risks of Poor EDI monitoring and review
- Risks of alienating communities; eroding trust & safety

10. EDI can be dangerous work that challenges privilege and prejudice; with much of the organisational responsibility to make change invested in resisting rather than enabling that change.
Issues pertaining to diversity and inclusion in any industry elicit strong emotions because it is political. This is even more so in Emergency Management organisations where there is a long history of a dominant homogenous culture where it is male, hero centred, heterosexual and often white. Recruitment of diversity does not make automatically make an organisation more receptive to promoting and including others; especially if there is an overall feeling that the privilege of a prototypical group is being eroded. This can impact all levels of an organisation creating a culture which says it is inclusive but acts exclusively and defiantly protects the normative. This is when diverse people & EDI practitioners become the sacrificial pawns of bias.

11. EDI exists within; and initiates backlash and other resistant acts in workplaces

Backlash is defined as a negative reaction to social and/or political change. Diversity backlash is a real and tangible phenomenon which can damage people and businesses alike. It flourishes within EMSOs. Australia along with the rest of the world is currently facing increasing societal backlash to equity and inclusion which is manifesting in numerous behaviours. This must be factored in and mitigated in all risk analyses, implementation and communication.

12. The quality of Leadership has a direct correlation on the success of an organisation’s EDI outcomes.
12A. Poor leadership brings implicit bias and covert elements of homosocial driven backlash

Strong, effective, authentic and informed leadership which sponsors EDI is key to ensuring backlash is managed and treated effectively whilst protecting diverse employees and EDI practitioners in the execution of their roles.

13. Innovation is pushed by the growth of EDI.

The broadening of the organisational pool frequently drives innovation with new attitudes and ways of thinking influencing the organisation to better outcomes.

14. Thought diversity can be a friend or a foe. It needs to be monitored so it does not subvert the agenda.

Thought diversity is broadened by demographic diversity but employing different personalities from the same prototypical group is not an act of inclusion, merely an excuse to avoid it.

15. Practitioners and champions can burnout in this highly politicised space...

“Nothing easy about it (EDI), at times I rather be a florist”

UK EDI Practitioner (taken from interview transcript)

16. The informal firefighter culture comprising of the “brotherhood” and other unwritten ground rules within an organisation, matter.
17. Improved Socialisation & Communication of EDI is vital

18. EDI progress correlates positively to enhanced community engagement for EMSO’s and public safety outcomes.

19. EDI requires access to senior leaders, and it requires resourcing and authority to be effective.

“Go directly to the Fire Commissioner...this is how we get the work done”

FDNY CHIEF, I&D, Deputy Commissioner Cecilia B Loving

CONCLUSION
One perspective became breathtakingly apparent whilst travelling internationally and that is Australia is lagging the world when it comes to EDI best practice and workplace inclusion. Could it be our isolation or were we late to come to the EDI party, distracted by a history of the White Australia policy and deep internalised racism? Is it an Anglo-Celtic inspired macho culture where unlike Iceland, survival in our harsh environment was the domain of only men? Australia’s pervasive cultural stories impact each of us personally and collectively seep into limiting our professional environments.

Complicating this, Australia’s EMSOs are even further behind. Clinging to a traditional culture defined by the separatist axe wielding heroic “fireman”. Diversity is minimal and inclusion is often resisted. There are even few diverse people in senior ranks. Cross industry initiatives to assist women are floundering and no voice exists collectively to progress the agenda of diverse firefighters and EMSO workers on a national scale. Unlike that of the UK and USA.

Looking overseas I found effective social and cultural narratives, a richer history of promoting equity, support by Governments and a genuine desire for EDI progress. Granted some countries had to be sued to move forward but with the litigation came humility and a renewed commitment. Internationally gender at 50% of the world’s population remains the first “minority” group to receive attention, often paving the way for all diversity target groups in subsequent strategies. The trojan horse analogy is well used but appropriate to describe this cascading of most EDI initiatives.

In my report I confirmed that EDI is greatly impacted by the following:

**Socio-political context and cultural framework in which equity, diversity and inclusion sit.**
Iceland showed that at culture of acceptance of EDI principles in a social-political context, automatically cascade to industry, enabling EMSOs to leverage the benefit readily and easily.

**Learnt experience from adversity:** Japan is proactive with EDI in disaster planning and resilience having learnt the cost of ignoring it. These principles are now gaining traction in their EMSOs.
**Humility and collaboration expedite EDI outcomes.** Not competition; not ego, nor a scarcity of resources argument.

