

Submission to Upper House Select Committee Inquiry into Fire Service Restructure Proposal.

I wish to draw the attention of the Select Committee to a number of points of concern which I ask be considered in your inquiry.

- Concern that the “Firefighter Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Service Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 was drafted in secrecy by a small group who used bad process, without detail and without consultation with key players in the Fire Industry. It did not involve:
Country Fire Authority,
Metropolitan Fire Brigade
Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
Emergency Management Victoria
Fire Service Commissioner Craig Lapsley. (Involved towards end)
Victorian Community stake holders
- Combining the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and the Fire Services Legislation Reform into one Bill is poor process and holding volunteers to ransom. If the Government had truly believed in its Fire Reform Bill the poor decision to combine the 2 totally separate issues into 1 Bill would not be necessary.
- The Firefighter Presumptive Rights Compensation Bill discriminates against volunteers IS NOT the same as the Queensland Legislation as claimed by the Government. The Victorian Bill has 2 separate levels, one for staff and one with additional requirements/restrictions for volunteers. Up until this Bill was presented it had bipartisan support.
- Has this Bill been solely drafted so that a workplace EBA with the UFU can be signed off? The existing EBA has not been tested under the new Fair Work Australia procedure. Political and Industrial interference is wrong motivation for change. It does not fix the EBA problem, it only moves it.
- No consultation by the Government has occurred at this stage with Volunteers as is required by the CFA Act and the Volunteer Charter.
Current briefings and spin by the Government and the CFA after the Legislation has been written is NOT consultation.
CFA Volunteers and a majority of the communities it serves feel frustrated, anxious, ignored and undervalued with the bad process and hidden agenda motivating the change proposal in the Bill. It is already having a negative impact on volunteer morale.

- After a number of inquiries and a Royal Commission over the last 10 years there is no recommendations that splitting the CFA integrated model would make for a better fire service to the community. Many improvements have been implemented from these inquiries and recommendations over the years and this was due to all in the Fire Sector working together, no back door deals were needed to achieve these outcomes.
- No impact analysis or cost benefit/analysis has been applied to the proposed Legislation. Will this impact future CFA Budgets? Will CFA be the poor cousin because of the proposed changes?
- I have great concerns with the mistruths and blatant lies that are being told as this Bill is being sold to volunteers. Questions by volunteers cannot be answered as no detail on how the new system would work is available, too many detail gaps. Our existing Fire Service, although always open for improvements is so important for Victoria to leave to chance or used as a tool to meet an industrial problem.
- If a bad decision on this Bill is made it will have a negative impact on the current model we work under and is often quoted by senior fire management across the Fire sector “as the best in the world” It will affect both local fire response and CFA surge capacity if volunteer morale is lost.
- Will the people who have drafted this Bill, and those who are promoting it in its current form be willing to face a Coroner or a Royal Commission when the next ‘Ash Wednesday’ or “Black Saturday” hits this fire prone State, and the volunteers were not there when needed?
- I ask that the Upper House Select Committee recommends that the Bill before the House not be passed and that any future models or improvements to existing models be investigated after TRUE and FULL consultation with all stake holders has been conducted.

I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission, and if you require any additional explanation or detail you can contact me as shown below.

Hans van Hamond

July 4th 2017.

[REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Current Volunteer with over 51 years service.
Ex Captain of a busy Urban Fire Brigade,
Current member of my Brigade Management Committee,
Good understanding of the Fire Service,
25 years as a VFBV State Councillor and current Board member.
Current Board Member with the Council of Australia Volunteer Fire Associations,
Foundation member, Emergency Management Victoria – Volunteer Consultative Forum.