

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 4 July 2017 9:29 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Personal Submission to Upper House Select Committee Inquiry into Fire Services Restructure Proposal

I have been a CFA Volunteer since prior to the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires, actively involved in two volunteer Brigade Management Teams, honoured by being awarded the National Medal for my services to CFA, and have been advised that I am about to be awarded CFA Life Membership. CFA Volunteers are one of the most respected groups in Victoria – and we plan to remain so – responding voluntarily when needed. However to do so we need an organisation that is totally supporting the volunteers – not one “working for 2 bosses”!

I submit to your Select Committee my following personal comments relative to your Select Committee Inquiry:

*a. impact on fire service delivery across Victoria*

I am most concerned that the proposed Restructure will result in significant dis-satisfaction amongst Volunteers in City areas (i.e. proposed FRV service areas), resulting in significant reduction in surge capacity for campaign (long term) fires, especially those in Country (non-FRV) areas. (Already there is significant demarcation between full time ‘paid’ CFA personnel and CFA Volunteers in ‘manned’ stations, and elsewhere (e.g. UFU personnel declaring no-go zones for volunteers in shared manned stations, no-use of certain equipment, jobs only for the UFU in control centres, etc.) – resulting in many cases in friction and dis-satisfaction. The proposed restructure will, in my view, significantly worsen this situation – leading to reduction in numbers of volunteers available for campaign fires.

The proposed secondment of UFU personnel back from FRV to CFA will, in my view, result in a very high level of dis-satisfaction amongst CFA country based volunteers – significantly affecting the efficiency of wildfire fire fights. Personally I will be extremely sceptical of the reasons behind any directions received from a seconded CFA person.

*b. effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery*

I am concerned that the FRV area volunteers will be dis-enfranchised by UFU demarcation – resulting in loss of surge capacity (see above). This will result in significant extra workload (especially in long running campaign wildfires in Country areas) on CFA Country volunteers (unpaid) resulting in country CFA Volunteer burn-out, reduced effectiveness of the fire-fight at these fires, and long term reduced CFA volunteer numbers.

Dis-satisfaction amongst country based CFA volunteers will result in lower turn-outs and reduced membership – significantly affecting the fire fight in serious / severe fires.

*c. short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision*

In proposing the changes the Victorian Government has already had to place on the table substantial funds to ‘separate’ UFU and Volunteer personnel in FRV, and to support the revised CFA proposal. The

total cost impact has not been released and has probably been significantly under-called due to lack of detail / implementation plans. Potential long term costs (e.g. having to hire full time fire-fighters in country areas to bolster the declining volunteers) probably have not been considered. A full impact and cost / benefits study, including full details of proposals and implementation plans, should be mandatory prior to any Government legislation being formulated / passed.

*d. underlying policy rationale.*

The base proposal / rationale of the current legislation is that all existing UFU personnel will be transferred to FRV (so the EBA can proceed!), and then those required to maintain CFA operations “seconded” back to CFA. This “working for 2 bosses” proposal is extremely likely to fail! I cannot believe that the “seconded” personnel will forget that they are UFU members and fully take orders from CFA hierarchy. In particular existing UFU rhetoric is that their members “will not take instruction” from volunteers – yet that is what will be necessary on the fire ground in country areas , where local knowledge is critical!

I request that my name, address and any other information that may identify me be withheld from any publication of this submission (to prevent UFU retribution!).

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
Email: [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
Mobile [Redacted]