**Outcomes such as public and environmental safety are more important than most fiscal outcomes.**

**Adaptive, authentic, empathetic and emotionally intelligent leadership.** EDI without tangible support of leaders’ withers. When EMSOs perpetuate homosociality into senior ranks as they have done due to the absence of a talent pipeline of alternative “others” EDI has little genuine sponsorship. EMSOs such as FDNY are addressing this explicitly by creating Inclusive leadership institutes, employing diverse leaders from outside of the industry (or via lateral promotion), clearly articulating the value inclusion has upon innovation and public safety.

**EDI needs to be heard directly by leaders not filtered through a prototypical hierarchy.** All EMSOs interviews viewed EDI as strategic and business critical as such they have direct reporting lines between EDI leads and the heads of co organisations. This needs to occur in Australia to ensure ideas progress. Many EDI practitioners in Australia are hampered by their strategies being filtered through prototypical leaders who lack “skin in the game” and a nuanced understanding of the EDI progress agenda. This is diluting EDI capability and progress in local EMSOs and is a problem in urgent need of redress.

**Ideas before hierarchy.** Dr Dave Baigent reinforced that there will always be a huge trust and communication chasm between firefighters and management. However, with insightful, clever leadership this can be overturned into a leveraging opportunity to unite management and frontline for EDI. This has occurred at Staffordshire FRS where great work has been done to create a uniform and lateral team from firefighters to Commissioner – this flattening of the structure is not usual and works against the traditional paramilitary hierarchy. This trailblazing approach is creating a more inclusive and agile workplace culture, more responsive and better capable of serving their community’s needs.

**Awareness of EMSO Identity & Culture.** It is here the identity politics of firefighters require suspension. EMSOs must focus and “serving the community... rather than individuals operating from the ego centred base of “I am a firefighter”. To achieve this requires introspection and awareness of complex intrinsic biases. Introspection is a key to the work.

**Frontline culture progress via volunteers?** Many services interviewed believed volunteer emergency responders as critical for cultural progress. Many believe culture stalls within the prism of 24 hours shifts and station homosociality of the fulltime employees. Volunteers are proving more adaptable and willing to bring progressive ideas forward. Volunteers corps are often more diverse.

The above are only some of the main themes gathered on my Fellowship journey. So much more has been learnt. The real value lies in the relationships I formed and the practitioner partnerships which have been planned. This is the collaboration needed to progress EDI and enable EMSOs to better adapt to the increasingly complex and more diverse communities of the future.
Initially, this report was twice as long filled with insights and innovative actions - many about EDI practice and others specific to inclusion within EMSOs. However, this space is a growth area and there is also ample opportunity to springboard further academic study. EMSOs who wish to access the information will avoid costly errors and risks associated with poor implementation. This report is the beginning of a much larger discussion to assist the develop of EDI practice in Australia and in particular within the specific areas of EMSOs. I look forward to exploring this topic in more depth with organisations through dissemination, conferences and direct engagement.

The world is progressing EDI cognisant of its immense value for organisational growth and adaptation to meet future business needs. Fire services and EMSOs must make way for this change if they are to compete for the very best labour, stay relevant, adapt to new technologies, engage and promote public safety in the communities to which they belong. The ideas and recommendations contained within this fellowship will help contribute towards making this critical adaptation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7 KEY AREAS:

1. **An evolution & expansion of EDI practice to become better interconnected with business and community expectations**

2. Thematically EDI needs to move away from identity politics to coalition politics. This important insight was introduced to me by Prof Mustafa Ozbilgin and really gets to the heart of EDI practice. Practice needs to focus beyond identity groups. And inclusion is required as a universal principle embedded in all business functions. This will create better employment experiences and lessen backlash for all people, irrespective of their demographic differences.

3. These coalition politics are about collaboration as opposed to competition. Leaders are best mindful of this as they are in a competitive space and need to make a conscious cognitive agility shift for EDI.

4. An EDI practitioners’ organisation is to be established for coalition in this industry. In EMSOs, the Emergency Management and Defence Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners Australasia (EMDDIPA) will officially launch October 2019. EMDDIPA is already mobilising EDI practitioners to share knowledge and improve current EDI practices the emergency service and defence environments.

5. EDI is not a soft skills practice. It is inextricably linked to better organisational performance and improved community engagement. Practice requires political insight, knowledge of stakeholder groups and a strong organisational development skillset. To avoid risk, organisations need to be more critical with where their EDI information
originates and ensure they are recruiting high level practitioners with proven experience, inclusive leadership traits and demonstrated success in this field.

6. Engage rather than enrage EDI detractors to shift mindsets and culture over time. Consciously and articulately reach out with an informed narrative and respond to backlash politics and critics – this is an opportunity counter mythology and misinformation.

