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Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

As an active CFA volunteer for 35 plus years ,holding competencies to Strike Team Leader and presently the brigade secretary and communication officer at Toongabbie Fire Brigade I wish to submit the following observations and comments on the proposed Fire Services Legislation.

Firstly I see a need to separate the two proposals as the two matters are unrelated. In my experience industrially, when health and safety matters are combined with industrial/political matters the health issues are often (nearly always) lost in the process and argument to the detriment of all concerned.

Secondly I can see a need for a redefinition of what area constitutes metropolitan Melbourne .i.e. the MFBs area of responsibility.

Thirdly I cannot see any practical way of implementing the proposed legislation without incurring dramatically increased costs to the community. Inevitably the UFU will demand higher staffing levels as Vol. participation decreases. I cannot see any way under the proposed legislation that integrated stations can exist and function as they do now . For I cannot imagine, given known union behaviour at a few stations , that staff and vols. could coexist and work together ,much less the UFU ever allowing mixed crews or the sharing of equipment . For it to work would mean duplication of resources with associated increased costs

Fourthly it is hard to see how surge capacity can be maintained under the proposed legislation, this implies that Vol participation in the urban fringe areas will inevitably diminish. Furthermore if the new CFA recruits its ops. officers from what will be in practice, the MFB, their suitability and experience would be badly effected in the longer term as the present CFA staff retire . Vols with bush fire experience would be deterred from working with them. It must be recognised that the skill set required to fight bush fires is dramatically different to those needed for city fire fighting. Particularly hieratical structured models as used in the MFB/union model.

Finally it seems strange to me that we can have a restructure of fire services in Victoria without including Forest Fire Management in the discussion. For, in the Black Saturday events which pose the greatest risk to people and property in Victoria, the CFA and FFM work together as the principal combat agencies . It would seem logical to me that the CFA staff could be employed by FFM rather than FRV because of the need for this interaction.

Yours Faithfully

Don Cadwallader

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