

DAVID BREADMORE

Thursday, 29 June 2017

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

RE: Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

I am writing today to voice my deep concern in relation to the current government's actions, handling and communications regarding the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

The most critical of these dealings has been to combine both the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 into one single bill.

1. Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation

Firefighters Health Safety and rights in regards to Presumptive Compensation has nothing to do with the reform of the Fire Service or how it operates. **This bill must be separated into two Bills** and not bundled together to force through change to the operation of Victoria Fire Services.

Career staff or Volunteer, MBF, CFA, DELWP all are exposed to the same environment, all are exposed to the same risk, all provide emergency services on state, national and in some instances internationally level on behalf of the State of Victoria. All of these organisation and people deserve to have the same rights and protection.

2. Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform)

How can a major reform and restructure of such a critical organisation be concluded without consultation with CFA and VFBV and how can it be done when the CFA Act specifically details that consultation must occur. ?

It is not unreasonable to request that after a long and established commitment to Victoria that CFA and its members are treated with honesty, integrity, trust, service and accountability, and that they are not misled and kept in the dark, but fully informed in a honest and transparent manor.

As I read the CFA act (acknowledging that I am not a lawyer) it prohibits government from effecting or proposed changes that affects CFA, its operations, service delivery, support and rights, without consultation with CFA, or its volunteers representatives. Having ignored this Act, I am not convinced that the current government has acted legally and they should be brought to account for this.

I do not believe that all Victorian or CFA volunteers have been give enough information, clarity or details to make a fully informed decision about the Fire Service reform, what it means or how it will work.

As the committee responsible to inquire into, consider and report, on the restructuring of Victoria's fire services. I believe that due concertation be given to:

- a) Stopping the current government from proceeding with legislation or implementation until there is volunteer and community consultation prior to decisions being made, as is the legal obligation under the CFA Act
- b) That the current government should provide full details of the proposed changes, including answers to detailed operational questions by the VFBV and CFA
- c) That a full operational impact assessment of the changes are undertaken before a decision is made
- d) That a full volunteer impact assessment of the proposed changes is undertaken before a decision is made
- e) And most importantly that the draft legislation and amendments to be provided to volunteers (VFBV) for consultation prior to it being considered by Parliament)

I offer the following commentary in support of the lack of detail and misleading information which has surrounded these actions

- a) It would appear the James Merlino has mislead Victorians , He told Victorians on 3AW, "I've been talking to everyone, I've been talking to volunteers, CFA, the UFU, VFBV, the boards of both organisations, I've been talking to communities around the state,"

The fact is that he has not consulted VFBV about these changes and these claims that he did are false and misleading. There has been no consultation with VFBV and no briefing of any detail whatsoever.

- b) James Merlino has also said " The recent major reviews - 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission; 2011 Jones Inquiry; 2015 Fire Services Review, 2014/15 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry and the 2015/16 Parliamentary Inquiry into CFA Training College Fiskville have recommended that the CFA be split into a fully staffed service, and a 100% volunteer service".

The fact is that not one these reviews have ever recommended that the CFA be split into a fully staffed service, and a 100% volunteer service. To suggest or imply otherwise is dishonest and yet another lie to the Victorian people.

- c) I can confirm in a letter from "CFA CEO Steve Warrington to the VFBV received late afternoon on Friday 19th May 2016 that There has been no opportunity for consultation with CFA prior to this because up until late Thursday advice from CFA to VFBV was that there was no information known."
- d) The fact is that the Minister Merlino confirmed that even "CFA Chief Officer Steve Warrington had not been involved in the discussions until two or three days prior to the announcement".
- e) As I understand it these reforms have been drawn up by a small group working in secret within the Department of Premier & Cabinet, and has not involved the Fire Agencies. This group and their work has also reportedly been hidden from Cabinet itself.

This would be the first time in Victoria's history, that Fire Service Reform has not been the subject of any public scrutiny or consultation.

At the very least all CFA members and the people of Victoria deserve to have been fully informed of the proposed changes to Victoria's fire services, the impact both from service delivery and community impact it will have on all Victorians, that due care and correct process should be undertaken before the CFA and its proud history of service to the Victorian community is dismantled.

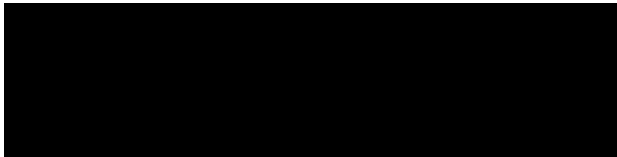
A snapshot of the types of communities which will be effected.

Red Hill Fire Brigade (1 of 1,186 CFA stations in Victoria)

Current membership	47 Members
Total combine current years of service to Victoria	1192 years
One Family alone has 4 generations of members totalling	400 + years of service
Years established and servicing the community of Victoria	75 Years
Compliance with service delivery standards (response times)	100% compliant (as at May 2017, per CFA report)

It is not unreasonable to request that after a long and established commitment to Victorian that CFA and its members are treated with honesty, integrity, trust, service and accountability, that they are not mislead and kept in the dark but fully informed in a honest and transparent manor.

I would be to address the Committee as a witness or contributor to the process



David Breadmore
 CFA Volunteer
 2nd Lt Red Hill ,
 Training Officer,
 District Strike Team Leader,
 Group Mentor & 4th Deputy Group Officer
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