

Coroner Doogan

I am not a legal person and nor am I versed over all the evidence that has been provided; I am also probably speaking out of turn in regard to the coronial and the findings which may occur.

What I can talk from is my personal experience, and the impact that certain aspects of this process have created and still continue to this day for all sorts of different reasons. Morally I feel I need to make a statement in regard to the process as a whole, one which demonstrates my feelings and those of the majority of people I deal with from day to day.

I, like many others, have been affected by the severity of the impacts which have resulted from this event. The way I see it, we have a choice : whether we move forward and make the best of what we have or whether we stay in the past and try to resolve issues which cannot be effectively resolved as they are in the past.

Hindsight is something that has been talked about a lot during this coronial and all I can say is that everyone made decisions to the best of their abilities and according to the information they had at the time and I personally would not have changed anything that I had done. Nor would many others.

What I will say though, as a fire fighter who has worked both on the fire ground and within Incident Management Teams, we are human and at times we are required to make judgement calls based on the evidence before us and not always having the full picture.

We make decisions everyday - what happens if I take this different turn in the vehicle, do I let my child walk on their own to the shops, do I allow my 7 year old son go into the male toilets on his own. All of these decisions are ones which we have to make where we weigh up the risk. I can never have the full picture as to what is happening and I base my decisions on the information I have. What we need to do is look at what we can do to assist us to make these decisions, not attribute blame to decisions, so we can move forward.

I am a fire fighter who had 19 years experience and dedicated a large part of my life striving to do my best when making decisions on behalf of the people I commanded on the incident ground. These decisions were dealing with people's lives at every step, whether it was a hazard reduction burn, mopping up or a major incident. The decisions I made had potential to impact on someone's life. I always accepted this as did everyone else; we always did our best, and still do. It is important that this continue. So there will always be someone there to make the decisions we need to support these people, not isolate them, whoever they may be.

The last thing that I wish to see is people either now or in the future too scared to make a decision during an incident or any event, for that matter, whether they are a volunteer or paid. We need to ensure that we have people in the future as well that want to take up these roles and strive for the best and not be weigh down by what ifs. I know at times I can be accused of being too much of an optimist but I feel that there can be many positive outcomes that can assist our future decision makers and make it a better future.

We need to ensure the legacy that we leave behind is one that is remembered for the right reasons, not just now but the long term future.

I would like to see the outcomes of this coronial assist us in the future and allow us to make the decisions that need to be made and learn to make it a better system. I would like to in the future show my children how we all contributed to making this a better system and one which we all will be proud to be associated with.

Your's sincerely

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