

01/07/2017

[LCSC@parliamint.vic.gov.au](mailto:LCSC@parliamint.vic.gov.au)

Attention the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

Dear Committee Members,

I take this opportunity to raise some of my concerns about the Fire Services Legislation which the Andrews Government has pushed through the Lower House and attempted to rush through the Legislative Council.

I am a proud and passionate CFA volunteer firefighter with both Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade and Toorloo Fire Brigade, have undertaken professional training and have completed numerous courses to assist me in protecting the communities I have chosen to serve. I have also served as a volunteer with the Mooroopna Fire Brigade.

I have been a member for approx. 14 years and are currently serving as Lieutenant, Secretary (both at Brigade and Group Level) and as a Crew Leader.

I raise my concerns as an experienced fire fighter with some understanding of CFA and its relationship with Victorian communities. I believe the previously appointed Board, Chief Officer and Chief Executive Officer had a sound relationship with Victorian communities and CFA volunteers. I now firmly believe this is no longer the case following the Andrews Government appointments.

One of my primary concerns is that the Presumptive Rights (Cancer) legislation does not treat paid and volunteer firefighters equally. Under this new legislation a paid firefighter with one of the 12 prescribed cancers will automatically get access to treatment and compensation. A volunteer firefighter will have to be "considered" by an unspecified panel and then may be granted coverage / treatment / compensation. Having fought fires, beside paid fire fighters, such as highly toxic cool store fires, I find this legislation offensive in the extreme. This legislation treats me like a second class citizen. It is unfair, unreasonable, and unjust. Are the parliamentary members of the Andrews Government so out of step with presumptive cancer legislation in other states or is this in line with what the UFU have demanded. The CFA Board, who are supposed to represent both paid and volunteers, should be ashamed that they are prepared to support this legislation. As a volunteer, I am thankful that the VFBV is there to support me and my fellow volunteers.

Victoria is recognised as one of the most at risk bushfire regions in the world and as such needs the best firefighting capability in the world. This legislation splits up Victoria's firefighting capacity and potentially puts us all at risk when the next Ash Wednesday or Black Saturday occurs.

When (not if) another major fire event occurs will we have the surge capacity to meet the challenge? Or will it have been eroded because those brigades we depend on have been deskilled or sidelined because they are in FRV areas?

Another of my concerns is the motive for this new legislation and its potential effects on CFA Volunteers I don't understand why we need to split CFA up.

None of the inquiries suggested it and the Bushfires Royal Commission actually praised the integrated model of paid and volunteers working together.

What is the motive for this dramatic change in fire services in Victoria? The Premier spoke about the stream of Inquiries into CFA as a justification yet not one of these inquiries advocated for a restructure of CFA, Indeed where CFA's structure was mentioned it was to support the integrated model.

Is this exercise nothing more than a very expensive strategy for Premier Andrews to sell firefighting in Victoria out to the UFU? I urge members of this Committee to closely review what is happening at integrated stations as it is my understanding that volunteers are already being pushed aside and that changes are already occurring even though the split up of services has not been approved.

Finally, considering Victoria is one of the most at risk fire regions in the world and that this legislation will affect every Victorian, please consider these key questions,

- 1. Do you believe that the Victorian community has been sufficiently consulted and supports this legislation?**
- 2. Are you confident that this legislation will not ham CFS's surge capacity?**
- 3. Do you believe that even with this short Inquiry that you know enough about this legislation to risk Victoria's fire safety?**

Thank you for considering my submission

I do not wish for this submission to be listed on the Committee's website.

Yours faithfully,

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Mobile No. [REDACTED]