

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 June 2017 7:21 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission to Committee

Good afternoon,

My name is Brad Kelly and I am currently the Captain of the Toomuc Rural Fire Brigade in the Cardinia Group which is located a very short distance from the integrated brigade in Pakenham. Effective 1 July though I am no longer Captain having resigned from the position and will remain as a volunteer.

I'm very proud of the Toomuc brigade. We have a rich 70+ year history. We have more than 25 active and trained members, two relatively new appliances and we respond to 160-200 calls per year, many of these in support of Pakenham brigade.

There are so many issues that concern me about this legislation although I'm sure most will be covered by others. What I wanted to talk about in my submission was the likely impact this will cause on my Brigade, and others whose area is also located very close (but not part of) an integrated brigade. Our issues will be similar to those where integration is today, although no one is talking out brigades like ours. Around pakenham there is us but also, Officer, Nar Nar Goon and to a lesser extent Pakenham Upper.

Under today's model the volunteers respond to support the staff. At most jobs there are significant resources when combined with staff of 3-4 and then 10-15 volunteers, even more for bigger jobs. This model not only meets, but exceeds the community needs from a fire service perspective.

I fear that these changes will have a detrimental impact to volunteers within the FRV boundaries which will result in the need to increase the paid workforce just to maintain what exists today, in an area I might add where the business case for even integration is questionable considering the staff often go days without the need to respond into the pakenham area. To then staff up as would be required should the local volunteers deplete will come at a significant cost to the tax payer. While the cost makes no sense at all, what's worse is that there is likely to be a lessor service going forward at a higher cost and without the important surge capacity.

My greatest specific concern to our brigade and those like us relates to surge.

Surge capacity is indeed one of the current CFA strengths, however every time I hear the UFU ad on the radio telling the public that surge capacity won't be impacted, I feel sick.

Toomuc has attended most if not all of the large fires over the years. We can crew our truck for strike teams throughout summer and as we have a new Medium Tanker it is critical the truck rolls.

I am not at all confident that this is sustainable in the future as I suspect that we will simply lose many of the enthusiastic and engaged members we have today, me included. Keeping volunteers trained, active and engaged is more critical than anyway realises.

Like it or not, if volunteers are not actively responding to fires in a meaningful way they lose their practical real world skills. This is not replaceable with training. What's worse, disengaged volunteers will simply leave and find another area to volunteer where they are better utilised and appreciated. We volunteer to help our community and communities in need, if we are not doing that then many will leave. Then when a big surge is needed they simply won't be there.

Now we are only 1 Brigade with 2 trucks and say 25 active members. But being a busy brigade we are also well skilled, trained and have plenty of real world experience. We also have several crew leaders and a strike team leader (me) amongst he ranks.

Should we become unviable and should 40-50 other brigades just like us suffer the same demise, then there goes the surge capacity.

What's worse, these brigades will typically be on the urban fringe where fast surge is critical. A staffed brigade can simply not fight bush fires alone, they have the skills of course but too many people are required, and the towns still need protection. You can do this with volunteers where the numbers in our group are several hundred, you can't do this with 3-4 in shift.

I'm really worried for our great state that this change is going to have a long term and irreversible impact on our Fire fighting force.

And all of this just so an EBA can be passed that has a clear negative impact on volunteers and infact on ALL Victorians. This is a bad reason to change our Fire Services.

Please do not pass this floored legislation.

I am happy to discuss these concerns in more detail as I have already requested to the minister and also the CEO of the CFA, neither have responded to me though over several months. Consultation has been very poor with brigades like ours.

Thank for for taking the time to read my letter.

Brad Kelly



Sent from my iPhone

If you are not the addressee, please inform us immediately that you have received this e-mail by mistake, and delete it. We thank you for your support.