

Prue Purdey

From: The Firie [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 28 June 2017 1:35 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Bill Select Committee

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have tried submitting this using the eSubmission form, but it is coming back with errors.

I am extremely disappointed in this whole reform.

As a volunteer at an integrated station, I have already been told that we will not be required going forward on a day to day basis, at best we might be needed for longer duration bushfires and the likes. All the talk about not changing volunteers and having volunteers continue to respond in exactly the same way as they are now is definitely not what we are being told is going to happen. We have already been told that the assignment tables that currently have volunteers and staff responding to calls in our brigade area will be changed and going forward only FRV will be responded to these calls. This is the total opposite to what the general public has been told and what is stated in the legislation, however this is what we are actually being told on the ground.

We are also hearing that our neighbouring CFA brigades rescue appliances will no longer be responding to rescue calls like they do today and is likely not to even be responded to rescue calls in their current brigade area. This is something that will be left to FRV to undertake going forward.

This legislation lacks detail on how it is actually going to be implemented, appears to be bad news not only for the volunteers in the outer metropolitan areas of Melbourne but ultimately for all Victorians. Just ask yourself, if you are spending a couple of hours a week training and honing your skills to remain competent as a fire fighter and be ready for calls, where currently you are responding to between 100 and 200 calls a year currently and going forward you only get to respond to a couple of significant bushfires a year, what is the point of keeping up the skills. This will result in a massive loss to the surge capacity, while this legislation states that there will be no loss, there definitely will be and it has already started as volunteers are already being told we have no future when FRV takes over. This will mean that we need to employ a huge number of additional career firefighters to be able to cover the expected loss of volunteers.

I am not sure whether you have seen the figures that are floating around for getting a new integrated fire station up and running, but figures I have heard are around the 10 million mark for a new integrated fire station to be built, 2 million for a new Heavy pumper, then the on going salary of the 20 fire fighters that are employed at each station which is around the 2.5 million a year. Given the lack of career staff in the outer metropolitan areas of Melbourne, I would expect that if we loose the volunteers in these areas we would need at least another 10 career stations, maybe 20 to be able to provide the adequate coverage that is expected. So if we are saying 10 stations there is another 25 million a year, just for the costs of wages, maybe 50 million. Then start adding in the maintenance of the additional trucks, the uniform costs and all and it doesn't take long to realise that we will need a massive increase to the fire services levy, which is the reason I believe that the government is not even prepared to mention anything on the costs of these changes, and will leave it for the next government in 2 years time to have to break the news to the general public.

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world – there is no disputing that! The government is planning on ‘winging it’ – proposing a fundamentally flawed piece of legislation that has very little detail – is vague, and offers more questions than answers. A bad solution won't fix anything. The Victorian fire service – with our mission of protecting lives and property.... is too important an issue to get it wrong.

I know if this legislation goes through that it will be the end of me as a volunteer, which I started back in 2002, so while it has been a very rewarding part of my life, I have to say I will be extremely disappointed in being forced out of such a great organisation where I have been able to provide a great service to not only my community but the whole of the state.

Regards
Mark Jones