

Submission to the Upper House Select Committee concerning “The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Service Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017”

By: Chris Lang, [REDACTED] (District 6 volunteer for 50 years.)

Date: 3/7/2017 Not confidential.

I have several comments as a long term volunteer from an all volunteer District.

1. **Split the Legislation:** I have no problem with the Presumptive Rights Compensation Legislation and feel that it is very different to the Fire Service Legislation. They both have different duration and intent. I feel that it would be simpler to debate, pass and implement if they were put as two separate pieces of legislation.

2. **Leadership:** The structure of a combination of permanent and volunteer brigades has been effective for many years. It seems that the current drive for change seems to be due to stalled EBA negotiations. This stalling seems to be due to personalities, leverage and cussedness. It is a pity that this short term leadership combination is preventing a more considered long term outcome.

3. **Planning:** Critical legislation requires considerable evaluating, planning, marketing and implementing. It appears that this legislation has had none of this. We do not know the cost of the new structure, how each group is funded, the relationship to other emergency services (SES, RAV, Forest Fire Management, forest industry brigades, etc), and many other matters. Volunteers need a clear analysis if they are to accept the proposal.

4. **Finance:** it seems that the majority of the rates based funding comes from the urban areas. If FRV proceeds there needs to be an equitable allocation of funds between urban and rural areas. The EBA model for negotiations has been very fraught. It is quite possible that a new corporate structure would also cause similar problems with the division of funding.

5. **Negotiating parties:** It appears that the negotiating parties to date in the EBA and the FRV negotiations are the UFU for the unions and the CFA as the employer. Many of the issues in the EBA concerned training and equipping volunteers. In many cases it seems that the volunteer interests were not able to be represented by the volunteer organization VFVB. This does not ensure a happy outcome.

6. **Employment:** It seems that in the proposed new structure any CFA staff is to come through the FRV channel, probably via permanent manned stations. It seems to me that the type of CFA operations officer to support CFA volunteers may not always have the people skills required of a permanent station officer. There is a strong argument for an employment channel directly into the CFA without going via FRV. CFA staff need a strong people management focus. Not just emergency management.

7. **Confidence:** I am not party political and prefer to vote for the local member who I feel will best represent my needs. However I feel that the CFA/UBV/EBA debacle has damaged my confidence in the present management of government process. If the FRV “fix” does not work to volunteers' satisfaction across the Victoria then our confidence in the State Government will be damaged for many years.

Signed: [REDACTED]