7. A carefully constructed, nuanced and business aligned communications strategy is vital to support EDI in a changing workplace environment. This makes it resilient to backlash, competing scarcity of resources and other political pressures.

8. Be mindful of the public discussion surrounding inclusion. As a leader or practitioner, you are part of the progress for a more equitable and inclusive environment.

9. Within EMSOs: Clearly reframe the EDI Narrative to be inclusive of all employees. Ensure EDI is interdependent with business success and as pertinent as it is in other industries.

“EDI is not change management it is PROGRESS management.”

2. Getting real about inclusive environments in ESMOs by creating an external and independent Government monitoring body.

10. Creation of an external legal entity to monitor EMSOs. I recommend the creation of an external monitoring and organisational assessment Authority as exists to monitor EMSOs in the USA, UK and Europe. Current “self-regulation and internal management” is failing diverse employees of EMSOs. In NSW I recommend the creation of an independent Government Authority as a follow up to the Parliamentary Enquiry of 2018.

11. Create safety and confidentiality in victim reporting: Utilise an App or technology such as RescueBase (used to also record sex harassment in EMSOs in Europe) to monitor and record this data external of the ESMO and to the Authority. Allow this data to be used in evidence to support ongoing action to minimise further harassment and discrimination.

12. The Independent Authority creates a space for dialogue with relevant trade unions, communities and other stakeholders which are impacted by and can impact EMSOs.

13. Senior EMSO leaders including Commissioners to attend externally supplied EDI training conducted in partnership with the external Authority.

3. Create inclusive environments FIRST to successfully pursue authentic EDI activities and progress.
14. EMSOs to design inclusive and bias free organisations BEFORE recruiting more diverse employees. This will enable retention and unobstructed career pathways for the diverse recruits. There is little point recruiting for diversity if these same people leave after feeling excluded or have later hit exclusive policies, processes and/or and structures.

15. EMSO conduct a full risk analysis as they would for any other strategic business function. Be mindful of discovered risks and develop effective strategies to mitigate these risks.

16. ESMOs need to obtain more leaders from diverse groups either through external recruitment or by expediting the current limited pipeline. This must be made a priority in ESMOs.

17. EMSOs will not succeed in EDI if their senior leaders isolate themselves, operate patronally and/or are excluded from the dialogue of frontline operations.

18. EDI leaders need to have authority and influence in ESMO structures and therefore need to be positioned at more senior levels, given greater operating resources and have a clear line of communication directly with the Agency head. Removal from HR Unit and having a direct reporting line to Commissioners is best.

19. These EDI leaders must be fully conversant and capable across all aspects of EDI. Appointing inexperienced staff in the EDI space is a major business risk.

20. Data: Accurate HR data be kept on recruitment, retention, promotion and exits This data be submitted to an external monitor on a standard interval basis. This Data be made available to EDI managers.

21. Create EDI KPI’s for accountability until EDI is fully embedded into all business functions for level 2 or below rated agencies.

22. Avoid ego based and rank inspired directives on EDI – “If you don’t like it leave” serves no purpose except to divide. This is not inclusive and risks setting the EDI agenda back.

23. Resource EDI for strategic thinking & innovation

24. Create effective and experienced EDI teams which are diverse and reflect their communities. Walk the talk.

25. Ensure your EDI is cost effective Avoid media hyped projects which have no demonstrable return on investment and no links to the employment life cycle.

26. The continuing exclusion of “boat rockers” (Marc Stigter PhD.), punishing behaviours of “others” within ESMOs, including vocal proponents of EDI progress must stop in these rank-based organisations. This is a major issue.
4. Operational considerations at the frontline: Stations, PPE and inclusive workplace design

LEADERSHIP

27. Understand and communicate to others that rank does not equal EDI expertise in an EMSO. Similarly, an Inclusive leader is not determined by rank.

28. Similarly, being a diverse stakeholder does not make for expertise in an EDI Professional capacity. That said, firsthand experience by diverse stakeholders will always be critical in informing the wider EDI narrative.

29. The link between EDI and strategic operations in EMSOs requires strengthening.

30. Monitor training Colleges and Firefighting Academy’s - instructors, pedagogy and culture to ensure each are champions for a future focused EMSO which promotes and respects the value of EDI.

31. Create Employee resource groups / network’s which suit the EDI maturity phase for your EMSO / organisation. If you are beginning your EDI journey, you will be establishing these. If you are a best practice EMSO you may in fact transcend the need for these to make way for a fully inclusive and accepting workplace culture; as seen in fire Agencies the UK.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

32. Ensure all training programs are inclusive and focus on capacity building. Think carefully before create training programs which are viewed at fixing the problem of diverse groups. This may create further divisions rather than inclusion.

