

Dear Secretary and all members of the Fire Services Bill Select Committee,

Proposed Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

My name is David Evered, a very proud volunteer CFA firefighter of the past 11 years. For the last 8 years I have been a Lieutenant and crew leader for The Basin CFA. The last 14 to 16 months have taken their toll personally and as a result I have stepped down as a Lieutenant.

As a volunteer It seems that we no longer have the support or confidence of our current Government or even our CFA leaders, that are desperately trying to support this bill with fingers crossed that it will eventually work out supported with no proper detail at all. I understand that their Jobs are at risk, but there is so much more at risk if this is not thought out correctly. My decision to “step down” as an officer is partially due to this, but also the disgusting behaviour that I have received on the fire ground from a very select few of CFA staff from our local integrated CFA brigade, Boronia. Please note that this is not the same view of all career CFA staff. But as a volunteer, I’m not alone in receiving this unwarranted attention resulting in my actions.

Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria.

- Reduction in CFA Volunteer numbers due to instability across all sectors. Cause, no confidence in our Government or CFA leaders. Result, no capability for surge when needed, or worse, what reduced surge capacity is available, have been ill equipped or ill trained resulting in tragic ends.
- Claiming it helps address service growth when it provides even less flexibility for CFA to grow resources to match risk compared to the current model
- It strips control of CFA resources away from CFA. They claim it gets the EBA interference out of CFA but it does not – all it does is block CFA from having a say in the EBA that will ultimately determine how key CFA resources work.
- CFA hamstrung to employ its own staff. All our OM’s and OO’s and Training Instructors are to be hired and managed by FRV and then contracted (“seconded”) back to CFA. CFA loses all control over its future management culture.
- Too many detail gaps. Fire services are too important to leave to chance
- Lessens flexibility to support brigades
- Further fragments the current service, this does not modernise the CFA it takes CFA backwards.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

- Presumptive legislation discriminates against Volunteers. We both fight the same fire with the same gear, yet Volunteers have to front a “Select Board” to receive compensation, a Career firefighter does Not? How is this not discriminatory? Mr James Merlino has stated that this is Legislation with be the same for both Career and Volunteers, that it’s the same as the QLD model, and that it’s the same as what the VFBV have asked for, all Mr Merlino’s statements are false and misleading.
- Splitting CFA for no reason other than to drive an EBA through is irresponsible and short sighted
- Irreparably damages the sense of worth of CFA vols – the thin edge of the wedge to devaluing service and commitment. This overt, partisan and capricious political interference over our service will have a lasting impact and is doing great damage to our morale and confidence in Government and CFA

- No real consideration of how the operation of integrated stations will operate (with/without vols), both ways – particularly in remote stations like Traralgon, Shepparton, Mildura, Warrnambool, Wangaratta Portland and Wodonga – they have no quick support except from CFA vols.
- No consultation, bad process
- Loss of CFA management (OM's and OO's) impact on CFA culture by outsourced management.
- Treat Volunteers like 2nd rate in urban areas
- Negative impact on Volunteers morale.
- Destruction of the Integrated model
- No obligation for FRV to sustain volunteers

Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

- Financial & Budget implications
- Increased cost and impact on future CFA budgets. Will CFA be the poor cousin?

Underlying policy rationale.

- CFA's "briefings" leaves everyone with more questions than answers – and it is clear CFA leaders are just crossing their fingers and "hoping" that it will all work out. What a way to drive and lead reform for an emergency service organisation!
- Clear lack of process to allow engagement and rational consideration of options. To hold meetings and briefings AFTER they table their legislation in Parliament and dress these up as consultation is as insulting as it is disingenuous
- Political and industrial interference is wrong motivation for change.
- Does not fix the EBA problem, it only moves it.
- Clear union agenda to flow beyond the current 35 areas.
- No recent reviews have recommended splitting the CFA integrated model.

I have a proud history of not holding back when confronted with odds that do not stack in my favour. I was awarded The Basin's "Roy Ritchie Firefighter of the year" in 2009 for duty served in trying times. Armed with the current, modern up to date CFA training and the same in modern CFA equipment and personal protection, combined with the backing of my fellow CFA firefighters, career and volunteer, MFB and CFA, I am committed to doing the best job I possibly can when it comes to protecting both lives and property of the Victorian Community. However, I'm not a politician, I do not have any training, equipment or personal protection in this field. I do not know how to fight a secret, devious and unseen danger as I believe is currently being played out in the offices of the Victorian Cabinet Chambers. I do need the backing of people that do! This is where I need your help.

I am not opposed to change, providing it can be demonstrated that the change will be beneficial to the communities we serve. At the moment that outcome is not evident and the reverse may be likely. All I ask is that the outcome is both **fair and reasonable** for the whole Victorian community, not just for the current political leaders and their UFU partners.

Respectfully Yours.

Dave Evered.