

Johannes (Hans) van Lierop



### **Preamble**

Whilst I am a member of our Hodges Rd Fireguard group, this submission is written as an individual with some concerns as to how this situation has been handled. We experienced the fires of Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009, first hand with flames to our doorstep and back yard. We successfully defended our home as well as keeping safe our 3 neighbours, one of whom was seven and a half months pregnant.

When the current situation between MFB (union) and CFA first hit the news, I was horrified by what was being said and initially agreed that what was being done would tear the CFA apart as a volunteer organisation, however after reading a little more on the matter including both the MFB & CFA Acts of 1958, the Fire Fighters Presumptive Rights Compensation & Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 and the terms of reference of the investigative committee, I have changed my opinion on the matter and agree with what is being proposed along with the addition of the proposed amendments. Having only one body to handle the fire delivery service for Victoria should result in a more streamlined approach to this very important service particularly for those who live in high fire danger areas of Victoria. Having only one control body will not be without its challenges as it will have to deal with paid union members and volunteers.

### **My take out from Union advertising**

1. The union has advertised on TV and created the impression that MFB provides a better fire service delivery than does CFA.
2. The union has created the impression that in the event of a fire emergency, no action can be taken by CFA unless a member of MFB is in attendance.
3. The union has created the impression that Fire Rescue Victoria will simply take control of all the assets of CFA.
4. The union raised the matter of extending MFB boundaries, however did not really explain why this should happen except to say they could do it better than CFA.

### **Submission points**

1. I believe that all fire service delivery locations should be referred to as Fire Rescue rather than having them branded as MFB and/or CFA.
2. I believe that it would be difficult for union members and volunteers to co-exist at the same location as has been suggested.
3. The union will see the formation of Fire rescue Victoria as a major win for them as no doubt their numbers will increase due to the extension of Metropolitan and Major Regional Centre boundaries.
4. This will be seen by CFA volunteers as a loss, however it could be turned into a positive as many of these younger volunteers could have the opportunity of becoming career firefighters.
5. The current rift between MFB & CFA although possibly only perceived will tear apart the CFA with the real possibility that CFA volunteers will leave in great numbers and thus leaving country/rural Victoria without an effective fire delivery service.

6. The committee must have a plan as to how/why fire service delivery boundaries are being moved.
7. The government must also have a plan for what to do if volunteers leave the service of CFA and as well have a model in place which extrapolates and costs these issues.
8. The committee should re-consider the following clauses in the proposed amendments:
  - Clause 40, new section 33E as it states “Provides that a member of the strategic Advisory Committee may be removed from office by the Minister at any time for any reason”.
  - Clause 103, has reference to Section 72A of the Principal Act and suggests that if the Chief Fire Officer is not present at the fire, no action can take place.

**END**