



Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission

promoting, protecting and preserving human rights

REF: HRC-RES-FIRE SERVICE

Mr. John Bodden
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P.O. Box 1804
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CAYMAN ISLANDS

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Via Email: john.bodden@gov.ky

Dear Mr. Bodden,

Thank you for your email of 15 January 2015 in which you requested the Human Rights Commission (the "HRC") review the Cayman Islands Fire Service's (CIFS) Draft Grooming, Hygiene and Personal Appearance Policy (the "policy").

As you are aware human rights are about the *balance* of rights, freedoms, and responsibilities; treating individuals fairly, with dignity and respect – while still safeguarding the rights of the wider community.

In regards to the policy the HRC suggests that the document should express that policy has been created in line with health and safety regulations and/or best practices, whether local or international) as they relate to the CIFS (wearing of uniforms, attending fires/accidents/etc.). Following from that perspective each of the standards listed in the document must be proportionate responses. For instance, it would be proportionate for the CIFS to say that hair cannot be placed in twists which do not allow the helmet to be fitted properly; however, it would not be proportionate to place restrictions which do not in any way affect the said health and safety regulations and/or best practices. The HRC also questions the need for different policies with regard to hair for males and females - it may be that the policy currently designed for females is sufficient to cover both sexes.

In regards to the provision for the wearing of religious articles that are not visible, this *could* be considered a violation of an individual's right to religion. If jewelry cannot be worn at all due to safety concerns then it is proportionate to not allow religious articles of jewelry to be worn at all; the CIFS does not have to compensate for this, potentially creating safety concerns, by allowing such

articles to be worn underneath clothing. As a safeguard, the policy could indicate that individual cases can be presented to yourself, or other delegated persons, for consideration.

The HRC is encouraged that the CIFS is carefully considering policies to ensure compliance with the Bill of Rights and would encourage you to review the document ensuring that each of the standards is proportionate to the health and safety regulations and/or best practices. We thank you for taking the time to send this document to us for our comments, if we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



James Austin-Smith
Chairman
Human Rights Commission