

Submission to:**Fire Services Reform Select Committee 2017.****From:****The Officers and members of the Daylesford Fire Brigade.**

At the last meeting of the Daylesford Fire Brigade I was authorised by the members to compose and send on their behalf this submission to the Fire Services Reform Select Committee 2017.

The Daylesford Fire Brigade was formed in 1861 and like the majority of fire brigades throughout rural Victoria we are a 100% volunteer organisation crewed by dedicated and highly trained locals. Most of our members are formally trained and nationally accredited in responding to Wildfires, Structural Fires, Hazardous Materials Incidents and Road Accident Rescues. The training required to gain these accreditations and then maintaining our skills is done in our own private time, such is our commitment to our local community.

We are deeply concerned about the changes being forced upon the CFA by the incumbent Victorian Government under the influence of the United Fire Fighters Union.

As a largely volunteer organisation, the CFA depends on its many thousands of members to respond in times of need, day or night to ensure the safety of the community. I can say right now the morale of CFA volunteers is very low. This has already and will continue to erode the volunteer engagement which in turn will affect the participation in fire service delivery across rural Victoria. In the last 12 months we have lost an Emergency Services Minister, a Chief Officer and a Chief Executive Officer, all of whom were respected by us, due the politics involved.

The body that represents us at the table is the VFBV (Volunteer Fire Brigades of Victoria). We are deeply disappointed that this organisation has been shut out of the reform negotiations between the Government and the United Fire Fighters Union.

We remain deeply suspicious of the motives of the UFU. The UFU does not speak for us and clearly does not understand the pivotal role that volunteer CFA brigades play in being the part of the nucleus of rural communities.

Rural communities and businesses have always donated generously to help their local brigades buy much needed equipment. The creeping influence of the UFU into the CFA culture will destroy this generosity and good will and fire service delivery will be compromised.

The value to the Victorian taxpayer of what volunteer fire brigades are prepared to do is inestimable. Once the culture is broken, it will be broken and gone forever. The cost to replace the 30,000 or so operational volunteer firefighters would be far more than any Victorian Government could ever bear. The loss of any of these member's willingness to respond because of the anti-volunteer agenda of the Andrews Government and the UFU will cause serious issues to the surge capacity should we have large scale emergencies.

In consideration of the proposed Fire Services Reform Bill we respectfully urge you to stand up for the independence of volunteer fire brigades and for the communities we all protect with our local knowledge and expertise.

We urge to protect the rights of volunteer firefighters to equal compensation under the Presumptive Rights Compensation and not have this important piece of legislation be held hostage to the passing of the Reform Bill.

Written and signed by:

Glenn Webster.
Brigade Training Officer.
Daylesford Fire Brigade.

On behalf of:

The Officers and members of the Daylesford Fire Brigade.