33. Workplace flexibility is a powerful contributor to employee engagement, inclusion and retention for all employees.

34. Going forward EMSOs require universal design in all their workspace and workplace places – including Stations. Utilising flexible architectural technologies will allow Agencies to create fire stations which can accommodate all genders and shifting numbers of staff over time. This has been done effectively overseas.

35. Greater inclusion also extends to improved PPE design. New technologies and material will enable better, more lightweight and stronger PPE. Removal of leather in PPE will also enable those with moral and religious observations to utilise equipment which has not impacted animals. This is being done effectively overseas.
5. Safety and Wellbeing to support diverse staff and the EDI agenda in EMSOs (and other organisations!)

36. **Intersectionality** is a growth space. The solidarity and collaborative potential created through increasing intersectionality can be a force multiplier for EDI within organisations.

37. Engage more role models for diverse people, but this only solves part of the issue of “you cannot be what you cannot see” the other half of the solution is in the design of EDI.

38. Consideration be given to adequately resourcing specialist staff who are trained in grievance management and occupational health pertaining to violence elimination. Currently this is under resourced in many EMSOs; with one of the largest services having only 1 established psychologist position to support all 5000+ staff.

39. Create improved links between EDI, psychological safety and well-being in EMSOs.

40. Introduce holistic programs for employee health and wellbeing. This is being employed internationally within EMSOs to help create more resilient, inclusive and self-aware workforces.

41. Identify covering & bias which masks EDI failure points.

42. Identify both stiletto and brass ceilings in EMSOs.

43. Understand team homogeneity will deny members a level of self-expression and safety. This limits innovation, engagement and ideas. Diversity provides an antidote to this.

6. **Better leveraging of EDI to improve public safety outcomes**

![Diagram showing Trust, Recruitment interest, more diverse people attracted work for the EMSO, Improved Prevention education, Pre employment access programs for diverse groups, Trust and Community Engagement reinforced, Diverse communities represented within EMSOs]
44. The above cycle illustrates the cycle to deeper community engagement. This will lead to improved emergency and fire prevention outcomes whilst also building greater trust with diverse communities. In turn this trust helps attract more diverse employees.

45. Improve disaster planning and emergency response preparedness by seeking a wider and more inclusive picture of community need.

46. In Australia we can also extend this concept to include environmental considerations (in preparation for improved bush fire protection management) by building greater trust and engagement with First Nations people who have complex understanding of this unique landscape. Given there is indisputable knowledge that Climate Change exists: it is a recommendation that using the cycle above to build trust, greater economic empowerment and self-determination via employment and community partnerships. EMSOs continue to grow engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to establish how to better care and prepare our land to be more disaster resilient.

47. Escalating environmental concerns are linked to EDI and risk management for EMSOs. EMOS can engage beyond the traditional internally focussed scope of EDI and develop sustainable partnerships with communities to better protect natural spaces. This works to further improve public safety whilst enabling EMSOs to become improved societal citizens promoting the safety and protection not only of communities but of all biodiversity. This is a huge public safety risk mitigation exercise, extends the definition of EDI to include all life. This expands the context of EDI to support surviving not only in an EMSO workplace but also in a rapidly changing world.

DISSEMINATION OF THIS REPORT

Upon receiving this Churchill Fellowship, I made plans to promote and disseminate the information I would gather on this extraordinary opportunity.

Whilst away I shared my findings and experiences with interested followers

▪ Via LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.
▪ This will continue through 2019 and 202 with articles and further promotion of findings

Plans for further dissemination include:

▪ Keynote speaker SALT Conference at UTS October 2019
▪ Keynote speaker EPHEA, Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia Conference Nov 2019
▪ EMDDIPA Launch November 2019
▪ Speaker at Criterion Wellbeing National Conference – Melbourne Feb 2020
▪ Presentation to AHRI DIAP 2020.
▪ Submission to AHRI Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2020
▪ Continued partnership with Bushfire Natural Hazards CRC 3 Year Research Project “Diversity Building Strength and Capability”
▪ Submission to the WAFA Conference 2020
▪ Speaker at Workplace Wellness festival June 2020 ICC Sydney
▪ National print and television Media coverage
▪ Local Print Media coverage - The Leader
▪ Blogs and Article extracted from the report to be featured on Change Agents for a Modern Fire Service
▪ Formation of international partnerships has been discussed and are in planning

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Use of this report, quotations and recommendations in whole or part thereof, requires acknowledgment of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and this Report’s author. Any use of interviewee commentary needs to also be acknowledged.

“Diversity is a table to which everyone must bring something to share.” Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin.