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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 June 2017 10:18 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Bill

Categories: CONFIDENTIAL REQUEST

Attention: Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

To the Committee,

There is significant confusion around the point of the Victorian government's legislation around the restructure of the fire services. The bulk of the confusion stems from the fact that the United Firefighters Union (UFU) appears to be controlling the legislative process and using militant tactics to assume control over the Country Fire Authority (CFA). Clearly the public do not want this. The UFU's role is to protect their members, not legislate for all Victorians. That is the role of the parliament. If changes need to be made to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) boundary, then so be it, but that should not mean annexing another organisation and driving away volunteers. In this state, many organisations are losing volunteers at a rapid rate. Without those volunteers, we will grind to a halt. The reasons behind this are many and varied, however when our own government seeks to shut volunteers out through their actions, in an effort, that on the surface appears to be to appease a union, then we are a long way from a resolution.

To my understanding, this is about operational control. The UFU want what the CFA has. That's not a good reason to legislate. Should stations such as Dandenong and Boronia become MFB? Most likely. Does that require operational control of the CFA? Absolutely not. Should it mean that Warnambool, Mildura or Shepparton are also annexed? Absolutely not. Peter Marshall, on behalf of the UFU, appears to be pursuing his union's agenda without regard for the broader community. I understand his role as a union leader, but as a firefighter, surely he must put the safety of all Victorians first? Operational response times cannot be compromised and it would appear that this new legislation does just that, particularly in rural and urban fringe areas.

The issue remains that reform of this type has been hampered by the apparent behaviours of the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP and Mr. Peter Marshall. Victorians are seeking clarity on what this legislation provides in terms of services and power to the union. The fact that boards have been sacked, Ministers removed and Chief Officers have felt forced to resign is reflected in the public's resistance to this legislation, and specifically, any perceived interests of benefits the UFU stand to gain at the expense of the people of Victoria.

* Please note that I seek confidentiality with regard to this submission.

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