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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 Victorian Government / Premier Andrews has pushed through the Lower House and attempted to push / rush through the Legislative Council.

I am a proud CFA volunteer firefighter with Callignee Fire Brigade. I have been a member for 48 years and have served as Captain, Lieutenant, Secretary, Treasurer, Crew Leader and Strike Team Leader.

One of my 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 listed 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.

Having watched the Fiskville horror process where members had to fight for their rights, I would hate for my family to have to go through the same process. This legislation treats me like a second-class citizen. It is unfair, unreasonable and unjust.

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 praised the integrated model of paid and volunteers working together.

The UFU and the Government are ignoring the fact that the current CFA integrated Fire Stations are already delivering the Turnout responses indicated by the UFU and with the full support of the Volunteers of those respective CFA integrated Stations.

How will this service be improved under the UFU proposal? It will not, due to the forced separation of Career and Volunteer Members.

How are we supposed to work with FRV, a separate organisation with different priorities?

If the CFA career Staff are to become FRV Members and then are supposed to assist the Volunteers in Training and Administration how will they be able to meet the Volunteers needs when the UFU EBA obstructs and condemns Career Personnel from working with Volunteers

Is this exercise nothing more than a very expensive strategy for Premier Andrews to sell firefighting in Victoria out to the UFU?

Finally, considering Victoria is one of the most at-risk fire regions in the world and that this legislation will affect every Victorian household, 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 CFA'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 wish for this submission to be listed on the Committee's website.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Ewart OAM OStJ

Captain Callignee Fire Brigade

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